

Dear Friend,

Thank you for your inquiry about staff-practitioner positions at Cloud Mountain Retreat Center. We are interested in talking to you about the possibility of your joining us as a staff-practitioner member. In addition to this introductory letter, we are enclosing information about our current specific staff-practitioner openings.

The staff both lives and works at Cloud Mountain, so developing and supporting harmony is essential. This is especially important given the work we do of supporting the people who come on retreat to engage in spiritual practice. We try to be thorough in finding individuals whose aspirations, skills, and level of spiritual development are in accord with the rest of the staff. It is important to be sure, from your side and from ours, that we have a good fit. We encourage you to stick with the application process as the rewards and spiritual support of living and working at Cloud Mountain are worth the effort. The impact of your gift of service in supporting people to come and practice on retreat is incalculable. The following material should begin to give you a general sense of what it means to make a commitment to the lifestyle and mission of Cloud Mountain by joining the residential staff.

It is possible to come to Cloud Mountain from any Buddhist tradition. However, it is vital that you have a regular meditation practice already in place. One of the greatest benefits of being on staff at Cloud Mountain is to use the living opportunity here to deepen your own understanding and meditative practice experience. Your own daily meditation practice will be the most solid foundation and support for your life at Cloud Mountain. Our experience has shown us that, in general, individuals who do not already have their own meditation practice in place are confronted with significant difficulties in adapting. We would also suggest that you carefully review our retreat schedule and the description of the teachers and retreats. You will notice that most of the teachers come from the Theravadan tradition. You may want to consider whether you feel that the teachers and retreats offered here would be in line with and helpful to your own practice.

Staff-practitioners have the opportunity, as the work schedule allows, to sit with and interview with many of the teachers on our retreat schedule. Since the typical group retreat schedule has meditation sessions from early morning through late evening, there are opportunities, as the work schedule allows, to join the group retreat for meditation, as well as sit in on the instruction sessions and evening Dharma talks. Staff members are always welcome to participate in the retreats to the degree that the work schedule permits. This is one of the major benefits Cloud Mountain has to offer, and acts as one of the greatest supports to deepen one's meditation practice.

To cover some practical and logistical matters: Cloud Mountain is located in rural southwestern Washington. The retreat center set on five acres of wooded property. There are a few neighboring houses on the road, which is a dead-end, so we have little traffic, but we are set amidst many acres of land owned by timber companies, so the area is sparsely populated. Castle Rock is the nearest town (population about 2000), about 10 miles from the center, and Longview is the nearest small city of 30,000, about 20 miles away. Portland, Oregon, is the closest metropolitan area, about 60 miles south of Castle Rock, and Seattle is about 125 miles north.

For housing, each staff-practitioner has a private living space consisting of a downstairs living area with a bathroom and an upstairs meditation/sleeping loft, or one of the other private living spaces. The building is conveniently located on the retreat property.

We do not want you to use your valuable time pursuing a position with us only to find there were some things that you needed to know from the onset that would have helped you make the decision whether or not to continue with this process. Please be aware that the following are requirements:

- 1) It is our expectation that individuals be willing to commit to take a staff-practitioner position for a period of one year. If you are thinking of a shorter time commitment, we recommend that you inquire about our work-retreatant position.
- 2) Since all of the staff lives at Cloud Mountain, we require that applicants come for a work visit (preferably for a minimum of five to seven days) as part of the interview process. It is important, from both your side and ours, that we have a good fit. The work visit allows the applicant to be able to see firsthand some of what may be involved in working and living at Cloud Mountain and allows the staff and managers to be able to meet with the applicant. For us to be able to meet the person who may come on staff is especially important because we are a small community of usually no more than five or six people, and the arrival of every new person impacts the community to a strong degree.
- 3) We do not accept any pets.
- 4) We are not able to accept children of any age or a live-in partner or spouse.

An information letter can only cover so much material. We are happy to answer any questions that may not be addressed in this letter. Please call or email if anything seems unclear or if you have any questions about Cloud Mountain or more about the specifics of the job for which you are applying if you would like to do so before continuing with the application process.

If you are still interested in applying for a staff-practitioner position, please send us a complete work history or resume, which would include:

- 1) All places of employment and address, with:
- 2) Job title and duties,
- 3) Skills learned in the job,
- 4) Dates (month and year began the job and month and year left the job) worked there, and
- 5) Supervisor's name or other work-related reference with contact numbers.

Please also include the name and phone number of three (3) work references and two (2) personal references.

We also ask everyone for a letter of interest in which we would like to know:

- Why do you wish to live and work in a Dharma center? What benefits do you hope to receive from living and working at Cloud Mountain?
- Have you lived and worked in a spiritual center/community before?
- What is your understanding of the path of service?
- What is your meditation practice and path? Please provide details about the exact nature of your meditative practice, retreats you've attended, and teachers you've practiced with. Please be as detailed as possible.
- Are you going through a difficult life change/transition and how are you working with it?
- What is your ideal vision of your living and working life? What are your hopes or expectations about community living, work schedule, center or area activities, social environment and practice opportunities?
- Is there anything you would like to share with us about your life and personal circumstances? What do you do for entertainment and pleasure? How would you describe your social needs?
- Please comment on your willingness and ability to honor and live by the five precepts that are followed and practiced by Dharma practitioners the world over. See "Five Precepts" sheet enclosed.

We also need some medical information:

- Do you have any physical limitations?
- Are you or have you recently been under a doctor's care?
- Are you taking any medications?
- Do you have a history of depression or mental illness?

Also:

- Does your history include any misdemeanor or felony arrests? Any convictions? If yes, what were the circumstances?

You can email or fax the information requested, as that would expedite the process. We hope this information provides a thorough overview of the application process, and an adequate introduction to what is involved in joining the Cloud Mountain residential staff. We look forward to hearing from you.

Work Retreatant Positions

From time to time, we take work retreatants. Work retreatants receive no stipend or dana, and work approximately four to five hours per day, five days per week. Work times are scheduled to allow the work retreatant the most opportunity to sit in on any retreats. These positions are for experienced meditators who wish to integrate the activities of daily life with formal meditation practice while working in a silent retreat environment. The minimum stay for a work retreatant is one month.

If you are interested in a work retreatant position, please answer the above questions, except for those questions asking about your work history and asking for references. However, please include a general summary of any work experience or skills that might be helpful in grounds-work, housekeeping, or cooking.

With best wishes,

David Branscomb – Executive Director
Laura Hauer – Business Director

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Staff Positions Available

Integrating the activities of daily life with formal meditation practice is key to profound and lasting spiritual transformation. Mindfully observing ourselves throughout our daily activities allows us to deeply understand where our hearts and minds are open and where they are still closed. Cloud Mountain staff have the opportunity to explore work as practice in a supportive environment. We strive to create a work environment where we see our work as an essential aspect of our spiritual practice. As such, we seek mature and responsible staff that have a commitment to the exploration of bringing the practice of mindfulness to bear on all activities of daily life, who have a stable and established meditation practice, who have a dedication to service in a retreat environment, and have a good work ethic.

What we are looking for in the person seeking any of these positions is someone who:

- Is willing to make a one-year commitment
- Is willing to give six (6) weeks notice before leaving position
- Works gently and kindly with people
- Can work independently and alone, without supervision
- Has efficient time management skills and can work efficiently
- Can work collaboratively and as a team
- Has the ability to prioritize
- Is flexible in adjusting to changing circumstances
- Has a stable meditation practice and can utilize the available resources to deepen his or her practice
- Has been on at least one silent meditation retreat, preferably at least a 7-day silent meditation retreat

Because all staff positions are residential, the following are required due to the residential nature:

- A strong interest in service and community living
- Attendance at morning staff meditation periods
- An established daily meditation practice

Benefits for all staff include:

- Stipend of \$400 per month plus dana (offerings of money at the end of retreats to the staff which averages about \$250 a month)
- \$1200 bonus upon satisfactory completion of the one-year commitment
- Private living space
- Meals
- Use of facilities (laundry, sauna, Internet)
- The opportunity to participate in a variety of retreats (as work permits) at no cost.

The following descriptions of each position we have here at Cloud Mountain can only be generally described. Since we are a small staff, the tasks and duties of each staff member may change according to the priorities of what needs to be done. We see each position more as a staff position at Cloud Mountain serving the retreats, the retreatants, and the community, and supporting the purpose and mission of Cloud Mountain, rather than a fixed boundary position with clearly defined job duties.

KITCHEN MANAGER

Responsibilities include: menu planning; shopping, preparing and serving vegetarian meals for retreats; organization of kitchen; coordination of kitchen helpers. The work-week varies according to the retreat schedule, but averages 30 - 35 hours a week. The ideal candidate has experience or training in cooking for groups. However, we can train individuals with strong basic cooking skills.

When there are no retreats or between retreats or when the kitchen manager is not cooking, the kitchen manager may also be given other tasks or duties as assigned by the Center Manager. During longer periods of time (especially during the winter) when there are no retreats, the kitchen manager will work on the grounds or on interior projects.

Cuisine is vegetarian with emphasis on simplicity. We cook with dairy and eggs on occasion, but also provide for some common special dietary needs, e.g., wheat or dairy free. The main retreat meal is served at midday, with a light soup for the evening meal. Meals are served for 25 to 50 people. Volunteers assist with preparation and do most of the clean-up. During retreat, other staff members provide relief cooking. The kitchen manager is not responsible for meals for staff between retreats.

Must have driver's license and must be able to lift at least 40 pounds.

HOUSEKEEPER/RELIEF COOK

Responsibilities include: relief cooking; pre- and post-retreat set up; ongoing housekeeping and interior cleaning; deep cleaning; inventory and restocking of center supplies; working with volunteers when they are assigned to cleaning duties. The work-week varies according to the retreat schedule, but averages 30 - 35 hours a week.

The housekeeper/relief cook may also be given other tasks or duties as assigned by the Center Manager. The housekeeper/relief cook will work on the grounds or other projects when there is no housekeeping or interior cleaning.

Must be able to lift at least 40 pounds.

GROUNDS & MAINTENANCE

Responsibilities include:

Maintenance: such as building repairs and maintenance including carpentry (some light construction,) fixing faucets, clearing a plugged toilet or drain, interior and exterior painting, replacing a smoke detector, repairing a water line or valve, putting up a shelves, replacing light fixtures, etc.

Grounds: such as mowing lawns; raking leaves; leaf-blowing (using a back-pack blower); turning garden beds and compost heaps; cutting branches and limbs; weed control; clearing roofs and gutters.

The grounds & maintenance staff person also provides relief cooking as needed. The work-week varies according to the retreat schedule, but averages 30 - 35 hours a week.

The grounds & maintenance staff person may also be given other tasks or duties as assigned by the Center Manager. The grounds & maintenance staff person will work on interior or cleaning projects or other projects if unable to work on the grounds or in maintenance.

Staff Cooperation

Because of the nature of the community living and working at Cloud Mountain, all staff members are expected to maintain a sense of service toward the overall operation of the center and toward the retreats and retreatants. This means maintaining an open and generous attitude toward all duties generally carried out by other staff members. There can be much overlap of activities and sharing of duties, while maintaining responsibility for one's own job. The more integration and sharing within and between the staff, the healthier and more alive the overall community will be, for both the staff members themselves as well as for the retreatants.

Personal Practice, Growth, & Development

It is anticipated that individuals who join the staff here at Cloud Mountain will have a sincere and genuine interest in developing themselves through meditation, mindfulness, service, study, and practice. While we cannot force anyone to be a certain way or work to further one's own growth and potential, we do highly encourage (expect) the staff of Cloud Mountain to hold these elements near and dear to their own hearts. Our individual and collective purpose for being here is to do what we can on a personal level as well as on a community level to help facilitate an environment conducive to practice, growth, and development for those traveling the spiritual path. To do so and for our mission to be successful, it must all start right here, with and inside our own being, the members of staff, as a matter of personal habit and as an example of practice in action for the retreatants.

The Five Precepts

These precepts are offered to guide the ethical behavior of the Cloud Mountain community. Retreatants, staff, teachers, board members, and volunteers are all requested to do their best to cultivate these precepts while at Cloud Mountain Retreat Center. They are intended as standards we can internalize as a foundation for our practice, as the Buddha intended. Living by the precepts is an act of great generosity to all beings we encounter.

1. Refraining from Killing:

Aware of the suffering caused by the destruction of life, I will cultivate the precept of not killing, and will not encourage others to kill. In undertaking this precept, I acknowledge the interconnection of all sentient beings.

2. Refraining from Stealing:

Aware of the suffering caused by exploitation, injustice and stealing, I agree not to take anything that does not belong to me or has not been freely offered, and to respect the property of others. I will be honest in my dealings with money.

3. Refraining from Sexual Misconduct:

Aware of the suffering caused by sexual misconduct, I will avoid creating harm through sexuality, and will avoid sexual exploitation or breaking commitments of sexual fidelity.

4. Refraining from False Speech:

Aware of the suffering caused by unmindful and untrue words, I will undertake the training of speaking truthfully, with beneficial words. I will cultivate deep listening. I will refrain from gossip about others. I will attempt, with kindness and honesty, to resolve any conflicts I have with other people.

5. Refraining from the Use of Intoxicants:

Aware of the suffering caused by unmindful consumption of intoxicants, I will refrain from abusing them, including non-medicinal drugs and alcohol.

We also ask that you bear in mind the principles of stewardship and generosity while at Cloud Mountain. I will refrain from wasting the resources upon which other beings depend. I will not be possessive of people or things, but will undertake to give of myself for the alleviation of suffering and the well being of all.