



Issue 12 - October 2010

Dear fellow-members of the TS and TOS around the world,

We hope that you are enjoying keeping in touch with what is happening in our international TOS community. Our electronic newsletter aims to bring you information to inspire your service work within and outside the TOS and to help you get to know TOS members outside your country.

In this issue we highlight a milestone for a beloved and dedicated TOS and TS member, Joy Mills, who celebrated her 90th birthday on October 9. We thank all donors to the appeal for the restoration of the TS Headquarters building in Chile following last February's earthquake. You'll find lots of news about TOS members and groups: the exploits of longstanding TOS in America member, Miles Standish, information about the Glasgow TOS's initiative to knit teddies for children suffering after the earthquake in Haiti, and news from TOS Groups in India, Kenya, the Philippines, Australia and the USA. You are invited to find out about four UN days that could provide a catalyst for service activities. The article in this issue is the talk that Vicente Hao Chin, Jr, President, Theosophical Society in the Philippines, gave at the TS World Congress in Rome. In it, Vic challenges us to make Theosophy part of mainstream society.

Remember that the newsletter is designed to be read while you are connected to the internet.

Please consider sending photographs of your TOS activities and news items that might be of interest to fellow TOS members. We would welcome your contributions, either through your National TOS Director/President/Coordinator/Correspondent or directly to the editors at: carolyn.tosinternational@gmail.com

Celebrate with Joy

On the occasion of Joy Mills' 90th birthday, the International TOS interviewed her about her experiences in the TOS. As Joy puts it, "In one way, I never felt a distinction between working for the TS and doing something for the TOS, one just flowed into the other, the one being just a natural outgrowth of the other, if I can put it that way." [Read more](#)

Meet Miles Standish from the TOS in America

There's surely no one in the TS and TOS in America who doesn't love longstanding TOS member, Miles Standish from the little town of Cottonwood, Arizona! In the name of the TOS and of his computer club, over the past few years Miles has collected and delivered items to the Sioux tribe on the Rosebud Indian Reservation in South Dakota, to the Hualapai in northern Arizona and to the San Carlos Apache Reservation in eastern Arizona. [Read more](#)

Thanks to donors for supporting the Chile appeal

You may recall that the HQ building of the TS in Santiago, Chile was badly damaged in the earthquake last February. Upon learning of this, the TS in America offered to transmit donations for anybody who cared to help out. The American Section has announced that the amount of money needed to carry out the substantial repairs has been gathered. [Read more](#)

TOS news from around the world

Find out about recent TOS activities in Nairobi in Kenya, the USA, Orissa in India, the Philippines and Australia. [Read more](#)

Making the most of our website – using the home page

Have you ever wondered about how to show prospective members what the TOS does and just how active its members are in a wide range of areas?

Take a look at the home page of our International TOS website at <http://international.theoservice.org>.

[Read more](#)

What's new on the International TOS website?

Check out the latest TOS publication, *Helping the Dying* by Nelda Samarel, in the [Latest News](#). Clean water is one of the greatest gifts we can give and our new [Featured Project](#) takes you to Chennai to visit a new water purification plant installed by the TOS. The new [Featured Article](#) challenges us to consider a variety of ways in which we can work towards peace. There are also additions to the TOS photo gallery and the Inspiration section. Go to <http://international.theoservice.org>

Teddies for Haiti

Do you remember the Teddies for Tragedies project promoted by the English TOS? Well, it is spreading its warmth around the globe. Knitters organised by the Italian TOS have been creating Teddies for Tanzania and now a Glasgow TOS member has been gathering together a group of knitters to make Teddies for children traumatised by the earthquake in Haiti. [Read more](#)

Planting Seeds of Influence... a talk given at the TS World Congress in Rome, July 2010

by **Vicente Hao Chin, Jr**, President, Theosophical Society in the Philippines.

Vic challenges us to take a different perspective and make Theosophy part of mainstream society... "It is now time, I believe, for the Theosophical Society still more actively to participate in the moulding of popular culture, social values and public opinion." [Read more](#)

UN International Days for community activities

We feature four International Days:

- October 4 World Habitat Day
- October 10 World Mental Health Day
- November 25 International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women
- December 3 International Day of Persons with Disabilities

For information and ideas for activities in which TOS groups could engage, [Read more](#)

Would you like to receive this on-line newsletter automatically?

- a) To sign up, you only have to send a message telling us which country you live in to tos.intouch@gmail.com with 'Subscribe TOS e-newsletter' in the subject line.
- b) If you do not want to receive future newsletters you can easily unsubscribe. All that is needed is a blank message to tos.intouch@gmail.com with 'Unsubscribe TOS e-newsletter' in the subject line.



With best wishes,

Carolyn, Geoffrey and Diana

Carolyn Harrod is the National Coordinator of the TOS in Australia,

Geoffrey Harrod is the International TOS Webmaster and

Diana Dunningham Chapotin is the International Secretary of the TOS.

To open one's heart, to become resistance-less and barrier-less, is the means of true understanding, as well as of pouring out any possible help. Let the kingdom of your heart be so wide that no one is excluded.

N. Sri Ram

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Theosophical Order of Service International Newsletter

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**HAPPY BIRTHDAY
TO JOY MILLS**



TOS: *Dear Joy, many of your fellow TOS members around the world were thinking of you on October 9, surrounded by your Krotona Family.*

Joy: Thank you all so very much for your good wishes on my 90th birthday, but the real milestone occurred in August, actually mid-August to be exact, when I celebrated 70 years of membership in the Theosophical Society. My certificate of membership bears the date of August 15, 1940, and it is signed by George S. Arundale as President and Sidney A. Cook as National President of the American Section. So I treasure that certificate!

TOS: *You probably don't remember when you joined the TOS because membership of the TOS in America is by simple donation but what is one of your earliest memories of the TOS?*

Joy: You are right, I really do not remember officially joining the TOS. When I joined our National Headquarters staff, in 1942, we were all much engaged in sending 'care' packages to our members in Europe, and as I recall this was thought of as TOS service. There was also a little meditation that we would engage in, and this too was considered as a TOS activity for peace and brotherhood. In one way, I never felt a distinction between working for the TS and doing something for the TOS, one just flowed into the other, the one being just a natural outgrowth of the other, if I can put it that way.

TOS: *In the course of your life, you have felt particularly strongly about a number of social injustices. What are one or two of these and how were you involved in addressing them?*

Joy: I suppose I had always felt concern for what seemed social injustices, such as the treatment of women and the plight of the poor. We had a group called the League for American Womanhood, for example, which fostered equal rights for women. Then in the mid-1960s, there was the civil rights movement in the United States, working for the upliftment of the African-American population. Helen Zahara, who was then on our staff at Olcott, was very concerned that we speak out strongly on that issue, and I wrote a number of editorials (I was National President of the American Section at that time) discussing the ideal of brotherhood. Of course I had to avoid becoming political, but my effort was along the lines of urging members to consider how theosophical principles applied to current problems. Both Helen and I did join the local chapter of the NAACP (National Association for the Advancement of Colored People), and I was invited to speak to that group. We developed a program for lodge study called "Brotherhood Now". While I myself felt strongly on the issue, I did have to be very careful not to involve the Society in any way. So while I certainly continued to support the TOS in every way I could, as National President of the Section I remained neutral on issues of concern, emphasizing only that theosophical principles must be applied to our contemporary world as well as in our own lives.

TOS: *What are some issues of social injustice that you feel particularly strongly about now?*

Joy: There are, of course, many social issues that still need to be addressed. There are inequities and there are such problems as abuse of women and children, poverty and racial and religious intolerance. There is the whole field of animal welfare, the inhumane treatment of animals, their exploitation, so much work to be done to awaken people to the cruelties that are inflicted, etc. As you know, here in the American Section the TOS operates in quite a variety of areas. I find myself most interested now in supporting the healing and peace work. There is also, of course, the work for the preservation of Tibetan culture and spirituality. Even though I cannot be as active as in past years, I still support the efforts of the TOS in every way I can.

TOS: *Is there something special about the TOS for you?*

Joy: Yes, I do think the TOS gives members of the Society the opportunity to apply theosophical principles to all the problems that face us, challenge us, today. It is very special because it does encourage members to recognize that Theosophy is not just an abstract philosophy, but that it is a very practical philosophy; it has implications for the way we

live our lives, for the way we act in the world, in our relationships with others. True, there are many organizations working for the welfare of humanity, for great causes such as peace and concord among peoples, for ethnic and religious understanding, but the TOS has a unique role in that it is founded on theosophical principles. I do think that ultimately the TOS and the TS itself are concerned with changing the consciousness of humanity – no easy task! – expanding that consciousness to include a realization of the oneness of all life. In one way, it could be said that the TOS shows the immediate, practical application of theosophical principles, while the TS gives us the wider picture, puts the immediate into the context of the universal, so to speak, so that we recognize that whatever we do today has consequences for tomorrow.

I have enjoyed answering these questions, and hope they may be of use in the wonderful work you are doing for the TOS!



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Meet Miles Standish from the TOS in America

There's surely no one in the TS and TOS in America who doesn't love longstanding TOS member, Miles Standish from the little town of Cottonwood, Arizona! In recent years, Miles has done a great deal of website work for the TOS-USA but now his son Lloyd has taken over as Webmaster, and he can concentrate his energy on a cause in which he believes: the preservation of First American culture and spirituality.

In the name of the TOS and of his computer club, over the past few years Miles has collected and delivered items to the Sioux tribe on the Rosebud Indian Reservation in South Dakota, to the Hualapai in northern Arizona and to the San Carlos Apache Reservation in eastern Arizona. He has driven through sleet and snow to deliver blankets and winter clothing to his friends. He collected, restored and set up six computers for each of these groups. More recently he has concentrated on shoring up the Sicangu Sun Times for the Rosebud Reservation as he feels that an independently owned and operated newspaper on the reservation is vital to the health and progress of the people. Some of this was reported on the website of TOS-USA, and the publisher appointed Miles to the editorial board of the paper. More details at: <http://www.theoservice.org/node/241>

Miles is a member of the TOS board of directors. He feels that a thriving TOS can be a help to the TS because service work in a group setting can be more invigorating than when alone. He says, "Selfless service is plainly identified as the highest form of action for anyone aspiring to 'get on with evolution'. Jesus emphasised it, Blavatsky emphasised it and it's the underlying theme of *At the Feet of the Master*. The world is always grateful to anyone who serves."

One of our most faithful and enthusiastic TOS members, Miles began glider pilot training in October last year, soloed in November and completed his practical test in December. Last May, he made this special flight. Note his wife Lea stowed in the passenger seat. Greater faith hath no woman! The other two ladies in the photo are long-time friends who were at their wedding 31 years ago. Miles has this to say to us all: "The next time you pass through Arizona, I hope you will go flying with me! Afterwards, we'll go to lunch together and we can exchange ideas on TOS work."





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Thanks to donors for supporting the Chile appeal

You may recall that the HQ building of the TS in Santiago, Chile was badly damaged in the earthquake that took place there last February. Upon learning of this, the TS in America offered to transmit donations for anybody who cared to help out. The TOS forwarded this information to readers of this newsletter.

The American Section - sound the trumpets - has announced that the amount of money needed to carry out the substantial repairs has been gathered, thanks to many individuals and to a number of TOS and TS Sections, notably the Italian, Singaporean, New Zealand, French, Canadian and American. A particularly touching contribution was received from the members of the TOS in Mumbai, India. Normally Theosophists in Western countries contribute to the work within India. This time, our Indian sisters and brothers were also ready to help a sister TS Section overseas.

We will bring you more details on the situation in Chile as they come to hand. In the meantime, heartfelt thanks for your response.



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TOS News from around the world

Environmental education in Nairobi, Ken

Many Theosophists are deeply involved in community service as individual citizens. Here is an interesting example. A pillar of the TS and TOS in Nairobi, Narendra Shah is Chairman of the Oshwal Education and Relief Board. This charitable organisation owns and runs many nursery, primary and secondary schools in Kenya. It has even had a college since 1992.

As a new initiative, the Board is sponsoring the development of the Karura Forest northeast of Nairobi for recreation and environmental education. We see Narendra at the launch talking with Nobel Laureate, Wangari Maathai.



Meeting His Holiness, the Dalai Lama in the USA

In May, Betty Bland (President/General Secretary of the American Section of the Theosophical Society) and Tim Boyd (TSA Vice President, and also President of the Theosophical Order of Service) had a private audience with His Holiness the Dalai Lama. They discussed some of the work that the TOS has done to support Chushul Orphanage in Tibet. The meeting took place at Iowa State University, where His Holiness also gave an hour-long interview about the situation in Tibet and took part in a panel discussion, "Educating for a non-violent world".

From left to right: Betty Bland, Tim Boyd, His Holiness the Dalai Lama, Lily Boyd, David Bland



More dynamic work in Orissa, India

In May, the Mahabharat Group of the TOS in Orissa, India organised a Summer Spiritual programme for the students of Venkateswar English Medium School in the city of Bhubaneswar.

The one month long summer spiritual camp was organised under the banner "Body, Mind And Soul Awareness Programme". During the camp the students were taught yoga asanas, pranayama (breathing exercises), meditation, mantra chantings and moral lessons. On the closing day they were awarded certificates of participation.



The programme was inaugurated in the open-air grounds of the



The children learned moral lessons through games and songs.



The students had an opportunity to learn the rudiments of meditation.



Yoga lessons



New building and library at the Golden Link College in the Philippines

The Golden Link College is a project of the TOS in the Philippines. The College has recently added a new building to its campus.

The new building has four floors. The front fence and gate are still under construction.





A library is being established on an entire floor of the new building.

Opposite we see the new library ready for the construction of shelves.

Recognising volunteers in Brisbane, Australia

To celebrate National Volunteer Week in May, Lynette Muller, President of the Brisbane TOS group, presented members with certificates recognising their volunteer service to the TS and to various community activities.

Here she presents a certificate to Colleen O'Rourke recognising her work with cancer patients.



Rugs for a nursing home in Perth, Australia



One of the ladies in the TOS in Perth made knee rugs, which the TOS presented to the residents of a local nursing home.

The ladies in the photograph were delighted with receiving the rugs.

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Making the most of our website – using the home page

Have you ever wondered about how to show prospective members what the TOS does and just how active its members are in a wide range of areas?

Invite them to visit the home page of our International TOS website at <http://international.theoservice.org>. They'll find a **revolving slide show** featuring TOS service activities from around the world. Currently we have photographs of TOS members at work in Australia, Italy, Kenya and India. Interspersed with these photographs are inspiring quotations related to service and the Oneness of all life. These quotations can be used as discussion starters, focuses for meditation or can be picked up for your publications. The revolving slide show is refreshed every two months. We hope you enjoy it.

The **Featured Project** described on the home page provides more detailed information about a significant service activity. With each update of the website a new project is featured.

Prospective members are often interested in the spiritual values that infuse the service work of the TOS as well as our approach to current issues related to peace, social welfare, animal concerns, the environment and healing, for instance. You'll find a new **Featured Article** on the home page every time the website is updated. When you go to the linked article you will be able to print it out to share.

The home page also provides a quick overview of a current TOS news item, with a link to more detailed information. Look for **Latest News**.

Our International TOS website has lots of other useful information and we'll be discussing some of it in the next few electronic newsletters. In the meantime, enjoy browsing the site.

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Teddies for Tragedies

Do you remember the Teddies for Tragedies project promoted by the English TOS? Well, it is spreading its warmth around the globe. Knitters organised by the Italian TOS have been creating teddies for Tanzania and now a Glasgow TOS member has been gathering together a group of knitters to make teddies for children traumatised by the earthquake in Haiti.

Caroline Doyle-McManus, a member of the Glasgow TOS, gained the support of Glasgow's Lord Provost and the local papers to invite the city's knitters to get out their needles and start making teddy bears. She also enlisted the support of the British Red Cross, who agreed to distribute the bears in Haiti.

Poverty-stricken Haiti has the highest birth rate in the Western Hemisphere as well as the highest child death rate before the quake struck. The island had 17,500 acutely malnourished children prior to the disaster. Now surviving children face respiratory infections, malnutrition and diarrhoea from water-borne diseases.

Doctors on the Caribbean Island of Haiti discovered babies and toddlers recovered more quickly when given their own comforter – a cuddly teddy. Each child gets to keep their teddy when sent home, which increases the need for a steady flow of bears – and Caroline's knitters have set their goal at over a thousand.



*Caroline with, from left, Jo Chan, Ahay Yin Tsang and Yoshiko Hidaka
Glasgow Evening Times, 22 July 2010*

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Planting Seeds of Influence

Vicente Hao Chin, Jr.

President, Theosophical Society in the Philippines



This talk was given at the Theosophical Society World Congress in Rome, July 2010

Today, I would like to speak about the awakening of awareness from a different perspective.

People are mostly moulded by surroundings: the home, school, society and the media. By the time a young person reaches twenty years old, the mind has been shaped and conditioned. Whether that young person will be receptive to ideas and insights of the ageless wisdom will depend upon the nature of these conditionings.

For example, many, many people find it extremely difficult to conceive of a God that is not anthropomorphic. They find it a strange notion that a God does not listen to prayers, does not reward or punish, does not get disappointed with our weaknesses or elated with our goodness. By the time a young man reaches twenty, his fears and superstitions have been formed and it can be very difficult for this young person to unlearn those things because they have already sunk into the subconscious.

In those minds, the seeds of the ageless wisdom will not sprout easily. They have fallen on hard soil.

One of the greatest obstacles to the growth of the seeds of wisdom then is the nature of the soil. This means the nature of society. Where the common culture is permeated with superstition or wrong belief, then the seeds of truth will not find a warm and soft soil there. The task of a good farmer is to first prepare the soil before he plants the seedlings. He waters it, ploughs it. It must not be too soft, like mud. It mustn't be too hard, like rock.

The Theosophical Society has seeds to plant but we must find out if the soil is ready. If it is not then we, the Theosophical Society, must help in preparing the soil. This is part of our work – to prepare the social environment, the culture, public opinion and the prevailing thought currents of society to be congruent with the ageless wisdom. It means influencing popular notions about parenting, about educational philosophies and methods. It means being amongst the major providers of information to the media in whatever form. It means helping to create an atmosphere of unity, of brotherhood, of compassion, of tolerance, of openness, of the intermingling of races and creeds.

Madame Blavatsky wrote: "True evolution teaches us that by altering the surroundings of the organism we can alter and improve the organism; and in the strictest sense this is true with regard to man." (*Key to Theosophy*)

Making Theosophy Part of the Mainstream

It is now time, I believe, for the Theosophical Society still more actively to participate in the moulding of popular culture, social values and public opinion. We must not just be an esoteric group. We must enter the mainstream and be involved in the ploughing of the soil of society so that it will be more receptive to the seeds of the ageless wisdom.

Thus, for example, we must be involved in publishing magazines for the general public, not just for our members. Through these, we must plough the soil of public opinion and belief, expose them to fresh ideas, bring the deeper truths to the surface. The function of such an activity is not only to disseminate theosophy, but also to create a culture of intellectual freedom and inquiry. For it is upon such a soil that the ageless wisdom will sprout. The ageless wisdom cannot germinate in soils of fear, of oppression, or of tyranny.

We must be more involved in public and private education. For more than ten years in the life of a young soul, the habits, attitudes and minds of young people are in the hands of teachers and educators. In those ten years, the foundations of the wise life are either built or destroyed. The school therefore is the most powerful institution in the moulding of the future life of every individual, for good or ill. We, the Theosophical Society, must be involved in education – not just putting up our own schools, but in influencing the educational philosophies of public and private schools.

Then, we must be involved in media – that formidable force that moulds the collective mind, whether through radio, television, newspaper or the Internet. We may guess that 99% of what young and adult minds absorb from what they see, or hear or read in the media does not contribute to true wisdom in living. On the contrary, they push us to buy things that we don't need, they manipulate our desires to like things that may be harmful to us. So perhaps we should ask ourselves: How many theosophical radio stations or programmes are there in the world to reach the five billion people in the world who are above ten years old? How much theosophical reading material is there to even reach 1% of these people, or 50 million people?

Another area of work for us: we must be involved in establishing youth centres everywhere – with books, activities, camps, sports, projects and service work that will influence the fundamental direction, habits, values and attitudes of the 1.9 billion young people from ages 10 to 25 years growing up somewhere in the world. We should be actively involved in moulding them.

Annie Besant was the epitome of the involved theosophist. She dedicated her life to making theosophy part of mainstream society, not just standing on the edge of the human arena, but in the very centre of action. She put up two newspapers in India, established many schools, wrote many books, spoke to audiences all over the world, established countless leagues and societies. She entered into the thick of Indian politics and helped shape the destiny of that nation. She established the Theosophical Order of Service to let theosophists become involved in helping change the social and cultural environment.

Can we intensify our efforts over the next century to make theosophy part of the mainstream of society, not just in one country, but all over the world? If we don't do this, then we will always be on the sidelines, and not actively taking part in the arena that matters so much: the arena of influencing minds and cultures of the young and the old as they go about their daily lives. 99.99% of the people in the world will never come to attend a theosophical meeting or lecture in our halls. We must go out to reach them, through the schools, through the media, through institutions, through books, through pamphlets, through movements, or through centres. We are doing this in part already, of course, and as best we can. Now is the time to redouble our efforts.

Three Elements

In bringing theosophy to the mainstream, there are three elements that we must keep in mind:

First, we must choose two or three key ideas or concepts that we would like the Theosophical Society to be associated with. In our work of dissemination, we must keep in mind the principle that the wider the audience, the simpler must be the message. People, young or old, have to familiarise themselves with thousands of groups, religions, companies, advocates, famous people, politicians and writers. Theosophy is just one of them. It is impossible for a person to have complex knowledge of even the main ones. Thus, there is no choice except to know each group by just one or two associated ideas. Not ten, not even five. Just two or three ideas. When we hear of Zen, what do we associate it with? It is with meditation. Not with the Diamond Sutra. Or with Hui Neng. Or with koan. When we hear of the Dalai Lama, what comes to mind? Tibet and compassion. When we think of the Taliban, what comes to mind? Not their advocacy or their reasons but terrorism. We can think of a thousand and one names and movements and groups, and we will notice that you and I have associated each of them with one or two dominant ideas. It is upon this idea/these ideas that we like or dislike them, support or oppose them, seek to know more or simply set them aside.

If theosophy is to go mainstream, we must deliberately decide on what two or three ideas we will be associated with. Is it paranormal phenomena? Is it clairvoyance? Is it the astral body? Or is it universal brotherhood? Spirituality? Or peace? We must choose, or else society and popular prejudice will choose for us.

The second element is that we must institutionalise our work. Whatever we do, we must make it become part of the fabric of day-to-day social and cultural life. It must not be a once-a-week thing or once-every-quarter thing. It must become an enduring component of public life, public opinion and social behaviour. This is the institutionalisation process. To institutionalise means to make something part of social practice and values. A newspaper or magazine is an institution. A school is an institution. A social value is an institution. It takes decades to institutionalise anything. The sooner we start it, the sooner will it stabilise to become part of the fabric of society.

The third element is the need for enough qualified advocates within the Theosophical Society who will go out to the world to help bring the ageless principles into the mainstream of human society. There must be a sufficient number of theosophists whom the public can see and hear and feel, who demonstrate the embodiment of the ideas and ideals that we espouse. If we don't have them, then we'd better not go mainstream, because what we will reap may be notoriety – like having the reputation that theosophists are those who can do astral travelling, have knowledge of Atlantis and Lemuria, or can communicate with elementals. This element of internal preparation is important. It may take many years to prepare theosophists who will speak on behalf of the Society and who correctly represent the highest work and ideals of the Theosophical Society.

Allow me to share with you our own attempts in the Philippines in these directions.

1. In the first area – that of identifying one or two ideas to be associated with – we have not arrived at a consensus yet but some of the themes upon which we put emphasis are peace, self-transformation and wholesome education. For many years we have been publishing a newsletter called Peace Ideas. We have been conducting Peace Education and Self-Transformation Seminars in schools, for religious groups, for the military and for the general public.
2. In the second area – that of institutionalising our work, the TS has been publishing the Theosophical Digest for more than 20 years. In the eyes of the public, theosophy has been identified with the kind of topics found in this magazine: peace, brotherhood and self-transformation, in particular.

Another example of institutionalising our work is in the area of education. As is the case with the TS and TOS in India, the TS in the Philippines has established some schools – five in fact. One of them, Golden Link College, with about 530 students, offers tertiary courses or bachelor's degrees in five disciplines, where theosophy, comparative religion and related subjects are part of the regular curriculum.

A final example of institutionalising our work is in the area of self-transformation. The TS has been conducting a Self-Transformation Seminar for numerous schools, organisations, government agencies and the public for more than 15 years.

3. The final element suggested above for taking theosophy into the mainstream was the preparation of the members to act not just as speakers and facilitators but as embodiments of the wisdom tradition we espouse. We have trained several groups who are presently conducting lectures and seminars for the public, but we feel that the number is still very inadequate. Regular courses are given every year at various levels, such as introductory theosophy, intermediate theosophy, meditation, Mahatma Letters, speaker training, facilitator training, including a correspondence course through the internet. Above all, we work with our members on self-transformation in a practical, in-depth way. This, of course, is long term work.

We hope that we can learn from the other Theosophical Sections on how to better pursue these directions based on their own decades of experience. For such a vision, it is essential that we work together closely and not allow physical distances to prevent our work from being more effective and efficient. It is a difficult work that cannot be done just by any single Section. But it is a work that is achievable once we hold hands and do it together. Through these avenues of service towards peace, unity and self-transformation, we may help lay the foundations towards the awakening of spiritual awareness.

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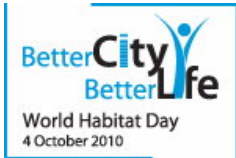
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UN International Days for community activities

The United Nations was built on spiritual principles and universal values such as peace, human rights, human dignity and worth, justice, respect, good neighbourliness, freedom, respect for nature and shared responsibility.

This year we are featuring International Days in each month that could provide opportunities for partnership activities within our communities. In this issue we share ideas for:

World Habitat Day on October 4, World Mental Health Day on October 10, International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women on November 25 and International Day of Persons with Disabilities on December 3, 2010.



October 4 World Habitat Day

The idea of World Habitat Day is to reflect on the state of our towns and cities and the basic right of all, to adequate shelter. It is also intended to remind the world of its collective responsibility for the future of the human habitat.

The United Nations chose the theme *Better City, Better Life* to highlight our collective vision of a sustainable urban world that harnesses the potential and possibilities, mitigates inequalities and disparities, and provides a safe home for people of all cultures and ages, both rich and poor.

It is projected that in the next generation, 70 percent of humanity will be living in towns and cities. So this is the time for us to look closely at urban life and how we can ensure our wellbeing on all levels. How can we live fit and healthy lives within our cities and towns? How can we develop our sense of a community and help build relationships within it? Are there members of our community who are isolated because of age, health or other factors? ... and what can we do to help?

We could also use this day to focus on the issue of homelessness which is a reality in our cities. What can we do to help on both a long term and an immediate basis? What community organisations could we work with?

For more information see the UN website: <http://www.unhabitat.org/>

October 10 World Mental Health Day

World Mental Health Day raises public awareness about mental health issues. The Day promotes more open discussion of illnesses, and investments in prevention and treatment services. WHO statistics for 2002 show that 154 million people globally suffer from depression, only one form of mental illness.

Mental, neurological and behavioural disorders are common in all countries around the world, causing immense suffering and staggering economic and social costs. People with disorders are often subjected to social isolation, poor quality of life and higher death rates.

World Mental Health Day could be used to focus attention on the needs of people with mental health disorders, provide information and challenge discriminatory practices. The World Health Organisation has suggestions on their website at:

http://www.who.int/mediacentre/events/annual/world_mental_health_day/en/index.html

and www.youtube.com has related videos.

November 25 International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women

Violence against women and girls is a problem of pandemic proportions. At least one out of every three women around the world has been beaten, coerced into sex, or otherwise abused in her lifetime – with the abuser usually someone known to her.

Frequently abuse leads to mental and psychological problems for both women and children, as well as homelessness.

See the UN site for information at: http://www.who.int/mediacentre/events/annual/elimination_vaw/en/

The International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women also launches the 16 Days of Activism Against Gender Violence, which runs through to 10 December, Human Rights Day.

The 16 Days of Activism Against Gender Violence is an international campaign that is used as an organising strategy by individuals and groups around the world to call for the elimination of all forms of violence against women. You can get involved on-line through the Centre for Women's Global Leadership at:

<http://www.cwgl.rutgers.edu/16days/home.html>

The Centre will also supply a free copy of an action kit that includes a bibliography and resource list, a list of suggested activities and supplemental information relevant to this year's theme.



December 3

International Day of Persons with Disabilities The World Bank estimates that 20 per cent of the world's poorest people have some kind of disability, and tend to be regarded in their own communities as the most disadvantaged.



The Day aims to promote a better understanding of disability issues with a focus on the rights of persons with disabilities and gains to be derived from the integration of persons with disabilities in every aspect of the political, social, economic and cultural life of their communities. The goal of full and effective participation of persons with disabilities in society and development was established by the World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons, adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 1982.

The theme for 2010 is *Keeping the promise: Mainstreaming disability in the Millennium Development Goals towards 2015 and beyond*.

There are numerous ways in which TOS groups and individual members can support the intent of the International Day of Persons with Disabilities. The following ideas and more come from their website: <http://www.un.org/disabilities/>

Involve: Observance of the Day provides opportunities for participation by all interested communities – governmental, non-governmental and the private sector – to focus upon catalytic and innovative measures to further implement international norms and standards related to persons with disabilities. Schools, universities and similar institutions can make particular contributions with regard to promoting greater interest and awareness among interested parties of the social, cultural, economic, civil and political rights of persons with disabilities.

Organise: Hold forums, public discussions and information campaigns in support of the Day focusing on disability issues and trends, and ways and means by which persons with disabilities and their families are pursuing independent lifestyles, sustainable livelihoods and financial security.

Celebrate: Plan and organise performances everywhere to showcase – and celebrate – the contributions by persons with disabilities to the societies in which they live, and convene exchanges and dialogues focusing on the rich and varied skills, interests and aspirations of persons with disabilities.

Take action: A major focus of the Day is practical action to further implement international norms and standards concerning persons with disabilities and to further their participation in social life and development on the basis of equality. The media have especially important contributions to make in support of the observance of the Day – and throughout the year – regarding appropriate presentation of progress and obstacles in implementing disability-sensitive policies, programmes and projects and to promote public awareness of the contributions by persons with disabilities.

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