

First Annual

**REPORT ON ACCESSIBILITY AND DISABILITY IN
SHAMBHALA**

February 2009

Prepared by the
Chair of Accessibility and Disability Working Group

Contents

Summary of Accessibility in Shambhala	1
<i>Funding Assistance</i>	1
<i>Chairs and footrests.....</i>	2
<i>Hearing and Visual Issues</i>	2
<i>Chemical Sensitivities</i>	2
<i>Other Disabilities.....</i>	3
<i>International Mandala</i>	3
 Accessibility Initiatives of Individual Shambhala Centers	4
North America	4
Shambhala Europe Accessibility -Initial Information	9
Others Regions of the International Shambhala Community	10
 Shambhala aspirations on diversity, accessibility and compassionate conduct	11
 Sakyong's Letter on the Aspirations	12
 More Information, Guidelines, Resources, Etc. for Specific Disabilities.....	13
 The Shambhala “Accessibility and Disability” Web Page.....	14

Summary of Accessibility in Shambhala

December 2008-January 2009

There is excellent news to report. There is a great deal happening in Shambhala to accommodate individuals with disabilities. This became apparent recently when all the North American Shambhala Center directors were contacted about handicapped accessibility. They had been asked about accessibility at their centers, what solutions they had found to obstacles, what help they could use, etc.

In fact many centers are now fully accessible. In addition there are several that are looking into moving to more accessible premises. Many either have or are looking into appointing an Accessibility Contact Person. All the center directors are very aware of the need to accommodate individuals with disabilities. Often despite very difficult structural obstacles, almost all centers seem to have found some way to improve accessibility, and are using an impressive variety of approaches.

It is great to report that twenty three North American Shambhala urban centers are now either fully or mostly handicapped accessible: **Albany, Albuquerque, Atlanta, Austin, Baltimore, Berkeley, Birmingham, Boulder, Davis, Halifax, Madison, Minneapolis, Montreal, New York, San Antonio, San Diego, Silicon Valley, Sky Lake Lodge, Sonoma, Vancouver, Victoria, Washington DC.**

In addition, as of December 2008, a further five Shambhala centers were expecting to be accessible within the next few weeks or months. **Denver, Durham, Kailua, Philadelphia, and Pioneer Valley.**

Our major practice centers are all very much aware of the accessibility and disability issues, particularly as their rural conditions present additional challenges for visitors. All of them are taking steps to make their accommodations more accessible. **Shambhala Mountain Center, Karmê Chöling, Dorje Denma Ling, and Dechen Chöling** all have wheelchair accessible accommodations, bathrooms and practice areas. The specifics vary, so it is still best to check what is available before visiting.

Many more centers either have plans to move to an accessible location or are working on ways to improve their present location.

Funding Assistance

Some centers in Canada are looking into applying for the government grants. Information will be made available to other centers as this progresses.

For the US, in Chicago there is a local foundation that will support “houses of worship” become accessible. There may well be similar help available in other cities and it may be worthwhile for centers to research this. If you do find ways to get help with this please let Hamish Maclaren know (maclaren@earthlink.net), or add it to the Diversity and

Accessibility Best Practices web page at
<http://www.shambhala.org/members/share/bpmain.php?catid=4> .

Chairs and footrests

Chairs and footrests that are ergonomically suitable for practice has been a big issue, probably affecting more people than any other area. Shambhala centers are finding many ways to accommodate this and these are listed under the individual centers below and also included in the document “Additional Resources for Phases I & II of Accessibility Guidelines” at Diversity and Accessibility Best Practices web page at
<http://www.shambhala.org/members/share/bpmain.php?catid=4> .

Hearing and Visual Issues

Many centers have members or visitors who are deaf or hearing impaired and blind or visually impaired. A number of approaches have been used to help, including

- headphones attached to the sound systems,
- transcribing talks onto a laptop computer as they are happening,
- sign language interpreters,
- reading dharma books out loud,
- recording chants and practices,
- developing programs for the hearing impaired, etc.

We are also looking into

- adding captioning to teaching videos on the Shambhala web site.
- larger font chants and practice texts.
- further improving the accessibility of our web site.

Ted Spearin, a blind member in Toronto, wrote a list of suggestions titled “Considerations so that the blind and visually impaired can get around in facilities”. The Seattle center had several people who were deaf and blind ask for meditation instruction. How they did this is written up in “Meditation Instruction for the Deaf-Blind”. Both of these are on the Diversity and Accessibility Best Practices web page
<http://www.shambhala.org/members/share/bpmain.php?catid=4> .

Several other centers are also working on this, and we will post their reports as they progress.

Chemical Sensitivities

Sensitivity to incense, juniper smoke and even charcoal is an increasing problem for many people. Obviously we don’t want to exclude anyone because of this. So centers are finding solutions so that everyone can practice and participate. Often the answer is not to light incense at all. There are two great posts on this subject at the Diversity and Accessibility Best Practices page ““To incense or not to incense?” - consolidated replies” and “Accommodating Practitioners with Multiple Chemical Sensitivities”.

Other Disabilities

Welcoming and accommodating individuals with disabilities like Learning Disabilities, Developmental Disabilities/Cognitive Impairments, Mental Illness, Chronic Illness & Invisible Disabilities, is also being addressed at many centers and some guidelines for these are in the document “Accessibility Guidelines for Shambhala Centers” at the Best Practices web page.

International Mandala

We have also been in communication with others regions of the international Shambhala community about handicapped accessibility. Shambhala Europe recently sent a message to all European group coordinators and centre directors asking them to think about their situations and what they are doing to accommodate people with various needs. They will be following up on this. The first initial informal survey shows that Bussum (Netherlands), Marburg (Germany), Zurich (Switzerland), are accessible or mostly accessible. Of course the main European retreat center, Dechen Chöling, has accessible shrine rooms, bathrooms, and shower and bedroom.

We have been communicating with the two Representative of Latin America on the Sakyong's Council; Magali Meneses of the Santiago center in Chile, and Lourdes Alvarez of the Tepoztlán Center in Mexico. We have also been communicating with the New Zealand centers' representatives Jude Bennett of the Auckland center (they hope to move soon into more accessibly premises), and Hannah Bianchini and Marian Bond in Wellington. As Magali Meneses of Santiago said, they are all very aware of the issues, and as they grow, they look forward to welcoming people with disabilities.

What became very apparent in the course of talking to center directors, is that, clearly, there is a major commitment at centers to ensure that, as the Shambhala Accessibility Statement says, “in Shambhala Society access needs to be provided for seniors and individuals with disabilities to all activities, programs, practices, any teachings they would otherwise be able to receive, community events, etc. and this access needs to be as safe, workable, uplifted, and dignified as access is for anyone else”.

This has been very encouraging. Far more is being done than any of us realized.

Thank you all very much.

Hamish Maclaren
Chair Accessibility and Disability Working Group

Accessibility Initiatives of Individual Shambhala Centers

More specifics on how some Shambhala centers are accommodating individuals with disabilities.

December 2008-January 2009

North America

Albany Shambhala Center. Recently moved to fully wheelchair accessible location, even has levers on the doors and bathrooms. This was a deliberate effort in order to make the center more accessible. They “acquired new commercial space in October of 2007 on the first floor of a building. It is a flat surface into the entrance of the building from the parking lot and continues as a continuous flat surface into the Center. The doors do not have automatic openers but having the basic structure accessible is really great. We have at least one person attending the Center who would not have been able to negotiate the stairs at our last Center.” Some individual with hearing impairments have asked to sit in front of the 800 sq ft shrine room. Sometimes use they larger location that has a sound system. For “chairs sitters” they bought maroon office chairs from Office Max for under \$25. A lot of people use chairs at the center and they have a big variety. Some use support cushions on the chairs. They always ask if incense is OK for everyone, if it is not they offer unlit incense. The center has two extra pairs of reading glasses for anyone who needs them.

Albuquerque Shambhala Centre. When they where modifying the space for their new center, they build a ramp, the materials were donated by a sangha member. “Newly installed wheelchair ramps for front and back accessibility to the Center. Recently renovated wheelchair accessible bathroom. Shrine Room and all community spaces are wheelchair accessible. Padded chairs in shrine room for "chair sitters". New thresholds currently being installed in two doorways to ease wheelchair maneuverability. Handicapped parking at front entrance. Continued awareness around the needs of all in our community.”

Atlanta Shambhala Center. Very accessible ground floor location, including accessible bathrooms, only one room not accessible. They often have people in walkers coming to the center. Headphones are attached to the sound system for people who are hard of hearing. They would like suggestions for suitable sound systems.

Austin Shambhala Center. Just built a wheelchair ramp, as they have couple of wheelchair users occasionally. “We're currently in discussions with the City of Austin to provide full ADA accessibility for one of our two buildings, which is required by law for that building.”

Baltimore Shambhala Center. Wheelchair accessible 1st floor, including the shrine room, etc. Good doors and a workable bathroom. Members and visitors can use the disability elevator next door to get to the basement rooms. In the back of the shrine room, there are 12 inexpensive padded folding chairs. They have other chairs if needed. Some people call in advance to ask that incense is not used.

Berkeley Shambhala Meditation Center. Fully accessible as they have an elevator. They sometimes use a sign language interpreter. They are looking into more things they can do to welcome individual with disabilities.

Birmingham Shambhala Meditation Center. Center is on a handicapped accessible ground level, so they don't have stairs, and they just had a couple of doors widened, which makes it more accessible for wheelchairs. "Physical accessibility is definitely a priority for us, so we intend not to move anywhere that isn't on ground floor or requires stairs to get in." Several individual who are hard of hearing sit at the front. Have a lot of people who practice in chairs, they have wooden chairs with cushions, and have one memory foam cushion. Some people bring there own special cushions

Boston Shambhala Center. Are in a building of several floors and no elevator. So they had a sound system, which is connected to the shrine room, put into the lower floor for anyone who can't get upstairs to the shrine room. There is also has a jack in the wall for video. They have both members with visual impairments and one person who is hearing impaired who has a friend sign for them. They have a member with Parkinson's whose daughter is going to show them some techniques for how best to further help her. They have some very nice chairs with padded seats, for people who can't use gomdons. These were ordered from Sauder Worship Furniture, including one with arms for those who need that. Bought a wheelchair for use by members who needed that inside the building.

Boulder Shambhala Center. Had a very solid brick and cemented ramp build to allow disability access to the building and has a powered door for disability access. There has always been an elevator inside the building, so all rooms are now accessible. A bathroom has been renovated for wheelchair access. Frequently there are people who use wheelchairs, and with other mobility impairments, at the center.

Burlington Shambhala Center. They are on a 2nd floor that has no disability access, so they are considering for a stair glide, (\$4,300 instead of \$90,000 for elevator). They have members with balance issues and two with MS. They have an accessible bathroom and also one hearing impaired member who sits in front with hearing aid.

Chicago Shambhala Center. Has some tricky challenges. They own their building, which was formerly a clinic, although it has a ramp, it is too steep. They are in process of doing a number of things, including looking into a ramp, perhaps in conjunction with their neighbor. They found some good folding chairs, metal with flat padded seats, at Cosco. They plan to look into accessibility funding help from The Retirement Research Foundation's Accessible Faith Grant Program in 2009. "the Foundation makes funds available to Chicago area houses of worship for accessibility improvements to their facilities."

Davis Shambhala Center. They are on the 2nd floor and have an elevator, the doors are also wide enough. They have one member who is deaf, and they have someone with a laptop who sits next to them and transcribes talks as they are happening. For weekend programs they have a sign-up for different people to help. Does mean that she has to let people know in advance and help organize it. One member with a disability, Leal Abbott, regularly writes articles or poems for their newsletter, about her and others experience, "casually, not preaching".

Denver Shambhala Center. They made renewing their lease dependent on getting an elevator installed and also have an allowance for making the bathroom accessible. They have a very nice landlord. Although the center is paying for half the wheelchair lift by an increase in their rent for the five-year lease.

Dorje Denma Ling. They have a deliberate policy to make things accessible. After fundraising for this, they build ramps to main building, which has accessible bathrooms, and also ramps to the

Lodge. So the ground floor of the lodge (including accommodation), meals areas, main practices areas, and registration are all accessible.

Durham Shambhala Center. They are about to purchase their own building. They will make ramps, handicapped parking spaces, and pave the drive way.

Fredericton Shambhala Centre. For members having trouble sitting on gomdens they bought several strait back chairs. Also a member made Japanese style benches for raising gomdens.

Gampo Abbey. Is considering renovations in order to make the building more wheelchair accessible. The building in its current form poses major challenges for anyone with mobility impairments.

Halifax Shambhala Centre. They have a ramp and an elevator, so bathrooms and most other rooms are accessible. Chemical sensitivities is an issue and they often just light and put out the incense.

Juneau Shambhala Center. They are on a 2nd floor, with no elevator. But for larger programs they use a different accessibly site. They have some people with allergies and problems with incense.

Kailua Shambhala Meditation. They have a small center on a 2nd floor and an elevator is being installed in the next few weeks. Have cushioned folding chairs that are great, that have been there for a while.

Kootenay Shambhala Centre. Just got better chairs, and have large font chants.

Lexington Shambhala Center. Here some members read, etc. for one visually impaired person. Have a 3inch step into back door of the main shrine on the 2nd floor .They own their building and the planned expansion includes a ramp.

Los Angeles Shambhala Center. They are expecting to have to leave their current location which had poor access, accessibility is a priority for the new site. A member just bought some great chairs with padded seats and backs.

Madison Shambhala Center. Wheelchair accessible building, and they have one member in wheelchair. No accessible bathrooms yet, but they have good relations with the Co-op grocery next door who lets them use the Co-op bathrooms. Many people have asthma and other respiratory issues and can't tolerate incense. So they are working with this and have a Juniper Notice Board warning, their goal is to get people into the center and get them sitting. They have Target folding chairs, that were \$15, (there are also covers/slips for these). Also have school chairs from second hand stores and overtime they found, in second hand stores, foam and gold brocade fabric which they used to make cushions and covers for them. This made them more uplifted and very popular, they are now cushioned on the back and the seat. The director Miriam Hall recently sent an email to sangha announce "To incense or not to incense" She consolidated the responses she received and that is now at the Best Practices page at <http://www.shambhala.org/members/share/bpmain.php?catid=4>

Minneapolis Shambhala Center. Five years ago they built their own building, it is two levels. The shrine room and accessible bathrooms are on the 2nd floor, but main entrance has a ramp to that upperfloor. They have handicapped parking. The lower level, which is not easily

accessible, has two entrances and has offices, a children's room, and a community room. When they expand they will make lower level accessible too. There are two types of chairs, four that are very upright with a flat cushioned seat. They also have stacking chairs from Ikea, molding plastic on metal frame. They have a Polycom conference speakerphone, this is used during talks and meetings for those who can't get to the center.

Montreal Shambhala Centre. They are on a fully accessible 5th floor, with an elevator, ramps, and accessible bathroom. Although they have no members with disabilities yet, that they know of.

New York Shambhala Center. Is wheelchair accessible and has an elevator, although bathrooms are not accessible yet. They have a lot going on in terms of accommodating individuals with disabilities Their "Unconditional healing" class often has individuals with disabilities attending. Programs for individuals with hearing impairments are being developed and they have headphones by sound system. Sign language interpretation is being worked on.

Ottawa Shambhala Centre. Here there are steep stairs and they are looking into moving. They are researching Canadian government grants for accessibility and will let us know how that goes. "In 2008, we instituted a no incense policy that exclude the burning of incense everywhere in the Centre. Juniper is permitted for certain occasions such as Werma practice. In such cases, a sign near the front door advises that juniper was burned at xx hours on xx day. A person allergic to juniper smoke can then decide whether to go further or not. On another front, while the Centre is primarily English speaking, a very large number of francophones attend. Many accommodations have been made for a long time and plans for many more are in the works including a bilingual chant book."

Philadelphia Shambhala Center. They are on the 3rd floor and their landlord is putting in an elevator. He has acquired the building next door and part of the remodeling includes putting elevator between the two. They have a member who can sign language. One or two members have a problem with incense, when they are there the center just doesn't use it. They have several different kinds of chairs for people who need those for practice.

Pioneer Valley Shambhala Center. They are soon moving to a place with an elevator and accessible bathrooms. Have stacking chairs with padded seats.

San Antonio Shambhala Center. A couple of years ago the landlord put in a ramp. At the time they had 2 members in wheelchairs. They have 2 members with hearing impairments and they sit in the front of the shrine room or next to speakers.

San Diego Shambhala Meditation Center. Fully accessible rented space, including accessible bathrooms. Also there is a wooden loading ramp in back. They have chairs that were upholstered and cushioned by a member.

San Francisco Shambhala Center. Here there is one member who is blind and who participates in everything. People often read for her. Quite a lot of people with hearing issues, sometimes they sit in the front and/or the volume of the sound system is turned up. Have good chairs for sitting, fairly upright. The center is upstairs and not wheelchair accessible, so they are looking into relocating to somewhere that is.

Santa Rosa Shambhala Meditation Center. They found some good folding chairs from Cosco for \$19, with stripped padding on seat and back. 4-5 larger chairs. Some members use cushions

under their feet. They are in an old school; but no elevator and a ramp that is too steep, so are looking for new space.

Seattle Shambhala Center. They found some chairs good for practice in a used restaurant supply store (level 2 style of restaurant chair). They had several people who were deaf and blind ask for meditation instruction. How they worked with this is written up in “Meditation Instruction for the Deaf-Blind. Seattle success story” at the Best Practices web page at http://www.shambhala.org/members/share/viewarticle.php?art_id=146

Silicon Valley Shambhala Meditation Center. Accessibly! They went for 10 years without a center, meeting in peoples’ homes. They were looking for a handicapped accessibly space and four years ago moved into their current location. Now on a 1st floor that is handicapped accessibly from a side door. Sometimes they use a wireless mic with a simple sound system. They have a number of good chairs at the back of the shrine room that work well. Often people need foot support, so they use gomdens and support cushions or even folded blankets. Incense is a problem for some of their members and visitors. For a while they were asking if it was OK before lighting incense at the start of programs. Then someone came in towards the end of a program and then had to leave. So now they don’t light incense. For long programs/practices if incense is used continuously it can cause a problem for some time afterwards. They found charcoal is a problem for some, perhaps it is the chemicals in it for lighting the charcoal.

Sky Lake Lodge. Wheelchair accessible for programs as they have ramps to the main buildings, but no accessible bedrooms. For anyone who is deaf they have a sign language translator in community.

Sonoma Shambhala Center. “our center is on the ground floor of a commercial building that is fully accessible to the handicapped. Our entry, the bathrooms and the doorways are all wheelchair accessible. There are handicap parking spaces in the parking lot just outside our entryway, and all sidewalks on the streets leading to the center have sloped sections connected to the crosswalks... We welcome a number of folks in wheelchairs or using crutches on a regular basis.”

St. Johnsbury Shambhala Center. They are on a 2nd floor that is not wheelchair accessible, so they are looking for new place. Some members have their hearing going. They have one member who is not able to get into the building, so they bought a Polycom conference speakerphone, now that person can take part in meetings and talks. For more about their choice, and conference speakerphones in general, see “Conference speakerphone connection for meetings and talks.” at Diversity and Accessibility Best Practices at <http://www.shambhala.org/members/share/bpmain.php?catid=4> .

St. Margaret’s Bay Shambhala Centre. They are in an old building and they use the upstairs, so they are looking into Canadian government grants, possibly the one that is for “enabling accessibility for small buildings”. We will let centers know how the grant application goes and will post a report in Best Practices. Have members with speech and visual impairments. Have a number of people with problems with incense and juniper. They installed a LifeBreath Air Cleaner whole building system, which their research indicates to be the best and most effective system available. There is a report about the process they went through for this “Accommodating Practitioners with Multiple Chemical Sensitivities”, at Diversity and Accessibility Best Practices at <http://www.shambhala.org/members/share/bpmain.php?catid=4> .

Toronto Shambhala Centre. They have been on a 3rd floor without an elevator for twenty years and are now trying to raise money to buy a building. Have good wooden chairs with cushioning that they have had for years. Have had incense issues, one person has allergies to mold. One of their members who is blind, Ted Spearin, wrote “Considerations so that the blind and visually impaired can get around in facilities” which is at the Best Practices web page at <http://www.shambhala.org/members/share/bpmain.php?catid=4>.

Vancouver Shambhala Centre. Currently rent their space and are looking to move to a new centre. They are on ground level and despite having stairs at main entrance, the back of the building has wheelchair access, which was used twice in the last year. Have a number of padded folding chairs at both sides of main shrine room. Members with hearing impairments sit close to speakers. A few years ago, one member (uses a hearing aid) used a personal mic set up that he placed beside the teacher. There is an umdze chant book with a large font. They refrain from use of incense during the Open House.

Victoria Shambhala Centre (BC). “They have a rented building. The front entrance is wheelchair accessible but not the shrines rooms (*from there*). Main shrine room can be accessed from a side fire escape door. They plan to build a ramp from the main entrance community room down into the main shrine room. Fund raising is underway via a cash back program with a local grocery store (Thrifty Foods). There is an upper floor that is not wheelchair accessible. On one occasion a program participant gave the teacher a microphone that transmit to her hearing aid. Interested in Gov grants.”

Washington D.C. Shambhala Center. Wheelchair accessible, this was a priority when finding new place. They are on the 2nd floor, but the entrance already had ramp. Had to refit and resize hallways, to be ADA compliant, and has accessible bathrooms. They had a Level 1 with a sign interpreter. Have a member who would sign for Open House. Has members in wheelchairs. Purchased folding chairs that slope back, but will switch those soon.

White River Shambhala Center. In the process of buying the space they already have, will expand the shrine and are looking into an elevator for the 2nd floor. There is a freight elevator from 1880s which is walled over. Have 7-8 chairs along back wall, with cushions, that came from an insight meditation center that was closing or going dormant.

Shambhala Europe Accessibility -Initial Information

This is mostly information Anna Weinstein, of Shambhala Europe’s Centre Services, received to an initial informal “survey” about the accessibility status in European centres and groups.

Bussum (Netherlands) – space is rented in a physiotherapy office, wheelchair accessible. (And since brochures are in the physio office, people who come for treatment can find the group.)

Marburg (Germany) – entrance and bathrooms are wheelchair accessible but inside the centre there are obstacles. Marburg is “city of the blind” (has blind schools, etc.) there are regularly blind visitors and members

Zurich (Switzerland) – elevator.

Dechen Chöling (France) – All the ground floor of the main building, including kitchen, dining area and shrine rooms, are wheelchair accessible. In the newly renovated building, next to the main building, the whole ground floor is accessible and includes the large main indoor shrine room, accessible bathrooms, shower and an accessible bedroom.

Others Regions of the International Shambhala Community

Santiago Shambhala Center, (Chile). Here in Chile we don't have any special accessibility policy yet, on the one hand because we are few and we don't have the need, but also because our priorities are still related to survival, we need to invest in teachers and programs, translations, books in Spanish, etc... I'm sure as we grow we will need to welcome people with disabilities and I'm looking forward to this. It makes me happy to know that a lot of work is already done and we will be able to ask for help.

Shambhala Meditation Centre Auckland (New Zealand). This is very important for us to consider. We have had one person recently who experienced a little difficulty reaching our Centre due to 2 flights of steps.

We are negotiating with landlord right now to move into different premises mainly due to increasing numbers. However accessibility will also be much easier as doors open directly to the outside with few steps to negotiate.

It is good to be aware of what we can do if any people come with some physical problem.

Shambhala aspirations on diversity, accessibility and compassionate conduct

The teachings held by the Shambhala mandala challenge us as individuals to recognize and dissolve barriers that separate us from others. As a community of practitioners, we strongly encourage understanding of and respect for the basic goodness inherent in all individuals, social groups and cultures.

At this centre, we are committed to the teachings of our lineages, to the practice of meditation and meditation-in-action, and to genuine communication. As part of our intention to create enlightened society, these also help us gain insight into others' realities, appreciate diversity and work with conflict.

We strive to foster a welcoming atmosphere free of prejudice and to develop an inclusive and enlightened society with facilities fully accessible to all persons. Although some of our programs and events are open only to those who have fulfilled certain prerequisites, everyone is welcome at our centre regardless of religion, spiritual tradition or teachers, path of practice, opinions, class, nationality, culture, ethnicity, race, language, age, gender, sexual orientation, or physical, perceptual or mental abilities.

Our centre is committed to creating a practice, study, and work environment in which all individuals are treated with respect and dignity. In addition to being bound individually and as a community to basic Shambhala and Buddhist standards of conduct, we are also citizens of the larger societies in which our centres are located worldwide and, therefore, must abide by public laws. These include, but are not limited to, laws pertaining to alcohol, drugs and sexual conduct. Each individual has the right to practice, study and work in an atmosphere that is free from discrimination.

As with all intentions, personal or collective, these aspirations chart our way forward, and it is our mutual responsibility to work together with each other to respect them. If any individual wishes to make recommendations to Shambhala, or is concerned that the actions of a member of Shambhala, including any of its office-holders, may not have been in accordance with these aspirations, please contact the Director of this Centre, the Rusung of the Dorje Kasung, or any appropriate person in the local leadership. Concerns about the behaviour of office-holders will be handled in accordance with the procedures set down in *Shambhala Care and Conduct*, a copy of which is available at this centre.

Sakyong's Letter on the Aspirations

Oct 2008

Dear director,

Shambhala Aspirations on Accessibility, Diversity
and Compassionate Conduct

One of my enduring wishes for our Shambhala mandala is that it will become a true training ground for the establishment of enlightened society, as inclusive and welcoming as possible. Our society therefore needs to be accessible to whoever wishes to take part in our program and practices, be genuinely open to a diverse mosaic of individuals, and ensure that people are treated compassionately and with respect for their inherent dignity.

The importance of embracing this view has been raised in the Shambhala Congress and, acting on my behalf, the Sakyong's Council adopted "The Shambhala Aspirations on Accessibility, Diversity and Compassionate Conduct". This was sent to all centres to be prominently displayed and I am always delighted when I see it at the entrance to centres.

Respecting and fulfilling these aspirations is an integral part of our vision for a world illuminated by Shambhala vision and our bodhisattva commitments. I have asked the Sakyong's Council to ensure that these aspirations are brought to everyone's attention and that all leaders in the mandala work to implement them. By doing so, you will be acting in accord with my heart wishes for the welfare of all beings.

The Sakyong, Jamgön Mipham Rinpoche

More Information, Guidelines, Resources, Etc. for Specific Disabilities

At the Shambhala “Diversity & Accessibility” Best Practices web page

<http://www.shambhala.org/members/share/bpmain.php?catid=4>

Brief General Guidelines and Ideas to consider for handicapped accessibility

Has about a dozen points that came up in calls to Shambhala Center directors, with some of the solutions that have been found. This should help to get familiar with what might be needed, either now or in the future depending on your membership and the situation at your center.

Accessibility Guidelines for Shambhala Centers

This document is designed as a resource for Shambhala Centers to help them assess their accessibility and make plans to improve it. The document has resources and poses questions that centers should consider as they look into this issue.

Accessibility Resources for Phases I & II of the Guidelines

This document provides a more comprehensive list of resources and suggestions once a particular need has been identified. Covering general accessibility resources (including Disability Etiquette), and accommodating both individuals with mobility impairment and individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing.

Accessibility Resources for Phases III & IV of the Guidelines

This document also provides a more comprehensive list of resources and suggestions once a particular need has been identified. Covering accommodating individuals with Blindness or Visually Impairment, Learning Disabilities, Multiple Chemical Sensitivities, Developmental Disabilities/Cognitive Impairments, Mental Illness, Chronic Illness & Invisible Disabilities. Also resources on Support for Caregivers and general accessibility resources.

Under “Share Best Practices” there currently is:

Conference speakerphone connection for meetings and talks.

A participant unable to get into the building or leave home can participate in meetings, talks or classes.

"To incense or not to incense?" - consolidated replies

Miriam Hall, Director of the Madison WI Shambhala Center, sent out an Email; to sangha-announce “To incense or not to incense?” She very kindly consolidated the responses to that for us.

Considerations so that the blind and visually impaired can get around in facilities
From: Ted Spearin “I am blind, with only 1% vision in the corner of one eye. I have been registered as blind since 1983...”

Meditation Instruction for the Deaf-Blind
Seattle success story submitted by Patience Paradox

Accommodating Practitioners with Multiple Chemical Sensitivities
From: Theresa Milligan, director of the St. Margaret’s Bay Shambhala Centre

The Shambhala “Accessibility and Disability” Web Page

<http://www.shambhala.org/community/da.php>

This includes:

Accessibility and Disability Documents & Reports. Which includes the Shambhala Accessibility Statement adopted by The Sakyong’s Council on 24th October 2005.

Conference Call Minutes & Notes. Minutes of the first meeting of the Accessibility and Disability Working Group.

Accessibility and Disability Articles, Talks and Teachings

Links to Other Accessibility and Disability Resources

Mental Health Resources

Publications

If you have suggestion of other materials or resources that could be added please send them to Hamish Maclaren at maclaren@earthlink.net