

Kadampa Center's New Building is Consecrated

By Barb Baranski

Celebration was in the balmy air of Raleigh, North Carolina as Lama Zopa Rinpoche joined members and friends of Kadampa Center in July for a week of teachings and events to consecrate Kadampa Center's new building. On his first night, Rinpoche led a Guru Puja as center members rejoiced in his safe arrival.

Later in the week, almost 200 people stood outside the center as Rinpoche and other senior Sangha (Geshe Gelek, Ven. Roger, Ven. Tonden, and Ven. Kunsang) led prayers leading up to the ceremonial ribbon cutting to officially open the building. After the ribbon cutting everyone moved inside the gompa where Rinpoche taught and talked about how incredible it is to be able to offer such a space for anyone to come and learn more about the Dharma.

Rinpoche also blessed Kadampa Center by personally signing copies of his book, *Dear Lama Zopa*. Smiles were shared all around as he spoke with each person individually before writing in their book.

Children were also a big part of the celebration, and their laughter, along with Rinpoche's, filled the gompa. Kadampa Center has a growing Children's Program – a group of its participants offered Rinpoche a sound offering by chanting the four immeasurables prayer in Tibetan. Rinpoche then gave a short teaching to the children and the transmission of Chenrezig, Shakyamuni Buddha and other mantras. Then the children lined up and each offered Rinpoche a flower and khata. He responded with gifts of small stuffed animals, bubbles and popsicles. With gifts in tow and lots of happy faces, each child circumambulated Rinpoche's throne.

During his visit, Rinpoche gave an unexpected explanation of close placement of mindfulness on the body, feelings, mind and phenomena and a series of accompanying guided meditations. He also taught extensively on the importance of refuge and the power of holy objects, encouraging us to have as many as possible in our homes. Rinpoche commented that it is very good to have some placed so that they are the first thing one sees upon awakening in the morning.

Near the end of Rinpoche's visit, he offered refuge and lay vows to about forty individuals, who joyfully listened as Rinpoche explained the Three Jewels and why they are worthy objects of refuge.



From this ... and thanks to Geshe Gelek's input ...



to this.

STOP PRESS!

Lama Zopa Rinpoche has, from his own side, committed to teaching Atisha's *Lamp of the Path to Enlightenment* in its entirety, to be held in annual sessions at Kadampa Center starting in the latter half of 2009. It is rare and precious enough for Rinpoche to commit to teaching the entirety of a text, but especially significant for him to do so with a text of such historical significance. A key transmission of the Kadampa lineage, *Lamp of the Path* revitalized the Buddhist dharma in Tibet and led to the creation of the Lam Rim tradition, as codified by Lama Tsongkhapa. Rinpoche's current thinking is that the full teaching will take three more years to complete.

Many volunteers worked for months to bring this wonderful series of events to fruition, including many people who had never met Rinpoche before. The clarity and power



The opening ceremony was attended by 200 people. Rinpoche received flowers from the children.

of Rinpoche's teachings and advice made all that effort joyous. It was wonderful to witness the effect Rinpoche has on people – even those relatively new to Buddhism. His visit brought our community together even more strongly than before and inspired huge amounts of rejoicing.

Kadampa Center purchased the building in January 2007, and held its first teachings there, with the help of Ven. Robina Courtin, in July 2007. A lot of hard work from many members and friends of Kadampa Center went into

transforming the former aquarium and fish store into a beautiful FPMT center.

When work started, the building was a mostly empty shell, with concrete floors and moldy drywall. Over the last eighteen months, volunteers replaced drywall, put up walls, put down floors, painted, cleaned, decorated, installed cabinetry, landscaped, and all sorts of odd jobs to make the space a comfortable home for the Dharma. Patrick McGinnity led the team that installed the beautiful cabinetry for the altar and to hold the full set of texts donated by

generous benefactors. Thank you Rinpoche for visiting and blessing our space!

Improvements will continue, and Kadampa Center hopes to soon start building a 14-foot marble Kadampa stupa in front of the building along the busy roadway that runs past the center. Rinpoche offered advice on placement of the stupa to maximize its benefit to sentient beings. ☸

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