Over the past 42 years, the Tibetan Aid Project has helped print, ship and give away over 3 million Tibetan-language books to Tibetan refugees throughout Asia. This amazing gift, one of the largest of its kind in history, includes essential texts for carrying on the Tibetan tradition, including works on philosophy, psychology, medicine, art and poetry. It is important that these texts reach Tibetans in time so their elders can transmit their deeper, subtler meanings to the younger generation. As these vital stocks are being replenished, the Tibetan Aid Project and its affiliated organizations are broadening the scope of the printing and distribution project to include other important works.

The 2012 shipment will include the collected works of great Tibetan masters who were part of the Ri-mey Movement, the great flowering of Tibetan philosophical thought and practice in the last century. One of these masters is the visionary Dudjom Rinpoche, the first head of the Nyingma school of Buddhism in exile. Dudjom Rinpoche worked closely with the present Dalai Lama to preserve Tibetan culture and wisdom after the Chinese occupation. He traveled and taught widely, always encouraging the Tibetan people, especially the younger generation, to keep their spiritual traditions alive despite the difficulties and obstacles they endured and the instability and uncertainty of their situation.

Dudjom Rinpoche was highly respected and admired for his vast knowledge of many subjects, including history, philosophy and medicine, and for his lucid and beautiful writing style. The 2012 shipment will include his collected works, composed of 25 volumes. These include a comprehensive history of the Nyingma school and commentaries on ethics and morality. These works will enrich curricula and libraries throughout the Himalayan region, and bring the inspiring voice of Dudjom Rinpoche back to the Tibetan people.

The books donated by the Tibetan Aid Project and its sister organizations not only make it possible for students to receive essential teachings, but also promote literacy among all segments of the Tibetan-in-exile population. Libraries in the farthest reaches of the Himalayas are stocked abundantly with the books we have given away, touching thousands of lives. Women are especially benefiting from this influx of books. Before, they had no access to the rare, fragile volumes that contained the most basic teachings. Now, they can study an unprecedented number and variety of books. For the first time, they have the opportunity to pursue advanced degrees.

None of this would be possible without the support of the Tibetan Aid Project’s donors. Small or large, every contribution makes a difference in the Tibetan people’s lives. The generous hearts of our supporters have helped spark a renaissance of literacy among Tibetans and helped ensure that their beautiful wisdom tradition can continue, for the benefit of the Tibetan people and all humanity.

“Whoever we are, we need to have a good heart, sincere and without deceit.”

--Dudjom Rinpoche
Clinical social worker and Wheel of Dharma Legacy member Emily Lewis says that what she learned at the Nyingma Institute more than 35 years ago changed her life. She adds quickly: “It continues to do so.”

Emily, an enthusiastic reader, walker and world traveler, recently returned from three months of volunteer work at a psychiatric unit in Thimphu, capital of the Kingdom of Bhutan. Born and reared in Waynesboro, Virginia, she came home to her native state after 40 years to be near her 93-year-old mother. The grandmother of seven said her study at the Institute with Rinpoche and his senior students in the early 1980’s gave her a “precise, clear foundation for living in a meaningful way,” both for herself and for others.

“The teachings showed me how to pierce through anger, depression and tightness,” she says. “I learned to go from a contracted place into a more open, liberated and joyful place, a place of more clarity, relaxation, generosity and understanding.”

Emily considers herself still a student of Tibetan Buddhism, and she is happy that she can support other students through her estate plan. “I made TAP a beneficiary of my living trust some years ago. We were doing an estate plan and including TAP seemed completely natural.”

She wants her bequest to support providing sacred Tibetan texts to as many people as possible and to encourage master-student relationships. “The transmission of the teachings can’t be done with words alone,” she states.

Of her TAP bequest she says, “We all hope to leave something valuable behind when we depart this world—some evidence that our lives have been beneficial. Leaving money to help TAP produce more books and support more study and practice will be my way of continuing to enrich the world after I’m gone.”

Entering its 11th year, Tibetan Aid Project’s annual fundraising gala Taste & Tribute San Francisco is eagerly anticipated by many as a night of amazing food, sparkling company and exciting auctions. Taste & Tribute notably features 22 of the Bay Area’s most celebrated chefs, who work tableside in paired teams to create gourmet dinners you can’t find anywhere else. Chef Gerald Hirigoyen, owner of the well-known San Francisco restaurants Piperade and Bocadillos, has been participating in Taste & Tribute since the beginning.

Chef Hirigoyen was selected as one of “Food & Wine Magazine’s Best New Chefs in America” in 2006 and is the only person to be named “Chef of the Year” twice by San Francisco Magazine, in 1995 and in 2003. Bon Appetit, Gourmet and The New York Times have all written glowing features about him.

Chef Hirigoyen learned about Tibetan Aid Project from his friend Chef Laurent Manrique, the acclaimed chef whose inspired initiative led to the creation of Taste & Tribute. “When you know about the Tibetan situation, it is hard not to do something about it,” Chef Hirigoyen says. A native of the Basque region in France, he finds a parallel between the Tibetan plight and the oppression of the Basque people, and feels drawn to TAP because he wants to “help another oppressed people.” Chef Hirigoyen enjoys Taste & Tribute “because it clearly reflects the Tibetan situation.” Using his talent, he hopes to continue to raise awareness for the Tibetan people and culture.

For ways to join the Wheel of Dharma Legacy Circle, contact Judy Rasmussen at 510-848-4238 or judyr@tibetanaidproject.org.
From September 30th to October 2nd, 2011, the Tibetan Aid Project will be holding the second annual Healing, Mindfulness & Compassion retreat at the Ratna Ling Retreat Center, nestled in the breathtaking redwood forests of Sonoma County. In this inspiring locale, Healing, Mindfulness & Compassion will welcome healthcare practitioners of all disciplines to explore a more holistic approach to healing, with a focus on increased understanding of provider-patient relationships. Participants will learn Tibetan healing techniques and discuss integrating Tibetan and Western medical perspectives.

Encouraged by the great success of the first retreat held last October, TAP is excited to be preparing for the second retreat. Dr. Ellen Barnett and Dr. Bob Dozor, longtime supporters of TAP and the key organizers of this project, are eager to explain the importance of a more integrated and provider-patient focused approach to medicine.

Dr. Dozor is founder of Integrative Medical Clinic Santa Rosa and has practiced family medicine for over 25 years. “Medicine in the United States is predominantly ‘reductionistic,’” he says. “It employs the scientific principle of reducing biological phenomenon to molecular chemistry. While this approach has been a powerful tool for fighting some illness, in general it neglects what is probably the most important aspect of treating patients -- healing. ‘Healing’ restores irreducible humanity to the equation.” Dr. Dozor will lead a discussion and give a presentation on integrative medicine at the retreat.

Dr. Barnett is Associate Clinical Professor of the UCSF Department of Family and Community Medicine, a practitioner of Family Medicine at Integrative Medical Clinic and a credentialed Balint leader. Dr. Barnett will be leading sessions on Balint, a case-presentation method that explores the complex factors in provider-patient relationships.

Balint sessions were warmly received at last year’s retreat. “Several practitioners commented on their experience in the Balint groups,” says Dr. Barnett. “Everyone struggles with similar issues in caring for patients and clients, and participants found benefit in taking some time to explore the issues of the relationships. It was a time to reflect on their own self care and how to bring this to their practices.”

Dr. Barnett & Dr. Dozor’s Advice for Keeping Healthy

When you notice stress... stop and take a slow cleansing breath.

Eat your veggies, shake your booty, get over it! And don’t smoke.

Eating fruits and vegetables, exercising and working on negative self-stereotyping are the most important things we can do for ourselves to bring about health and wellbeing.

To learn more or purchase tickets, visit tibetanaidproject.org/news-events/events
Prayer Flags, Malas & Book Bags

Tibetan Aid Project’s online store offers items inspired by traditional Tibetan practices. These items reflect the philosophy and mindset of the Tibetan culture, a culture based on valuing and cultivating wisdom and compassion above all else.

Also known as prayer beads, malas are used for counting mantras. A mala calms the body and mind, deepening meditative concentration. In Sanskrit, mala means “garland from above” or “heavenly garland.” We offer malas in rose quartz, carnelian and mother-of-pearl.

Prayer flags are used to promote peace, compassion, strength and wisdom. They are believed to bring happiness and good health for all who hang the flags and also for their families, loved ones and neighbors. When the wind passes over the flags, they transmit blessings and healing energy into the world. Our online store offers strings of small flags as well as special large flags.

Tibetans treat their sacred texts with high respect. To demonstrate this respect, they wrap their books in protective cloth. Our book bags are hand-sewn from satin and available in a variety of colors, such as bamboo gold, butterfly red, paisley gold and Tara green.

Visit our store at tibetanaidproject.org/store!

Tides of Change

Tibetan Aid Project welcomes its new executive director, Judy Rasmussen, who has been involved with the project and its affiliated organizations for 42 years. Rosalyn White, who has directed Tibetan Aid Project for 6 years, will be leaving her position to begin directing a sacred art project.

“When I was in India in 1995,” Rosalyn recalls, “I happened to see some Tibetans working at the side of the road breaking rocks into gravel with mallets for the paving of the road. It was heartbreaking to see the type of labor they had to do in order to survive. Ever since then I have really wanted to make a difference in their lives.” She is deeply grateful to all TAP donors for helping to improve the lives of the Tibetan people.

Judy Rasmussen was involved with Tibetan Aid Project in its early days as executive secretary, at a time when Tarthang Tulku directed the project personally. Judy plans to get to know our donors throughout the country and discover what inspires them about the Tibetan people and culture. She also looks forward to rejuvenating friendships and rekindling enthusiasm among our longtime supporters. One idea she is excited to implement is having our friends host parties at their homes, where she will give presentations about Tibetan culture. It will be a great opportunity for our supporters to share their enthusiasm about Tibet with their friends, learn more about the Tibetan wisdom traditions and possibly raise additional funds for our work.

“It is heartwarming to see that despite the weak economy,” Judy says, “the spirit of generosity that people show when they realize how great the need is in Tibetan communities is an inspiring trait. We are deeply grateful for it.” Regarding what direction TAP will take in the future, she is open: “Whatever we can do to help the Tibetan people, we will do.”

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