

# Friends of Taktse *UPDATE*

## Special "Thank You" Edition

February 2010

### Support for Taktse stronger than ever in 2009

In addition to generous financial donations (see page 7), people express their support for Taktse in many ways. These include house parties, book drives, hosting Taktse teachers, videos and slideshows, and many other contributions—gestures that resonate throughout the far-flung Taktse community. In the words of teacher Mamta Rai, "We are deeply honored and humbled by the outpouring of generosity from so many kind people for our small school in Sikkim."

Following are examples of people turning their talents and energies to helping Taktse in a variety of creative ways. The list is incomplete—many more of you have contributed in so many ways. We hope that you'll email us about your experiences so that we can include them in future newsletters (see page 8)!

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### Taktse Gala



Last April, a committee including Marilyn Lee-Tom, Emily Cherniack, Lonnie Friedman, Aka Denjongpa, Maria Lauenstein, and Paul Lauenstein organized a fundraising gala. City Year in Boston kindly allowed us to use their beautiful function room. The event featured a video about Taktse edited by Sara Igl, a slide show, and a live Skype question and answer session with Taktse staff in Sikkim.

Guests bid on an impressive array of artwork generously donated by Philip Baldwin, Gaal Shepherd, Trish Crapo, Coco Raymond, Nancy Dyer Mitton, Salley Knight, Slade Cogswell, June Raymond, Zahava Friedman, Fritz Lauenstein, Milt Lauenstein, and others, raising over \$10,000 for Taktse.



## House Parties

House parties are a great way for people with a shared interest in education, environment and social issues to connect and get involved with Taktse.



For two consecutive years Emily Cherniack has hosted brunches at her Boston apartment in honor of visiting Taktse teachers and staff, who shared their enthusiasm for teaching with guests.

Sherry Dickstein and Kurt Lauenstein invited friends and neighbors to their Greensboro, NC home on two occasions over the past year to introduce Taktse. The second party followed their November visit to Sikkim. They also introduced Taktse's principal Pintso Denjongpa to other school principals in Greensboro.



Ann and Dan Lasman graciously opened their Essex, MA home for a "Himalayan Evening" to meet visiting Taktse teachers and staff.

Zahava and Rebecca Friedman threw a fundraising bash for Taktse with friends in San Diego, CA.

## Books for Taktse

Last year supporters gathered an impressive array of excellent books for Taktse. Visitors routinely take suitcases laden with books with them to Taktse.

Nancy Bonne, a retired librarian from Rockport, MA, set up a Taktse "Wish List" at [Amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com) to help people choose books for Taktse. She also contributes books, and prioritizes which books to send first, given the limited capacity of travelers' suitcases.

Harriet Kaufman of Lexington, MA said, *"I love books, and enjoyed sharing them with young children for 35 years as a teacher. When I met Maria and learned about the school, I dreamed of going there someday, but thought that for the present I could contribute books. I look for them at library book sales, yard sales, and used book stores. I hunt for bargains! It gives me great pleasure to send them to Taktse."*

Danielle Smick of Astoria NY held a book drive for Taktse at her yoga studio.



Judy Mock, a retired teacher, and her husband Steve drove all the way from Clark's Summit, PA to Beverly, MA to deliver 22 cartons full of books for Taktse. They were inspired by their son Kit's visit to Taktse last November. Judy wrote, *"It was my pleasure to finally be able to give my precious books to people who will appreciate and enjoy them. I purchased most of my books for use in my classroom at Wyoming Seminary."*

*When I retired, I took my treasured books with me and have stored them for five years, waiting to find the right place and time to donate them to people who would appreciate them. You cannot know the joy I felt in leaving my books in Beverly. The response was all that I had desired! I am thrilled that so many will benefit from my beloved books."*

In Greensboro, NC Samuel Silverstein used his bar mitzvah money to buy books for Taktse, and Peggy Wynn scoured book sales for books for Taktse.

Ashley Bernard of Stoughton, MA, a junior at Perkins School for the Blind and an accomplished singer and songwriter, used proceeds from sales of her CD to purchase books for Taktse.



Jan Baker, a teacher at Gould Academy in Bethel, ME, had this to say about her book drive: *"Our REACHOUT organization had a great deal of fun choosing books from your wish list on Amazon. Every selection we made was a personal favorite of someone in the group. It was a lot of fun listening to the kids saying 'Oh, I remember that book! It's so good! We must send them that one!' It really was a treat, and the selection process meant a lot to them! Enjoy!"*

Lonnie Friedman of Sharon, MA donated educational videos about modern European history, World War II and the Holocaust.

## Exeter Narrators



Helen Lauenstein of Exeter, NH organized a group of her retired friends to narrate books on tape for the listening lab at Taktse, giving students a chance to hear English spoken by native speakers. Taktse Principal Pintso Denjongpa, Helen's grandson, was momentarily disoriented one day when he overheard familiar voices from halfway around the world emanating from Taktse's listening lab!

## Resource People

A steady stream of bright, talented and energetic volunteers have journeyed halfway around the world to enrich the learning experiences of Taktse's students and teachers, enriching their own lives in the process. Here are some of them:



Linda Chang, Instructional Specialist at Mott Haven Academy in Bronx, NY, worked with Taktse teachers on progressive teaching methods.

Waring School graduates Sam Lasman and Sammy Stewart helped tutor students and teach classes. Sam Lasman conducted a Passover seder, spending two full days preparing matzoh and other traditional foods, and engaging students in a lively reenactment of the ancient story of exodus from Egypt.





Danielle Smick of Astoria, NY helped coordinate Taktse's first winter camp, which was so successful it is now an annual event.

Rebecca Friedman of San Diego, CA connected Taktse students with a living Holocaust survivor via Skype as part of their history curriculum.



Emily Cherniack of Boston, MA worked with Taktse's Rekha Jain to improve Taktse's administrative procedures.

Heather Lyon of Rockport, MA choreographed Taktse's first Autumn Collage theatrical production. Check out Heather's photos and stories on her [blog!](#)



Nancy Bonne of Rockport, MA helped organize the Taktse library, and encouraged parents to read to their children. Her grandsons gave swimming lessons.

Dr. Sherry Dickstein and her husband, Dr. Kurt Lauenstein of Greensboro, NC, along with their medical colleagues Dr. Steve Daub and Kit Mock put on a two-day medical clinic and CPR training for Taktse teachers and staff. Sherry also taught knitting, with donated yarns and knitting needles. Kurt taught a history class and played the cello at the Taktse Autumn Collage.



## Marion Institute



Michael Baldwin of the Marion Institute, our 501(c)(3) sponsor, has been a generous supporter of Taktse, and has visited our campus in Sikkim several times. His staff at Marion have provided useful advice and encouragement, and helped us reach out to supporters.



## Bioneers by the Bay



Taktse volunteers manned a table complete with a colorful banner, bookmarks and slideshow for three full days at Bioneers by the Bay, an environmental convention in New Bedford sponsored by the Marion Institute. Their efforts stimulated a great deal of interest in Taktse among the 2,000 attendees, underscoring the connection between education and the environment.

## Hosting Taktse Teachers in America

Many volunteers helped accommodate visiting Taktse teachers during their stays in America, making them feel welcome. Laila Goodman, Dean of Students at Gann Academy, facilitated a week of interaction and observation at Gann, personally picking up the teachers and dropping them off every day.



Jennifer Ford, principal of Cambridgeport School, arranged for the teachers to see the best teaching practices in Cambridge, and arranged for Taktse's principal Pintso Denjongpa to attend a principal's forum. Tina Blythe, a professor at the Harvard School of Education, took the teachers to a workshop on effective teaching at Harvard. Sheila McBroom provided tuition for Taktse teachers to attend Fountas-Pinnell education workshops. Jan Plourde arranged for the teachers to attend a workshop in Cambridge on integrating technology and education. Jan and Lorenzo Baker, Emily Cherniack, Salley Knight, Harriet Kaufman, Vivian Kurz, Sherab and Tsering Norpa, Sharlene and Takashi Oyagi, Tsewang Tungkhar, the Cambridge Coop, and others provided visiting Taktse teachers with accommodations, transportation, meals and friendship.



Bank Street School for Children, Friends Seminary, and Bronx Preparatory Charter School in New York; Gould Academy and Crescent Park Elementary School in Bethel, ME; Cambridgeport School, Martin Luther King School, and Peabody School in Cambridge, MA; City on a Hill Charter School in Boston; Atrium School in Watertown, MA; Acton Barn School in Acton, MA; Waring School in Beverly, MA; and Sant Bani School in Sanbornton, NH kindly welcomed and engaged visiting Taktse teachers.



## Waring School Supports an Alumnus



In addition to welcoming Taktse teachers to observe classes, Waring School Headmaster Peter Smick also took the time to discuss the inner operations of a small school with his former student, Pintso Denjongpa, now principal of Taktse School. Inspired by the difference Waring made in his own life, Pintso has implemented certain aspects of Waring's unique culture at Taktse, including sketching during field trips and older students teaching younger ones.

Two years ago Waring teacher Jim Watras journeyed to Taktse. He taught poetry and introduced Taktse teachers to the educational philosophy of Parker Palmer. Jim hopes to lead a student exchange between Waring and Taktse, so Waring students can learn about Himalayan culture and problems of developing countries, and Taktse students can learn about American culture, and problems the U.S. faces.



## Writer and Artist Visit Taktse

Renowned children's book author Anushka Ravishankar travelled to Taktse from her home in Chennai and spent a week giving writing workshops for our students and teachers. When teachers mentioned to Ms. Ravishankar that they wished there were picture books featuring Himalayan kids, she encouraged us all to write our own.



Serendipitously, Kyujin Lee, artist and art teacher at St. Patrick's School in Washington, D.C. arrived at our small guest house in Chanbari at the same time that Ms.

Ravishankar was visiting! Ms. Lee taught our students and teachers new ways to look at art, and use five elements of art to create their own. Everyone noticed a huge difference in our students' paintings after her visit.

Hopefully, the two will come again, and some children's books set in Sikkim will result!

## Fine Schools in India Welcome Taktse

Many schools in India have generously hosted our teachers, principal and board. The principals and teachers of these fine schools have given us crucial support by sharing their knowledge and the wisdom of their own experience, as we set down roots. They include The Cambridge School in Kolkata, Shri Ram School and Vidya Sanskar School in New Delhi, and the Oasis International School, Mallya Aditi International School, TISB, and Vidyashilp Academy in Bangalore. Closer to home, Himali Boarding School in Darjeeling and Delhi Public School in Siliguri have hosted our principal and board.



## Friends in New Delhi

Each year people step forward to make our November trip to the Bookaroo Literary Festival in New Delhi an even more rewarding trip. This year, friends at Bookaroo, Google India, Scholastic Books and CNN India opened up new worlds for our students to explore. Their enthusiasm for Taktse and their generous gifts of time have made these trips a huge success!

## Facebook



Aka Denjongpa set up a Facebook Cause Page and a Fan Page for Taktse. To date, over \$1,750 has been donated to Taktse through Facebook. Aka inspired his cousins to contribute to Taktse, and even asked friends and relatives to donate to Taktse in lieu of giving him birthday gifts.



## Sponsorships and Scholarships

Helen Lauenstein sponsored Taktse teachers to come to the US. Louisa Heyward purchased tickets for visiting Taktse teachers to see the Lion King on Broadway, and Sherry Dickstein arranged for the teachers to go backstage. Kirk Siegel gave the teachers their first opportunity to try cross country skiing. These generous gestures have greatly enriched our teachers' lives.

Louisa Heyward also sponsored Marilyn Lee-Tom, our past Capital Campaign Director, on a fundraising assignment to Taiwan, Thailand and Sikkim. Marilyn generously donated half her salary to Taktse.

Celene Lyon and Aka Denjongpa have pledged to help pay for scholarship students to attend Taktse School.

## Please Send Us Your Stories!

In this newsletter we have thanked many people for their extraordinary generosity in supporting and contributing to Taktse, but there are so many more of you whom we have not mentioned, and who definitely deserve recognition. Please write us with your stories so that we can include you in our upcoming newsletters. Please send your stories, photos and corrections to [lauenstein@comcast.net](mailto:lauenstein@comcast.net).





**The Taktse Board of Directors, faculty, staff and students are extremely grateful to the following donors for their generous support of our school over the past year.**

**\$10,000 and up**

Margie and Michael Baldwin  
Helen and Milt Lauenstein  
Russell Morrison

**\$5,000 to \$9,999**

Nancy Bonne  
First Parish Church in Beverly  
Louisa Heyward  
Ann and Dan Lasman  
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Celene and Geof Lyon  
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**\$10 to \$99**

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