

For the Love of Life

The most precious gift we can offer others is our presence. When mindfulness embraces those we love, they will bloom like flowers.

—THICH NAT HANH

For the Love of Life

THEOSOPHICAL ORDER OF SERVICE, USA

Editor Ananya S. Rajan

Designer Lindsay Freeman

OFFICERS AND BOARD OF DIRECTORS

President Nancy Secrest

Secretary Betty Bland

Treasurer Jeanne Proulx

Board Members Tim Boyd
Ananya S. Rajan
Kathy Gann
Jon Knebel

**Honorary
Board Members** Joseph Gullo
Miles Standish

Contact information for the Theosophical
Order of Service in the United States:

Mailing address Theosophical Order
of Service
P. O. Box 660
Warrenville, IL 60555

Phone 630-668-1571 ext. 332

E-mail theoservice@gmail.com

Website www.theoservice.org

**To leave a name for the Healing Network:
800-838-2197.**

If you are interested in becoming a healing
practitioner and need a copy of our ritual,
please email us at theoservice@gmail.com.

For more information about the TOS around
the world, go to [http://international.
theoservice.org/](http://international.theoservice.org/)

Disclaimer

Articles and material in this publication do not necessarily
reflect the opinions of the Theosophical Order of Service or
the editor of this journal. An effort is made at all times to
give a fair consideration of views.

—The Editor

Contents

Winter 2012-2013

- 2 **From the President's Desk**
BY NANCY SECREST
- 3 **A Note about Locks of Love**
BY LAUREN BOOTHBY
- 4 **The Look of Service as
a Theosophist**
BY ROBYN LAWRENCE FINSETH
- 7 **To Listen is to Serve**
BY ANANYA S. RAJAN
- 9 **A Reflection**
BY NATASHA CLARK
- 11 **Our Thoughts to Serve Others**
BY ANANYA S. RAJAN
- 13 **Healing Network Notice**
- 14 **Book Review**
*1,000 MITZVAHS: How Small
Acts of Kindness Can Heal,
Inspire and Change Your Life*
BY LINDA COHEN
- 15 **TOS Conference**
- 16 **Nursing Scholarship Award**
BY NATASHA FERGUSON
- 17 **Chusul Update**
BY PEGGY DAY

From the President's Desk BY NANCY SECREST

Someone recently asked me “what are the goals and purpose of the Theosophical Order of Service in the USA?” It seems a simple question. I could quote our motto: “A union of those who love for the service of all who suffer.” I could quote our mission: “To promote reverence for all life, universal brotherhood, and world peace through service activity.” Mottos and mission statements are of necessity designed to get to the heart of the matter — the ultimate goal. We all know that. Once we have decided upon a mission, however, the real question becomes *how* do we do that? The TOS has been struggling with this question ever since its inception. Think about it. “To promote reverence for ALL life, UNIVERSAL brotherhood, and WORLD peace...” The concept is daunting. In fact, for many of us, the idea of actually completing such grand goals is paralyzing, so much so that we don’t even try because we don’t know where to begin. But wait — we have not set for ourselves the task of accomplishing these grand goals, but rather, of “promoting” them. Whew ... that gives us a little breathing room. The word “promote” also suggests that we don’t have to accomplish all of this by ourselves. We can get help from others, we can help others, or we can draw attention to the efforts of others who are on a similar path and already have their “machinery” in place. And, that’s what we do.

The TOS-USA is a small organization with limited resources. We have a board of seven, plus two honorary, directors who live in six different states and meet twice a year. The decentralized national structure of the TOS-USA causes us to depend greatly on our communications: *For the Love of Life*, periodic newsletters, and our website, www.theoservice.org to keep in touch with you, share what is going on in the TOS, and let you know about the interesting and worthwhile endeavors of our and other organizations. We use these vehicles to promote our mission. Our decentralized structure makes it difficult to devise and maintain a specific, nationwide project. So then, how do we who are spread across this vast country accomplish our rather ambitious mission? Another saying — that we have all seen on bumper stickers — comes to mind: “Think Globally; Act Locally.” I love this bumper sticker. When our service projects are put into that context they become doable rather than daunting. And, that’s where you, our members, our most valuable resource, come in. For many years, individuals and local TSA/TOS lodges and study centers have carried out service projects and/or searched



TOS PRESIDENT
NANCY SECREST

for ideas for service projects. A few years ago we decided to create TOS liaisons in order to give a more definitive connection between local TOS groups, the TOS Board of Directors and each other.

Consequently, a number of our TSA lodges appointed members as TOS liaisons. These folks communicate with Kathy Gann, the TOS Board’s liaison coordinator,

sharing with her their accomplished projects as well as ideas for group service projects. Among other things, Kathy produces a periodic e-newsletter that is sent to the liaisons or the group leader of those TSA groups that have not yet named a specific TOS liaison. The liaison or group leader can then share the e-newsletter with their members perhaps getting ideas for service projects that they themselves can also carry out in their localities. Seed money to get your project started is available. Seed money application forms can be found at www.theoservice.org.

Sometimes though, we do get the opportunity to participate in a more far-reaching event. This coming July immediately following the TSA’s Summer National Convention (SNC), the TSA and the TOS-USA will host the Third TOS International Conference at Olcott, the TSA’s National Headquarters in Wheaton, Illinois. Here we will have the unique opportunity to lend our ideas, our voices and our service on a global level. All active TOS members are invited to this working conference where we will discuss and plan “The TOS into the Future.” Information on the conference and application forms are available on our website at www.theoservice.org.

Finally, I would like to invite you to join me in a personal service project. Shortly after Betty Bland left the presidency of the Theosophical Society in America, she cut her hair and donated it to Locks of Love, a non-profit that makes wigs for children who have lost their hair. It occurred to me that it would be an easy and creative service project to simply allow your hair to grow. Then, when its length is adequate for wig making, have it cut and sent to Locks of Love. A service project can’t get much easier than that! You can find

CONTINUED ON PAGE 3

the exact specifications of how and where to send your hair on the Locks of Love website www.locksoflove.org. Basically, 10 inches of hair is needed, from tip to tip. (See the attached guidelines from locksoflove.org.) Will you join me in this project to create beautiful wigs for children?

GUIDELINES FOR ACCEPTABLE DONATIONS

- Hair that is colored or permed is acceptable.
- Hair cut years ago is usable if it has been stored in a ponytail or braid.
- Hair that has been bleached (usually this refers to highlighted hair) is not usable. If unsure, ask your stylist. We are not able to accept bleached hair due to a chemical reaction that occurs

during the manufacturing process. ***If the hair was bleached years ago and has completely grown out it is fine to donate.*

- Hair that is swept off of the floor is not usable because it is not bundled in a ponytail or braid.
- Hair that is shaved off and not in a ponytail or braid is not usable. If shaving your head, first divide hair into multiple ponytails to cut off.
- We cannot accept dreadlocks. Our manufacturer is not able to use them in our children's hairpieces. We also cannot accept wigs, falls, hair extensions or synthetic hair.
- Layered hair is acceptable if the longest layer is 10 inches.
- Layered hair may be divided into multiple ponytails.
- Curly hair may be pulled straight to measure the minimum 10 inches.

- 10 inches measured tip to tip is the minimum length needed for a hairpiece.

PLEASE NOTE:

- Shorter hair will be separated from the ponytails and sold to offset the manufacturing costs. Although the shorter hair cannot be used in the hairpieces, it still greatly helps to reduce costs.
- Gray hair will be accepted and sold to offset the manufacturing costs.
- Colored hair is not usable if it is colored over bleached hair.

Because Locks of Love creates custom hairpieces for each child, we are unable to accept donations of wigs, falls, hair extensions or synthetic hair. **TOS**

A NOTE ABOUT LOCKS OF LOVE

from Lauren Boothby, Communications Director

Locks of Love is a non-profit organization that provides the highest quality hair prosthetics to financially disadvantaged children suffering from medical hair loss. Most Locks of Love recipients have lost their hair due to a medical condition known as alopecia, which has no known cause or cure. Other recipients have been victim to severe burns, endured radiation treatment to the brain stem as a treatment for cancer, or suffer from any number of skin disorders that cause permanent hair loss. The prosthetics give the recipients a sense of security which in turn allows them to get back their self-confidence and be kids again.

Something that you may not know is that we provide new hairpieces every 18 months to our recipients, up until the age of 21 years old. The hairpieces Locks of Love provides are custom-made for each child's head. The hairpiece forms a vacuum seal, like a suction cup, and doesn't require adhesives. Only the wearer of the hairpiece may remove it, by breaking the vacuum seal at the temples. Children can swim, shower and do gymnastics — in short, they can be kids again. Each hairpiece is made from real human hair and arrives long, so the children may style it to their liking. **TOS**



The Look of Service as a Theosophist

ROBYN LAWRENCE FINSETH

Being of service has been part of my youth, my present, and certainly my future. I have always looked at humanity as either givers or receivers. In one lifetime we may be in need of others caring for us, while in another lifetime we may need to be the one doing the caretaking for others. During one's lifetime you can, and often are, both a giver and a receiver. Both are important aspects of the same idea; it is absolutely vital to understand the difference.

Giving is just that, giving of free will; the operative words here are *free will*. It is an act which means, by its very nature, the intent is one of help. This help certainly can be in the form a physical act, but is not limited to this alone. Physical giving is usually fairly easy; opening a door, moving a chair, helping someone with a chore, or simply doing chores another cannot accomplish. Emotional giving of free will is the unconditional



ROBYN LAWRENCE FINSETH

acceptance of another in front of you. This is not so easy. Unconditional is the key word here; it is something we all seek, however do not necessarily give. I have noticed that when someone has trouble with unconditional acceptance of others, it really is trouble with unconditional acceptance of self. It is easy to place "blame" on something outside of self, easy to rearrange thoughts that support why this or that is true. Self-acceptance is really self-love. If you find that you are quick to criticize, ask yourself the question, "why?" Keep asking why until you can find the seed or root to this quality. I have said many times that if criticism really worked, we would not have a single psychologically troubled person in the world. Self-loathing and psychologically troubled thoughts often go hand in hand.

Giving freely does not include "strings attached." We have all been at the receiving end of a gift that really isn't a gift at all, but rather manipulation for another result. Like getting the gift of money from a person only to be spent on what the person wants you to spend it on. Not a gift, really, not in the true sense of the word. This doesn't mean the financial

gifts given so generously to various institutions, earmarked for endowments aren't useful, they are actually crucial to the institution itself. We often are asked for financial help for a variety of causes with the intent clearly stated. That is a different matter. I mean freely given gifts with unexpected returns. This is gift giving as another form of service. Some do not have time to donate, however financially are able to help others in need. Again, freely given is the crucial point.

Receiving is also self-explanatory. But what about receiving with an open heart? When receiving is "coached" with the idea that we "deserve" something, this becomes a category that is not from the heart, but from that selfish part of ego. Just because we "think" we deserve some service doesn't always mean that we do. When we find ourselves in this situation, it's important stop, take a breath, and reevaluate our motive. Receiving freely is often harder than giving. We often equate receiving with being power-less, however this is simply not true. There is power in both positions; it is simply up to the individuals involved to understand the intent of the act. When looking clairvoyantly at two people who are in the act of unconditional giving and receiving, it is quite magical. The giver is filled with a lovely pink hue directed at the receiver, who is also filled with a combination of pink and green. The connection is one of flowing from person to person, with the combined auras greater than the individual. It is a humble feeling just watching such an act.

Service is an act; an intent of spirit. If we serve with the intent to be of service, the look is different etherically than when we are of service because we "have to," and are working as hard as we can to "finish the task." There is a huge difference not only in the look, but in the feel. We have all been in a situation when we are reluctant, to "wait on" an individual and yet we find ourselves in this position. The look can be one of selfishness, a less than desirable look. The true intent of service comes from love, a beautiful look. In C. W. Leadbeater's book *Man Visible and Invisible*, there is a "Signification of the Colors" that shows the muddy color of selfishness in a person's aura. When feelings of deceitfulness, or even jealousy are added the muddy color is enhanced with colors of anger. This muddy color is actually throughout the aura when a person is feeling "put upon" and not wanting to do what is front and center. We all have times when we

have to muddle through a task. My suggestion is to first be honest with self. When we are less than honest with self we get into the resentment of the task. Without a doubt there are moments in time when we just feel tired and don't want one more thing to do. This really is okay, but it's important to acknowledge it, understand the basis of our avoidance, understand what is being asked, and why we are feeling the way we do. If it is something that cannot be avoided, then find some aspect of the task that is rewarding, if only for a job well done. Honesty of spirit is also necessary when we realize we never want to be asked to do something. In such a case, an evaluation of self from a non-judgmental position is needed.

Service is a state of mind. It is an act that becomes part of living in the world. It is to feel one's higher self when you are present in a room, a willingness to change the tide of emotion.

I was born and raised a Theosophist which has helped me in this lifetime to feel normal in a world that is often confusing. It was more confusing in my youth as I could see the true intent of the person which was sometimes in conflict with what they were saying. I am sure everyone has had the experience of knowing someone was either not being truthful, or pretending to be something they were not. My mother helped me understand the difference. I learned early that my mother's words of "to thine own self be true" held a great importance regarding intent. This brings us back to the idea of self-honesty; a crucial aspect of any lifetime. There are times when tact is important in working with others, for instance not telling another a feeling you are having which could detrimentally affect your relationship. If, however, this feeling is getting in the way of the relationship, then it is important to own up to your part in the difficulty. Difficulties are never one-sided, even when they feel like they might be. It takes two to create conflict.

We cannot pretend to be of service; we either are or we aren't. Service is the act of helping another, whether it is opening a door, making a meal or listening compassionately to someone's problems. Empathy can be a strong act of service and helps in understanding another's questions, concerns or confusions. The key to service is to appreciate humanity and have empathy for another's struggles. We all know the "good neighbor" who is always there, ready to lift

a hand to another, always having a smile on his/her face, not afraid to step in and get dirty. However, we also know the "good neighbor" who is really false and only interested in being nosy about activities. It is important to acknowledge the difference. Appreciating humanity validates that we are all on a path of incarnation and that we all have either been in another's shoes or will be either this time or perhaps in another lifetime. As Theosophists we understand our role in this evolutionary process and take part in helping others with the idea of "the good of the whole." We understand the great importance of acknowledging self and the needs of self, but not to the exclusion of others. There are always important tasks that need to be addressed for self, however there is a fine line behind being of help and overindulging. The overindulgent person looks much like the selfish aura with a muddy quality about the whole being, lacking a clarity of color, regardless of momentary commitment. We are a summation of what we think and act, and if we think we are fooling others, it is really our self we are attempting to fool. Although the vast majority of humanity does not "see" the aura, it does not mean we cannot sense it. We always sense the truth of the action.

Acts of service can be done by anyone. There are people who have such difficulty with humanity, that they avoid contact with others as much as possible. They actually do not like human contact and avoid even eye contact. Such people can be of service and are often in service to other things such as animals and plants. I have known many people who have had great difficulty communicating with their fellow humans, but are in full service to the animal kingdom. This is an instance where complete truth of self is answering the act of service within the capacity needed. If we accept that we are incarnating together, then we also need those souls who are willing to help our mother earth and our animal friends. It takes all of us to move forward. I always look at other's lives as a reflection of my own. And I wonder, did I have difficulty with this same issue in a past incarnation, or is it yet to come?

In our lifetimes we are sometimes in need of another's help. Personally, I have been on the receiving end of help from others who truly had not only my best interest in mind but also my dear sweet husband, Gary. When we went through a very serious health crisis in 2002, I could never have continued my practice, accomplished the feat of living if it were not for a very active family and close friends. It truly took a village to bring Gary back to the wonderful person he is today. Prior to this episode, I found it difficult to ask for help from others, but when facing something that was truly beyond what I

CONTINUED ON PAGE 6

The Look of Service

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 5

could do alone, the more I asked, the easier it became. So service happens both ways. As a receiver of such generosity I can now understand the importance of allowing others the gift of giving. Gifts are always in many forms, and if we are so self-absorbed that we cannot see how receiving a gift is as important as giving, then we are missing out on one of the many pleasures of life.

Yet, we do come across those who have been on the receiving end of gifts from everyone. They are a bottomless pit of gifts, not only with hands out, but complaining that they aren't getting their fair share. And, these people find those poor souls who are givers out of guilt and therefore give away more than they have to give. So, the cycle continues sometimes through several lifetimes. One emotion and duty feeding the other; not in the magical connection as I mentioned previously. This type of connection looks rather muddy with the darker colors of greed and guilt. So, who breaks this cycle? Usually the first to break away is the giver who finally realizes that it is not free will taking place, but guilt and finally puts an end to the cycle. The abusive receiver, continues to look for others to fill this insatiable need until finally either the pattern is reversed, or something wakes up this poor soul. Hard to say as we have all known people who are in both of these categories and we may have experienced a direct link ourselves, at some point in time.

Setting boundaries can become difficult, especially in cases of full-time care givers. These are people who are responsible for another's life, completely. An easy example is the new mother or father who has a lovely beautiful child they created. The child is one hundred percent dependent on someone caring for him or her. As a young mother I cherish my memories of my infant son, but I also cherish his own development and growth. Quite honestly, I couldn't wait for him to mature into the wonderful adult he is today. During my pregnancy I had these wonderful conversations with him, getting to know him as an individual, not simply as a child. Wonderful memories that also helped form our bond from an early stage. As a full time care giver, I also had to learn that my time was vital to my own self growth. If I did not take valuable time for me, I would not be as effective as I might be, and again as a young mother I had to deal with the guilt of leaving my baby. My own mother was wonderful in helping me understand that not only was it necessary for both of us (my son and myself), but it was also important to allow others the privilege of helping out the full-time parent. The

same principles apply for a full-time giver when caring for an injured loved one or a loved one at the end of life. You are not an effective care giver if you do not take the necessary time for self. You need to always fill self first with unconditional love and acceptance, this then flows into the work that is before you.

Look at meditation in relationship to service, either directly as in group meditation or in the etheric field while we are transcendent, we are using our connections to strengthen the concept of universal consciousness. If we accept that we are using this life as a chance to further our consciousness, we are also accepting our important role in helping others attain the same feat. Meditation is our tool we have perfected and use to connect with not only our higher selves or consciousness, but also the universal brotherhood. It is at this level we can be actively involved in service each and every day. When we are of service, it is this wonderful act that helps us find a center of gratitude; a form of happiness which is a reward in itself. When we are in this state we are not egocentric; not looking for tangible rewards for the act of service. A simple thank you is often reward enough. This egoless state is similar to the one we attain when we are in meditation, when we are one with our surroundings and universe.

Service is a state of mind. It isn't necessarily working in a soup kitchen, holding a door, helping a friend in grief. It is an act that becomes part of living in this world. It is the feel of one's higher self when you are present in a room, a willingness to help change the tide of emotion. I am sure you have been in a situation where you are in the presence of grief, and rather than turning from it, embrace it, thus helping change the course of the emotion. This is a very powerful service to us both individually and as a brotherhood.

I love being a Theosophist. When we are all together, we are in service to each other just by our very nature. We understand our importance in this incarnation and our impact on each other. We take responsibility for our moods, our thoughts, our actions. We understand that service is a gift, one we wish to share, but also one we give freely.

Dr. Robyn Lawrence Finseth is a practicing chiropractic physician in the state of Oregon. She was born into a Theosophical family, nurtured by Harry Van Gelder, Dora Kunz, and her Portland Lodge. She came into this life with the gift of sight, something not talked about openly during her youth. She uses her sensitivities in her life, her practice and teaching; understanding and accepting her role in this lifetime of being of service. She is grateful for the opportunities these sensitivities have afforded her now and in the future. TOS

Service takes on many forms in various fields with many different populations of people. The following two pieces were written as reflections about the work done for an organization to help those who suffer from depression and suicidal intentions. While this type of work can be stressful and emotionally draining, it is a great path for self-development and growth in compassionate understanding.

To Listen is to Serve BY ANANYA S. RAJAN

Part of the requirements for me to graduate from my Masters in Mental Health Counseling is to complete 600 hours at an internship site where I am exposed to mental health issues. I did not really have a place in mind when I was looking for a site. I actually thought I wanted to work in a domestic shelter and run a women's group. I had already designed a program for my practicum and had run a successful weekend group for women. I really enjoyed it and thought a repeat of it would be beneficial. The universe, however, had something else in mind.

While looking for an internship site, I got an email from a former classmate, Natasha Clark, who was promoting a site where she interned and was eventually hired. She was looking for interns and was persistent enough to keep sending emails out until someone responded. Other students in my program who were also looking for sites were getting nervous as more and more organizations have neither the time nor money to invest in interns. In actuality, this basic investment can harm an organization if not done. Interns provide fresh perspectives and energy thus increasing the lifeblood of an organization. Despite Natasha's emails, she was getting few responses. Chances are, it was because it was in suicide prevention.

I didn't intend on interning in crisis. At the time, my own life felt like a crisis as I was going through major transitions and just holding on. However, our program seems to lack the ability to help students find an internship site, so I set up an interview and went, feeling somewhat reluctant. Often when we don't want to do something, it is because the universe is about to change our lives forever, and it did. I fell in love. I fell in love with my potential supervisor and kindred spirit Mari Whittum who is the Clinical Director of Suicide Prevention Services of America (SPSA); I fell in love with the big old mansion that houses SPS, and I fell in love with my new family at SPSA.

I know this all sounds overly dramatic, but there is no other way to describe the feeling. I finally felt joyful after a year of feeling unsure of myself, my life, and the direction I was heading. I finally felt as though my feet were planted,



ANANYA S. RAJAN

that my path was steady, and the way was clear. But suicide? To be honest, I didn't even think about it while I was being interviewed. It didn't matter. With the loving atmosphere that surrounded me, I felt it would all be okay. Then I realized that in order to do this type of work, this

was the environment that needed to be provided. How could we possibly provide it to others if we didn't provide it to those who worked in the field? This insight was so powerful to me, because it is the crux of creating the reality we want in our lives. Part of SPSA's work is to be able to provide hope within individuals who can find none in their lives. The work is crucial in today's world and incorporates many of the spiritual tenants I've come to realize in my theosophical life. Sometimes it takes something outside of oneself to find the strength and joy hidden within.

My internship at SPSA started with ASIST, training specifically designed for suicide prevention and used worldwide. ASIST stands for Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training and it reframes suicide ideation from being something taboo to talk about to just another conversation. The mythical belief is that by talking about suicide with someone who is suicidal will push them to commit suicide. Studies have shown that this is not true no matter what the age of the individual. This is especially important as suicide is the third largest cause of death among teenagers. To be able to state out loud that one is thinking of taking their life

CONTINUED ON PAGE 8

To Listen is to Serve

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 7

becomes a relief for the individual who struggles with this thought. Our society has created so many myths around suicide—that a person will go to hell, that they are crazy, that they are selfish, and so on—that people who have such thoughts feel ashamed to discuss it. In reality, these myths are just myths, but they are one of the reasons that keep people from seeking help.

Suicide Prevention Services of America started in 1998 in Batavia, Illinois with the help of eight women who had lost a loved one to suicide. The eight “founding mothers,” as they are known, had started a support group in 1982 after a conference on suicide provided by a nearby college. The “survivors of suicide” group, or SOS, still meets today. SPSA works under the head of Stephanie Weber, executive director and a founding mother, who had lost her mother to suicide while she was in her thirties and raising a family of her own. SPSA is a service organization whose motto is “open minds, save lives and restore hope through prevention, intervention and post-

Signs of Depression

Depression isn't always easy to spot. Some people experience primarily behavioral changes, some mainly emotional changes, and still others mostly physical changes. Here are some warning signs that a person may be depressed:

- Persistently sad, anxious, irritable or empty mood
- Loss of interest in previously enjoyable activities
- Withdrawal from friends and family
- Trouble sleeping or sleeping too much
- Fatigue and decreased energy
- Significant change in appetite and/or weight
- Overreaction to criticisms
- Feeling unable to meet expectations
- Difficulty concentrating, remembering details, and making decisions
- Feelings of worthlessness, hopelessness or guilt
- Persistent physical symptoms such as headaches, digestive problems or chronic pain that do not respond to routine treatment
- Substance abuse problems
- Thoughts of suicide or suicide attempts

—www.ulifeline.org

intervention, using education, advocacy and collaboration” and this done through presentations at businesses, various organizations, schools and colleges. But the main work of SPSA is the hotline and this is the part of the service that I personally find is the essence of suicide prevention work.

SPSA runs a depression line as well as a lifeline that is part of the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline (NSPL) which runs all over the United States. The lifeline receives calls from various populations, even soldiers from abroad. While the lifeline is there for those contemplating suicide, a great number of calls are from those who just need someone to talk to. All the calls are confidential and hotline volunteers are trained to be “active listeners.” It is this active listening which is so crucial and needed in today’s world, because the art of listening is slowly being lost. Today, more than ever, people are rarely able to truly listen to another individual with full attention. We are often caught up in thoughts about what we need to do and where we need to be when we are with another person. With regard to the hotline, we are there to listen. Volunteers are instructed to put away their cell phones, their computers, and other forms of distractions when they come to volunteer. They are expected to be completely present when they are on the phones, which is at times difficult but fulfilling all the same. It eventually becomes a form of meditation. Many long-time volunteers say that the hotline is where they come to relax because for four hours there is nothing to do but be present for other individuals.

Listening is a form of service we can give to one another; one that is slowly becoming a rarity. To truly listen to another person allows us to communicate on an entirely different level. By actively listening, we can hear nuances in a person’s voice that often have a deeper meaning than what they are saying on the surface. By actively listening, rapport is built with the caller that allows the volunteer to ask about the change in tone, pitch, volume of the voice, that lets the caller know, “I am really listening to you.” As the calls can be anonymous and are confidential, callers often feel safe to explore the issue that is troubling them at the time.

To me, it is amazing how much can change in thirty minutes when one provides an outlet for another to express their deepest fears or worries. I am often shocked that only thirty minutes have passed and the issues which seemed so overwhelming at the start are now surmountable. The caller is more confident of facing their issues and feels more relaxed and somewhat rejuvenated. To hear someone say, “thank you so much for listening” means to me that we need to be doing it more often for one another. It is a simple act to do, but one that can change a person’s life. It might even save one. **TOS**

A Reflection

BY NATASHA CLARK

Ananya Rajan is a counselor intern at Suicide Prevention Services of America where I am currently employed. We met in a class that was part of a master's level program in clinical mental health counseling at Northern Illinois University. We speak together frequently when our time at the agency overlaps, and she recently asked me to write about the experiences I have had while working at SPSA.

I began volunteering with Suicide Prevention Services (SPS) in the spring of 2007. I had inquired several years earlier, after a moving presentation about suicide given by one of my professors, Pete Gutierrez. Dr. Gutierrez made a pressing, serious case for suicide intervention and he caught my attention. The idea that the issue of suicide merited research and an awareness campaign touched a place inside that I had ignored for many years. However, during my first inquiry



NATASHA CLARK

with Holly Cherry, SPS's coordinator of information and referral, I postponed training after recognizing that my marital turmoil was too absorbing and volunteer work of this nature needed a substantial amount of available inner strength.

Although I was psychologically stronger, when I returned to volunteer with SPS I was floundering with my direction in graduate work. As an undergraduate psychology major, I had worked on a research project that explored the Self-Determination Theory (SDT) of Deci and Ryan which explores human motivation and personality. (For more information visit www.selfdeterminationtheory.org.) My plans to continue that research were thwarted with a series of life events, including the birth of my daughter, my husband's job loss and deepening addiction, and three deaths in our family. Part-time graduate work in the school of education allowed me to inch along as a single mother, but it took the drive out of my career.

My first summer volunteering at SPS overlapped with my second semester in the counseling program. The ASIST (Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training) and listening-in on live calls reconnected me with my reasons for entering the helping profession. I felt invigorated; here I was, on the front line, speaking directly with



people ready to take their lives. As an additional bonus, I felt the power of simple engagement. In the counseling program I learned specific skills for active listening, reflection of feelings, and reflection of meaning. These skills were paralleled in my hotline volunteer work. The more I used Carl Rogers' Person-Centered strategies, which are taught both in the degree program and as basic communication for hotline work at SPS, the more I heard callers say they felt better. The more I listened to callers, the more I saw Deci and Ryan's theory unfold.

Seeking to be a school counselor — like the one I had relied on in my vacant, harrowing teenage years — I interned as a counselor in a rural Illinois high school. I instantly loved

CONTINUED ON PAGE 10

A Reflection

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 9

the teens I worked with. As an intern I was afforded the luxury of time for counseling. The professional counselors I observed did not have that time, and despite a wonderful year with them, I decided against pursuing employment in schools because of their restrictive and overburdened environment. Instead I wished to somehow provide what those in schools could not: a compassionate ear with an ability to brush aside the constraints of the fabricated world.

For my second internship, in clinical mental health counseling, I went straight to SPS. I was surprised to realize agency clinical director, Mari Wittum, and the other clinicians pursued counseling with the same approach as the SPS hotline work — with an emphasis on person-centeredness. Talking with people about ideas of suicide, about depression, about all types of struggles, I was struck by the importance of simply listening. SPS's executive director, Stephanie Weber, often reminds us in presentations that talking about suicide doesn't plant the idea in someone's head; if a person has been thinking about it, talking can free the person to let out what they've been holding in for a long time.

During this internship year, as I sat with teens, families, and adults, I witnessed the theories I had long studied unfold before my eyes. Carl Rogers postulated that with a few key ingredients, most especially "unconditional positive regard" from another, a person's own "self-actualization" will develop naturally from a seed within themselves. Deci and Ryan's Self-Determination Theory allows that a person has three basic

needs: autonomy, competence, and relatedness. Suicide is frequently a last attempt at asserting both autonomy and competence, when relatedness no longer holds fast.

How strange that talking about suicide, which my clients and the callers for whom I respond invariably do, allows for the development of self-determination. Yet the idea that each person has the capacity to take his or her own life is compelling. Those who are stuck in the grip of depression experience some relief by thinking they have at least one action with which to make a statement. Exploring the reasons a person has for wanting



1-800-273-TALK (8255)

to die can be an incredibly profound experience. My clients and callers express great relief and gratitude for having someone listen without judgment, without telling them there is something unhealthy about their thoughts. Rather, I often tell them "I'd probably feel the same way."

So I find myself employed now at Suicide Prevention Services of America. In addition to monitoring calls on the hotline and training new volunteers, I counsel clients as a Licensed Professional Counselor. As I listen to volunteers respond to callers and talk with them about their experiences, I am consistently amazed by the power

of interpersonal healing. Epiphanies happen every day. A caller talks about the pain of being ignored by a grown son, another sees nowhere to turn in financial disaster. Most often, callers and clients have multiple losses and a myriad of troubles. Such is the nature of life. Our most successful volunteers and counselors know this and are able to validate and empathize.

My work with SPS has caused me to appreciate the connection between my own life experience and my counseling profession. For the first time, I have allowed myself to recognize the strength I had developed through my own journey up from despair. My mother was severely depressed throughout my childhood and teens. She often told me of her elaborate plans for suicide and I lived in fear she would one day be successful. Among other troubles, I struggled with self-injury and a suicide attempt as a teen. So when people talk with me about wanting die, I can understand them. I know there are periods of time when life seems bleak. I also believe that from this contemplation of death comes great strength. For a person to know they can take their own life gives them power and an awareness of life's fragility.

I have come to feel privileged to work in this field, listening to people contemplate the most personal idea of all, the power of taking one's own life. Each call I answer on the hotline or client I sit with seems to be a gift from the universe. I have chosen a career that embodies my beliefs in serving humanity to the best of my ability. I don't believe I have answers for people, but I do think I can help people find their own meaning. And in my position, I can give people time, which is truly, and amazingly, a luxury these days. **TOS**

Our Good Thoughts to Serve Others

BY ANANYA S. RAJAN

The more experiences I have in my life, the more I realize that life is about balance. To have balance in one's life, a person must have discernment. Discernment in order to be aware of whether life events are helping or hindering one, whether a relationship is allowing one to grow or become stagnant, or whether the thoughts we have bring beauty into our lives or just complete chaos.

As a counselor, it has become apparent to me that many of us allow our thoughts to define our lives. We allow our thoughts to create our reality. "I think, therefore I am" is not just a quote by Descartes, but a way of life for so many. We believe the world is what we think it is and forget our true nature. We forget that the thoughts we have are just reflections of the world around us and are not really who we are. So often with clients, I will ask, "Where does that thought come from?" And while they ponder that, I will ask "And why do you believe it to be true?" Clients vary on their reactions. Some get stuck and go no further, while others really try to understand how invasive our thoughts, and the messages we are given, can be to how we view ourselves. It is quite fascinating to think how powerful our thoughts are. Given that they are so powerful, it is difficult to understand why we don't use them to empower ourselves and better the world.

In the book the *Power of Thought: A Twenty-First Century Adaption of Annie Besant's Thought Power* by John Algeo and Shirley Nicholson, the

authors devote a chapter to how we as individuals can help others through our thoughts and good intentions. This concept has gained more ground in the scientific world with the study and development of quantum physics which, in turn, has increased the number of people who once skeptical, now feel there is something more to our thoughts and intentions. Long before the power of thought or the influence of our consciousness was recognized by scientists, Theosophists understood the connection between humans and the universal energy field, as well as our responsibility to keep our thoughts positive. Granted, at the time when Annie Besant's *Thought Power* was written, the ability to measure the effects of thought power or the impact of our consciousness was not available. Today, experiments by such groups as the Global Consciousness Project (GCP) provide data that proves that our thoughts are more powerful than we believe.

The Global Consciousness Project <www.teillard.global-mind.org> is a collaborative international effort by scientists and engineers to validate the connected consciousness of individuals using objective measures. To use the words from the website, "Quantum event based random number generators (RNGs) produce completely unpredictable sequences of zeroes and ones. But when a great event synchronizes the feelings of millions of people, our network of RNGs becomes subtly structured. The probability is less than one in a billion that the effect is due to chance. The evidence suggests an emerging

noosphere, or the unifying field of consciousness described by sages in all cultures." Scientists with this project have been collecting data for the past fourteen years and now have 65 host sites around the world for the RNGs.

In the November/December 2011 issue of *Explore*, scientists Roger Nelson and Peter Banchel state that when starting the experiment, the scientists predicted "systematic deviations in the network data when there is a widespread sharing of mental and emotional responses. An on-going experimental test of the hypothesis, using replication protocol, finds significant evidence of characteristics anomalies in the data corresponding to a wide range of events. The results indicate that something remarkable may be happening when people are drawn into a community of common attention or emotion." While this is not new news for Theosophists, it does show, once again, the meeting between science and spirituality and the latent power we have within us. The GPC has measured events like international day of peace, the airstrike in Afghanistan, the election of the US presidents, as well as spiritual development groups where local electrogaigrams (EGGs) are present. Much like Rupert Sheldrake's studies in morphic resonance, GCP believes by the repeated showing of variance at a time when there is a world event, the proof is in the number of times the variance takes place at the same time a world event is happening.

On a smaller scale, groups of

CONTINUED ON PAGE 12

Six Steps to Freedom

1. Create a daily practice even if it is just for 5 minutes. Meditation has an accumulative effect so by doing it for a few minutes every day is actually more helpful than an hour once a week.
2. Meditate for the sake of it without expectations, as it can cause stress and even a sense of failure if you look for results. No appointments, no disappointments!
3. Make friends with your breath. Focusing on the natural flow of your breathing will give your mind something to do and encourages your attention to go inward. In this way you also make friends with your meditation practice.
4. Make friends with your chattering monkey mind. When you are still your mind can seem very busy and distracting. Name this your monkey mind and don't take it too seriously.
5. Commit to your peace. There is nothing more important than your peace, it is the core of your being, so make a commitment to being still and quiet regularly.
6. Do It

—“The Power of Meditation” www.huffingtonpost.com/07/24/2012

Our Good Thoughts

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 11

Theosophists have used meditation and thought power in various ways. In the spring 2011 issue of *Quest*, Morry Secrest wrote an article about using meditation to encourage the water devas of the Columbia River to encourage fry (baby salmon) to use the fish ladders when travelling downstream instead of heading through the huge generator turbines and spillways. According to Morry's article, the change in the pressure when passing through these areas, stun the fry making them vulnerable to the awaiting seagulls. Apparently many baby salmon are lost this way. Morry's meditation group sent out the intent for two hours and left, not knowing whether they had made a difference or not. Interestingly, weeks later, a member of the meditation

group overheard two of the fish passage monitors discussing the strange event of the number of fry that happened to use the fish ladder during one of the reviewing periods. Coincidence? Perhaps not.

Recently, Kathy Gann, our liaison coordinator, initiated an experiment of intention to allow those who seek the light of Theosophy to find it. The experiment was measured by the number of hits on the TSA website. According to the IT people at the TS, Mondays tend to show an increase in traffic to the website in general. However, given the fact that the two Mondays during the initiation and end of the experiment were regular Mondays without any major events taking place at the TS, there was a spike in hits on those two Mondays. In fact on the Monday the experiment started, there was a 23% increase from the previous Monday.

So the conclusion of the experiment was there was a small discernible difference in the number of hits, but nothing to actually explain the increase. But do we need one or can we be happy believing as everything is energy, we are affected and affect things that we sometimes cannot explain?

In Dora Kunz's book *Spiritual Healing*, there is an interview conducted by Rene Weber with Dora. In the chapter entitled “Compassion, Rootedness, and Detachment: Their Role in Healing,” Dora states that what was remarkable to her, of the many healers she had observed, was outpouring of the healer's attention and energy thus completely forgetting themselves. Dora speaks of “centering,” a going within in order to focus one's energies in the heart region. This brings to mind whether thought or intention of this kind is actually done without thought or mental energy. Instead, could it possibly be something that happens at a much deeper level which we ascribed to the heart region where there is no thought? When we connect with the universal energy field to create change, it would seem that the mind is involved up to a point, because it provides the intention. Eventually, however, the mind no longer plays a role and we are working at a level where our true self or higher self connects with that which it knows and recognizes as itself. It is at this moment that change takes place and our intent is “heard.” If this is true, we have no idea how powerful we truly can be or the changes we can create. **TOS**

The Healing Network

In these days of seemingly perpetual crises, it is easy to become complacent or even despondent, feeling personally incapable of having any significant impact on the world's problems. However, there is very strong evidence that our thoughts, words and deeds do have an impact beyond our immediate awareness. If we accept this as fact, it becomes our responsibility to contribute in any way we can to the positive energy of our universe.

One way of achieving this is to consciously invoke the angelic hosts to send healing love to those who suffer. The TOS Healing Department manages a Healing Network which has offered just such a service for more than 15 years. It is currently comprised of 57 groups and individuals who are committed to performing healing services on a regular basis. The Network receives the names of individuals who are ill or injured via a dedicated phone line. These names are distributed to the Network groups where they are kept for use in the healing service for one month's time. We encourage anyone and everyone, theosophist and non-theosophist alike to contribute the names of their loved ones who have become ill.

We would like to encourage groups and/or individuals who are not yet performing a regular healing service to



THE TOS HEALING GROUP MEETS EVERY WEDNESDAY EVENING. PARTICIPANTS OF THE RITUAL AS WELL AS THOSE ON THE HEALING LIST HAVE FOUND THE PRACTICE OF THIS RITUAL BENEFICIAL IN MANY WAYS.



THE HEALING RITUAL IS EASY TO PERFORM AND CAN BE DONE ALONE, WITH ANOTHER, OR WITH A GROUP.

consider becoming a member of the Healing Network. The only commitment is to perform our simple Healing Ritual on a regular basis or add it to their daily meditation. Most groups use it to bring a lovely close to their weekly study sessions.

To contribute names for healing, call our 800 number at any time or use the online form on our website www.theoservice.org. If you telephone, you will reach a recorded message giving instructions. To become a participating group, please contact Diane Eisenberg at theoservice@gmail.com. We look forward to hearing from you.

To call the Healing Network: 800-867-0017 or use the online form at www.theoservice.org. TOS

*If I can stop one heart from breaking,
I shall not live in vain.
If I can ease one life the aching,
Or cool one pain,
Or help one fainting robin
Unto his nest again,
I shall not live in vain.*

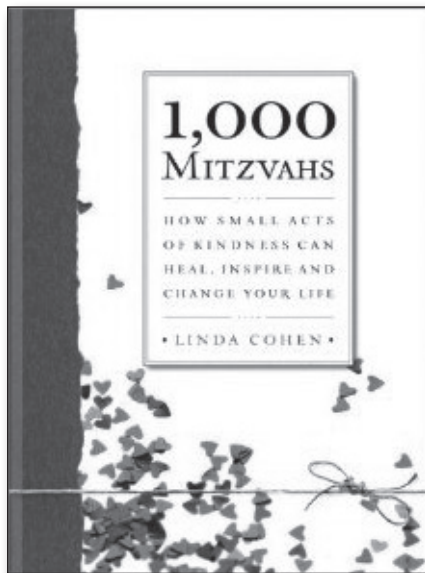
—Emily Dickinson

Book Review

1,000 MITZVAHS: How Small Acts of Kindness Can Heal, Inspire and Change Your Life by Linda Cohen

In her book, *1,000 Mitzvahs*, Linda Cohen says, “I didn’t set out to save the world. I don’t even profess that any of my 1,000 small actions stand out as particularly important or life-changing. But I will assert that each of them made a small impact, and that cumulatively they have changed my life.”

After the death of her father in December 2006, Linda Cohen began a process of grief that led her to perform a thousand mitzvahs in his honor. Being Jewish, the author followed the rites and rituals of her faith as they pertain to the death of a close family member. In discussions with her father, during his eight month bout with cancer, he requested that she perform the mitzvah of donating money in his memory to a charity. They made a list of favorite charities, and in his obituary the family requested



1,000 MITZVAHS: How Small Acts of Kindness Can Heal, Inspire and Change Your Life
by Linda Cohen
Paperback, 256 pages
Seal Press, 2011
\$16.00

that friends donate to these charities. Linda wasn’t satisfied. She wanted to do more. She came up with the idea of performing thousand mitzvahs to honor her father’s memory. Mitzvahs are statements and principles of Jewish law and ethics contained in the Torah or Five Books of Moses. One category of mitzvah is doing acts of kindness, and for the purposes of her project, that is the definition the

concrete way as she moved through her grief. Performing the mitzvahs and blogging about them proved to be a powerful combination for processing grief. From this blog a *1,000 Mitzvahs* was born.

The book is arranged so that each chapter highlights a different aspect of kindness, such as: food, assisting individuals, volunteering, ecology, donating money, animals, the treatment of others, death, dying and helping others through bereavement, and appreciating the kindness of others toward you. In each chapter, the author presents a sampling of mitzvahs relative to the chapter topic. Some of them are:

- Pick up litter on the sidewalk or wherever you see it.
- Find out about recycling day programs offered by your city or town and help out.
- Clean up after your pet, even if you have to return to the location to do so.
- Encourage a lemonade stand, bake sale, or the like where the proceeds go to your childrens’ favorite charity.
- Share your passion with your children and inspire them to have passions of their own.
- Pray for the sick [or participate in the TOS healing ritual].
- Praise your children when they do the right thing.
- Call or visit an elderly or homebound neighbor.
- Say thank you — there are many ways and many instances in which to do this.
- Donate to a charity.
- Go out of your way to help someone, even if it might inconvenience you.
- Ask someone for help when you need it.
- Don’t hold a grudge.
- Acts of kindness have no language barrier. Remember to perform them abroad.
- Tip the housekeeper of the hotel where you are staying.
- Light a candle and say a prayer (or whatever is within your tradition) for your loved one on the anniversary of their death.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 15

Third International TOS Conference

You are warmly invited to participate in our International Conference if you are an active worker in your TOS Group at local or national level. The three-day conference will be held at Olcott, the national center of the TS in America in Wheaton, Illinois from the evening of Tuesday 23 July to Friday 26 July, 2013. The TOS Conference is preceded by a five-day Summer National Convention of the TS in America from 19 July to 23 July. All are invited to attend this event as well.

We are delighted to welcome Maria Parisen, Director, Krotona School of Theosophy and Vic Hao Chin Jr, President of the Golden Link College, our featured presenters as well as all our brothers and sisters from around the world.

For registration details please visit www.theoservice.org. Registration forms and details can be found here. **TOS**



Book Review

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 14

It took the author two and one half years to complete her project, and we travel with her as she describes this journey that changed her life. As each of the mitzvahs she performed is presented, we learn the circumstances that brought it to her attention. She shares with us the thought and feeling process she went through and what she learned from that particular mitzvah. Linda Cohen began her project as a way to honor the memory of her father and help herself through the mourning process. At the end of the project she found herself a changed person with a closer relationship to God, community, family, especially her children, and her inner self.

I highly recommend *1,000 Mitzvahs* to all Theosophical Order of Service (TOS) members as this book depicts a journey of growth toward compassion and self-knowledge attained through service, a goal to which we all aspire. Throughout the book, the author used many examples from her Jewish faith, defined Hebrew and Yiddish words, and related aspects and processes of Jewish ritual that I found interesting and enlightening. Her inclusion of her children in many of the mitzvahs performed was touching and could be educational for parents as ways to instill a habit of kindness and compassion in their children. I was delighted to find that Linda Cohen lives in Portland, OR. As a resident of neighboring Washington State, I knew



the names and locations of the many organizations she mentioned. That will be useful in my own service. Similar places and organizations can be found in most towns and cities. Many will find the bibliography and list of charitable organizations at the end of the book to be a most helpful resource. This book tells the story of one woman's journey in a way that is relatable to us all. I found it to be interesting, humorous and enlightening as a story, and also think it will prove itself a valuable reference guide to TOS members and groups looking for ways to serve humanity.

— Nancy Secret **TOS**

From Our Scholarship Recipient

Dear Theosophical Order of Service,

My name is Natasha B. Ferguson. I was chose as a recipient for your scholarship. I would like to show my appreciation for yoru support and tell you about myself.

First off, thank you very much from the bottom of my heart! I extend to you my appreciation and gratitude for your generous donation to the Oglala Lakota College Nursing Program. I live approximately one hundred miles from the college center where my classes are held and being chosen for this scholarship will provide me with travel assistance back and forth to class, so that I may complete my education and continue on my path to success.

To provide you with some background information, I am a 27 year old Native American female from the Oglala Sioux Tribe from the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation. I have two daughters, Isabella is 10 years old and Alejandra is 22 months old. They provide me with motivation and inspiration toward achieving my goals in order to provide them with a successful future.

I am a full time student attending Oglala Lakota College. I am currently in my senior year and I will graduate in June 2013 with my Associates of Arts in Nursing. My current cumulative GPA is 3.17. I strive to put forth my best effort in my studies. I consider myself a caring , compassionate person, with an intellectual and dedicated ability to succeed in life.

One of my goals as a nursing student is to graduate in the top of my nursing class. I am currently working toward this by committing myself to my nursing courses. After graduation I plan to give abck to the Native American community by working as a RN with the Indian Health Service. After gaining some experience and settling in as an RN, I plan on finishing my education and obtaining a BSc in Nursing. I would then love to enter the specialty of pediatric neurology.

Once again, thank you for helping me achieve my goals. Words cannot express how very grateful I am to be chosen as a recipient for this scholarship. Please be assured that with your contribution you did a tremendous deed.

Sincerely,

Natasha B. Ferguson 



NATASHA B. FERGUSON

Kindness in words creates confidence.
Kindness in thinking creates profundity.
Kindness in giving creates love.

— Lao-Tse

Comments, Questions, or Ideas for the TOS?

Call us at 630-668-1571 ext. 332 or email us at theoservice@gmail.org.

We'd love to hear from you!

Updates

And a quick but beautifully joyful update from Peggy Day on the Chusul Home in Tibet...

Three wonderful visits this year. With the help of two generous clients, we built furniture, decorated eggs and each other and celebrated Losar, the Tibetan New Year, with the children in February. In July, I was strapped for funds and couldn't afford to take the kids on an outing and when they found out, they didn't even whine or complain. Instead, they put on a dance show and a basketball tournament to entertain me and we never left Chushul Home. Luckily, I came back in late August with two super fantastic sponsors who took them out for clothes shopping and patiently, taught them all how to do tie-dye. So now, when you make a donation for Chushul Home, please send a shirt to be tie-dyed by the kids and I'll send the finished product back to you. We still need your help so if you can, please send a donation made out to THE TIBET FUNDw/ t-shirt and mail to me at PMB 426, 1001 Bridgeway, Sausalito, CA 94965 or through Paypal on my web site at www.peggydayadventures.com. I leave for Chushul Home/Tibet on February 6th and would love your company and help.

Please let me know if you can join us. With love and gratitude,
Peggy and kids **TOS**



For the Love of Life

THEOSOPHICAL ORDER OF SERVICE, USA

P.O. Box 660
Warrenville, IL 60555
www.theoservice.org

CHANGE SERVICE REQUESTED

Non-Profit
Organization
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
Warrenville, Illinois
Permit No. 15