



COVID-19 Grants Awarded to 31 Organizations by Frederick P. Lenz Foundation for American Buddhism

BY ROD MEADE SPERRY | MARCH 10, 2021



The Frederick P. Lenz Foundation for American Buddhism announced Tuesday that it has committed to 31 grants totaling \$200,000 for groups in its grantee network impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic. The grants provide operational assistance to ensure continuity during this time of crisis.



Norman Oberstein, Lenz Foundation CEO, states: “Although we had initially planned a national conference in 2021, as the pandemic grew, we decided to move the conference to 2022, and instead make grants in 2021 to help organizations weather the organizational storm of COVID-19. Our grantee organizations with retreat centers or large physical

meeting rooms, along with meditation and mindfulness groups — all have suffered losses and face economic challenges. We feel fortunate we can help.”

David Macek, Development, Inward Bound Mindfulness Education (iBme) states, “The Covid-19 grant from the Lenz Foundation allows us to keep offering meaningful programs for teens. iBme’s organizational system and financial model have been extremely challenged, which meant quickly transitioning our signature residential retreats to an online format, adding new offerings, and increasing our focus on teens’ families.”

Rocky Mountain Ecodharma Retreat Center executive director Johann Robbins explains, “Almost all of our retreats were cancelled due to Covid-19. Normally our entire operating budget comes from our operating surplus. It is very difficult to ask donors to support both operating losses from Covid and our capital fundraising needs. The grant from the Lenz Foundation is helping to fill the gap.”

Roy Remer, Executive Director of the Zen Caregiving Project notes, “Our volunteers normally visit palliative care patients in-person. The organization has pivoted to allow volunteers to connect with patients virtually, at a time when patients feel particularly isolated, and to ensure our volunteers remain engaged via regular online community meetings and retreats. These changes, however, have been against a backdrop of reduced organizational income, ZCP staff reductions in hours, and a very fluid public health context. The Covid-19 grant from the Lenz Foundation helps us bridge this difficult period of transition.”

The conference formerly scheduled for 2021, “The Future of American Buddhism,” is now planned for June 2-5, 2022 at the Garrison Institute in New York and will be staged by the Lenz Foundation and Naropa University in several phases. From January to May, 2022, online webinars and communities of interest will precede the conference and provide timely, relevant content to the physical gathering in June. Main topics are likely to include: Buddhist responses to: Climate Change, Women’s Leadership and Gender Issues, Racism and White Privilege, Tradition and Innovation, Digital Dharma and New Forms of Community, and Socially Engaged Activism.

The Lenz Foundation “seeks additional sponsors to help finance the conference by contributing to its funding, and to provide their own grants to conference participants with worthy projects that grow out of this event.”