

Dear Friend,

Thank you for your inquiry about staff-practitioner positions at Cloud Mountain Retreat Center. The following is intended to provide some overview information about what it means to support Cloud Mountain's mission as a Dharma center by joining our staff.

WHERE WE ARE:

Cloud Mountain is located in rural southwestern Washington. The retreat center is set on fourteen acres of peaceful property deep in the forest. There are a few neighboring houses on the road, which is a dead-end, so we have little traffic, and 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 2200), about 10 miles from the center, and Longview is the nearest small city (population about 37,000) about 20 miles away. Portland, Oregon, is the closest metropolitan area, about 60 miles south of Castle Rock. Seattle is 125 miles north.

HOUSING:

For residential staff, housing is provided at no charge. Each staff-practitioner has a private, lightly furnished living suite consisting of a downstairs living area with a private bathroom and an upstairs meditation/sleeping loft. A kitchenette area provides a refrigerator, electric tea kettle, microwave and toaster. The main staff residence building is conveniently located on the retreat property.

FOOD:

Our retreat menus are lacto-ovo vegetarian (i.e., includes eggs and dairy) with an emphasis on using unprocessed, whole foods and providing nutritional balance. Some of our recipes include dairy and eggs, but we provide wheat-free, dairy free and vegan options as needed. During retreat, we serve three meals per day. The main retreat meal is served at midday. A complete breakfast with hot cereal for the morning meal and offer soup and bread for the evening meals.

For residential staff, when onsite, food from our standard inventory is provided at no cost. For non-residential staff, food is provided during your work shift. All meals are provided when retreats are in progress. Outside of retreat time, staff members generally prepare food for themselves out of the standard kitchen inventory or eat leftovers.

ADDITIONAL ONSITE AMENITIES:

Utilities are provided free of charge. Each staff member also has full access to our onsite gym/weight room, laundry and staff lounge. The staff lounge contains a computer with internet access for general staff use and is available 24 hours per day. Alternatively, a staff member can purchase their own internet service plan independently.

WORKWEEK:

The workweek usually offers a consistent 5-days-on, 2-days off pattern. However, sometimes off-days must shift slightly depending on retreat length, so perfect regularity cannot be guaranteed. Depending on the position, the workweek for residential staff averages about 31 – 33 hours, or a little over 6 hours per day.

ACCESS TO TEACHERS AND GROUP MEDITATION:

Staff members have the opportunity, as the work schedule allows, to meditate with and interact one-on-one with virtually all 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. You might also have the opportunity to sit in on some of the instruction sessions and most evening Dharma talks. On days off, staff members may fully participate in retreats. 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.

There are no formal group meditations among the residential community at this time. However, individuals with similar meditation scheduling preferences are welcome to connect with each other to set up meditation times together.

BEYOND THE PRACTICALITIES --WHAT IT'S LIKE, BOTH THE REWARDS AND CHALLENGES

It is our wish that individuals who join the staff here at Cloud Mountain will have a sincere and genuine interest in exploring their nature and cultivating themselves through meditation, mindfulness, service, study, and practice. 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. For our mission to be successful, it must all start right here, with our own existence, as a matter of personal aspiration and as an example of practice in action for the retreatants.

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 members 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 awareness to 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 an impeccable work ethic.

The staff both live and work at Cloud Mountain, and developing and maintaining harmonious community is challenging but essential. It is especially important given the work we do of supporting our retreatants as they engage their spiritual practice. We seek individuals whose aspirations, skills, and level of spiritual development are in accord with our mission. 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 who come and practice on retreat is incalculable, as are the deep and lasting benefits to you.

In many ways, taking on a staff-practitioner position is as much like engaging in a kind of long-term retreat as it is taking on a job (although it is indeed a job!). As a kind of retreat, the balance of our attentions is reversed from how we practice on a formal retreat. On a regular retreat, meditation practice occupies our primary focus, with the foundational practices of ethical and moral cultivation (sila), generosity (dana) and the cultivation of the "perfections" (the refined qualities of our humanity, or "virtues") in the periphery of our direct attention and energy.

In a staff-practitioner position, our practice focus shifts. Meditation is just one activity amidst the vast scope of life-practice. We offer our service to practice generosity. We renounce unhealthy and unethical behaviors to maintain an environment of trustworthiness and harmlessness for all who live,

work and come to practice. We cultivate the qualities of renunciation, wisdom, energy, patience, truthfulness, resolution, loving-kindness and equanimity to refine our humanity. We hold the wish to benefit all beings, not just ourselves. All of this takes place as we willingly step into the rock-tumbler of daily life as experienced through our work and relationships. To borrow a Zen metaphor, we are polishing the mirror of our own heart-mind. It is an incremental process that requires the friction of life as its fuel, and can be phenomenally rewarding. It is a dance of renunciation and cultivation that deepens our wisdom and insight. It is a way to cultivate exquisite balance and a deep understanding of our daily life as practice.

The rewards are great, but so are the challenges and the expectations of each staff-practitioner. Living and working in close quarters is guaranteed to put pressure on the ego-structure. It is important to be prepared to acknowledge, accept and work skillfully with one's own "baggage" or "shadows." One must have the willingness to accept whatever face the mirror reflects back and embrace the lessons that arise as they arise, both pleasant and unpleasant. As a community we support one another on each one's journey, but each one of us must have the courage, commitment and capacity to undertake explorations and healing that is ours and ours alone. One's own commitment to spiritually maturing is the most solid foundation and support for successfully integrating all of life's activities into one's practice at Cloud Mountain.

WHO WILL OR WILL NOT BENEFIT FROM A STAFF PRACTITIONER POSITION?

Although Cloud Mountain is a Buddhist center, it is possible to come to Cloud Mountain from any spiritual tradition as long as you have an interest in, respect for, and familiarity with Buddhist teachings. It is very important that you already have a regular meditation practice in place, or the equivalent spiritual grounding if coming from a tradition outside of Buddhism.

For those who do not yet have a strong spiritual foundation – for example, who are looking to establish a meditation practice – Cloud Mountain is not a good fit. For those new to meditation or who feel they would benefit from more formal spiritual structure and guidance, we would be happy to recommend other centers that offer more support of that kind. Our experience has shown us that, in general, individuals who do not already have their own meditation practice or prior retreat experience are confronted with significant difficulties in adapting to the silent retreat environment. Those who lack an understanding of Buddhism may have difficulty aligning themselves with many of the principles and values we uphold in our work, in how we relate to one another and in how we support the retreatants and teachers who come.

WORK ETHOS:

Staff-practitioners must have an exemplary work ethic. One must be equally adept at functioning with a high level of autonomy and accountability and also as a reliable and humble team member. There are only 7 full-time and 1 part-time staff members running Cloud Mountain year-round. (Compare this to larger centers where the total retreat size may be a little more than double our maximum of 44 retreatants, but where you might find a staff of 40 – 60 people.) The way we accomplish this is to work as a team of deeply committed, generous and supremely flexible individuals. No one "stakes out territory" or says, "That's not my job." And no one is too special to do a dirty job. Even the Executive Director plunges toilets or takes a cooking day as needed.

The following positions at Cloud Mountain are described below. 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. Because of the nature of community life and work at Cloud Mountain, all staff members are expected to

maintain a sense of cooperative service toward the overall operation of the center and toward the retreats and retreatants. This means maintaining an open and generous attitude toward accomplishing all duties, even sometimes those generally carried out by other staff members. There can be much overlap of activities and sharing of responsibilities, while maintaining primary responsibility for one's own job. There is a degree of fluidity in the staff positions at Cloud Mountain since the needs related to serving the retreats, the retreatants, fellow staff members, and supporting the purpose and mission of Cloud Mountain can extend beyond our ability to comprehensively list.

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

- Works gently, kindly and generously with others
- Has exceptional ethics
- Can work independently and efficiently without supervision
- Can effectively coordinate and cooperate with others in achieving a common goal
- Has excellent communication, organizational and time-management skills
- Takes pleasure in teamwork
- Has the ability to prioritize tasks, but is flexible in adjusting to changing circumstances
- Is willing to consider offering 12 - 18 months of Dharma service in this position
- Has strong spiritual aspirations and can utilize the available resources to deepen his/her/their practice
- Has a stable meditation practice in place
- Has sat at least two silent meditation retreats, preferably of at least 7-days
- Is willing to give at least 8 weeks' notice if possible before leaving a position

Benefits for Residential Staff-Practitioners include:

- Competitive compensation package
- Health Insurance, including vision and dental coverage
- Paid vacation
- Paid sick leave
- A private living suite, with sleeping area, living area, bathroom and kitchenette
- Food provided while on site
- Use of facilities (laundry, staff lounge, gym/weight room)
- An approximately 32-hour workweek, designed to provide time for spiritual practice and participation in retreats
- The opportunity to participate in a variety of retreats at no cost
- Opportunities for one-on-one connections with teachers of diverse traditions and lineages.

Benefits for Non-Residential Staff-Practitioners include:

- Competitive compensation package
- Health Insurance, including vision and dental (if working a 20-hour workweek)
- Paid vacation
- Paid sick leave
- Food provided while on site
- Use of facilities (staff lounge, gym/weight room)
- The opportunity to participate in a variety of retreats at no cost
- Opportunities for one-on-one discussions with teachers of diverse traditions and lineages.

Position Descriptions

Kitchen Manager: Responsibilities include:

- cooking for groups of up to 50 people from established and pre-planned vegetarian menus
- training, coaching and supervising retreatants in their retreat chores, which include clean-up and some light food-prep tasks
- tracking inventory
- food ordering/procurement from multiple vendors
- maintaining high standards of cleanliness and hygiene in kitchen facilities and procedures
- maintaining kitchen facilities and procedures in accord with county health department mandates
- maintaining the established kitchen budget.

The ideal candidate has experience in cooking for groups. No formal kitchen management experience is required. If you have excellent organizational skills, very strong basic cooking skills, the ability to guide and manage retreatants in their working meditation tasks, and an aptitude for strategic and practical planning, we can train you. During periods between retreats or when there are longer stretches without retreats, the Kitchen Manager may be assigned other tasks or duties by the Center Manager, which may include projects in the office, on the grounds or assisting the housekeeping staff.

Cuisine is vegetarian with emphasis on simplicity. Some of our recipes include dairy and eggs, but we provide wheat-free, dairy free and vegan options as needed. We prepare three meals per day. The main retreat meal is served at midday. We provide a complete breakfast with hot cereal for the morning meal and offer soup and bread for the evening meals. (Please note: our kitchen operations and menu plans are long-established and function extremely well in their current form. This position does not offer creative opportunities for generating new menus or procedures except as instructed by the Center Manager.)

Retreatants assist with food preparation and do most of the clean-up. Candidates for this position must have excellent interpersonal skills and management aptitude.

During retreats, other staff members provide relief cooking. The kitchen manager is not responsible for providing meals for staff between retreats.

Hours vary according to retreat schedule but average 32 hours per week. Must be able to lift 50 pounds. Must have valid driver's license and be willing to furnish driving record. Must be able to obtain a Food Handler's Permit.

Operations Manager: This position involves responsibilities for fundamental aspects of retreat facilitation and logistics. Some specific responsibilities include:

- pre- and post-retreat set up of the center, including the meditation hall, teachers' quarters, retreatant sleeping areas, shower and bathroom facilities
- training, coaching and supervising retreatants in their retreat chores (done in conjunction with the Kitchen Manager) and coordination of center clean-up by volunteers
- checking in arriving retreatants and completing chore lists
- ongoing housekeeping and interior cleaning
- inventory and restocking of center supplies

- *maintaining a high level of cleanliness, efficiency, safety and organization within the physical facility*
- *up to 3 days of relief cooking per week as required by the retreat schedule. The work-week varies according to the retreat schedule, but averages 32 hours a week. The Operations Manager may occasionally be asked to assist in the office, on the grounds, or on other projects as the need arises.*

Retreatants assist with ongoing upkeep tasks and do most of the final clean-up of the entire center at the end of retreats. Candidates for this position must have excellent interpersonal skills and management aptitude.

Hours vary according to retreat schedule but average 32 hours per week. Must be able to lift 50 pounds. Must have valid driver's license and be willing to furnish driving record. Must be able to obtain a Food Handler's Permit.

Application Guidelines

- 1) It is our hope that individuals be willing to take on a staff-practitioner position for a period of 12 - 18 months. Although there is no implied commitment and this is an at-will position, due to the amount of training required to be successful in this position, a candidate's life circumstances should be open and flexible enough to allow for the possibility of holding a position for 12 – 18 months.
- 2) In most instances, we ask that applicants be willing to 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 is involved in working and living at Cloud Mountain, and allows the staff to be able to meet with the applicant. For us to be able to meet in-person with someone who may come on staff is especially important because we are such a small community. The arrival of every new person impacts the community to a strong degree, so we want to make the best choice possible for everyone's benefit.
- 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.
- 5) We can only consider applications from US citizens or other government-authorized applicants, i.e. green card holders or those with a work visa.

APPLICATION MATERIALS:

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 email if anything seems unclear, if you have any questions about Cloud Mountain or about the specifics of the job for which you are applying.

Please send us a resume that covers at least the last 10 years and including:

1. Places of employment and addresses, with:
2. Job title and duties
3. Skills utilized in the job
4. Dates with month and year job began as well as the month and year job ended and why
5. Supervisor's name (with contact number or email whenever possible).

Please also include the name and phone number of three (3) work references and two (2) personal references. If you have an ongoing relationship with a spiritual teacher or guide, it would be ideal if you could please provide their name and contact information as one of your personal references.

Additionally, we ask everyone for a letter of interest in which you address the following questions. (For individuals applying for non-residential positions, you may modify your responses to the first three questions to focus on only the “working aspect,” without the “living”):

- 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?
- Describe your practice of generosity.
- 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?
- How do you distinguish between “personal,” “practice” and “work” time?
- 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. Do you practice them now? Which one is most difficult for you or do you foresee as most difficult for you?
- Do you use illegal drugs, alcohol or other intoxicants?
- Can you perform all the duties of the position as described in the attached position description?
- Can you meet all of the work requirements as detailed above and in the following position description?

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.

With best wishes,
Laura Hauer
Cloud Mountain Executive Director

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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, while on the Cloud Mountain property or when using Cloud Mountain equipment, I will refrain from using them, including non-prescription drugs, alcohol and marijuana (including “medical-use” marijuana).

We also ask that you bear in mind the principles of responsible ecological and planetary stewardship while at Cloud Mountain.

I will refrain from wasting the resources upon which all beings depend or harming the health of the planet. 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.