

Friends of Taktse *UPDATE*

February 2011 • "Thank You" Edition

Taktse International School
PO Box 90, Gangtok, Sikkim, India 737101 • www.taktse.org

Thank you for your generous support!

People expressed their support for Taktse in many ways in 2010, including house parties, donations of books, videos, cameras, computers, educational CDs, other gifts, and by making generous financial contributions.



Following are stories of people turning their talents and energies to helping Taktse. The list is incomplete—many more of you have contributed in so many ways, for which we are extremely grateful.

Wendy Cooling of Hertfordshire, England, a well-known author of children's books, visited Taktse in November. Taktse's Maria Lauenstein enthused: "*Wendy is absolutely amazing. We met her at [Bookaroo](#). She brought us a ton of books from the UK where she is a literacy advocate for kids from homes without books. She even won a medal from the Queen! She gave book talks, and inspired our kids and teachers to read like crazy!*"

Marion Institute

Marion Institute, Taktse's 501(c)(3) sponsor, provided essential support for the Capital Campaign, which is making construction of the new building possible. The new building will allow Taktse to provide more students with educational opportunities not found elsewhere in the region.

Connecting for Change

Last October, Taktse volunteers **Aka Denjongpa, Sao Pires, Katie Wandtke, Sherry Dickstein, Kurt Lauenstein, Emily Cherniack, Lonnie Friedman, and Paul Lauenstein** manned a booth to promote Taktse at [Connecting for Change](#), a three-day conference in New Bedford organized by the Marion Institute. The conference was a huge success, (*cont. on p. 4*)



10th grader Sagun Limboo said, "*The school has gained a lot from Ms. Wendy! I loved all the picture books that she brought for us, and the novels as well! For me, there is no greater joy than having a corner to myself, oblivious to the world and living in a fantasy that the author has created through words. It's magical, and Ms. Wendy has added a bit of her own magic.*"

10th grader Pooja Tamang commented, "*When an inspiring person like Ms. Wendy visits Taktse, it is very helpful for all of us. I love her British accent. Students who I thought would never read for fun were reading books that Ms. Wendy talked about.*"

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Taktse Teachers Come to America

Taktse principal Pintso Lauenstein-Denjongpa, administrative officer Rekha Jain, and grade 3 teacher Dawa Bhuti visited the United States for professional development during Taktse's winter break. They visited schools in Massachusetts, New York, and North Carolina.



In addition to professional development, the Taktse teachers got a chance to experience America, thanks to the generosity of the many friends who hosted and escorted them.

In Massachusetts, the teachers visited Salem Harbor, the New England Aquarium, the Beverly Library, and the Marion Institute. They were amazed by American supermarkets and the Apple Store, and took photos with the statue of Red Auerbach. Members of the Cambridge Coop hosted them.

Diane Jirka organized a Taktse party at Waring School. Pintso, a graduate of Waring, spoke about Taktse's origins, mission, and progress. Peter Smick, headmaster of Waring, commented on the two schools' shared dedication to progressive education.



On the bus ride to New York City, the teachers were amazed to be able to Skype their families in Sikkim. Allen Kang met them, and helped them negotiate the subway to Sharlene and Takashi Oyagi's apartment, where they stayed high above the city. In addition to visiting Bank Street School and Friends Seminary, they visited Times Square, took the ferry to the Statue of Liberty, toured the Museum of Natural History, and got front-row seats at The Lion King, thanks to the generosity of Louisa Heyward.



Pintso, Rekha and Dawa flew to Greensboro, NC in early January. Hosted by Sherry Dickstein and Kurt Lauenstein, they went ice skating for the first time in their lives, and visited the International Civil Rights museum.



At NC State University and Canterbury School, they made presentations and fielded questions about Taktse. They also spent a day visiting the Greensboro Day School.

Rekha Jain said, *"This trip really helped me grow, both professionally and personally. I look forward to sharing my experiences with my colleagues at Taktse."*

I would like to thank my friends in the United States for their enormous support."

Dawa Bhuti said, *"My first visit to the United States was amazing. I was impressed by the teaching, class management, community learning, interaction between teachers and students, and hands-on-activities in the schools that I visited. I extend my heartfelt thanks and gratitude to my principal Mr. Lauenstein-Denjongpa, his family, and friends of Taktse for making this trip a grand and memorable success."*



Everyone at Taktse is deeply appreciative of the efforts of all who assisted with the daunting logistics of this journey. Special thanks to Debbie Hilbert, Laila Goodman, Celene Lyon, Tsewang Tungkhar, Emily Cherniak, Sarah Mowitt, Bill Smith and others who chauffeured the teachers to schools and landmarks, hosted them for meals and places to stay, and arranged school visits.



Schools Visited

Massachusetts

Acton Barn School
Atrium School
Gann Academy
Lesley University
Peabody School
Phoenix School
Waring School

New York

Bank Street School
Friends Seminary

North Carolina

Canterbury School
Greensboro Day School
NC State University





Aka, Sao & Katie W. at Connecting for Change

(cont. from p. 1) attracting over 2,000 visitors to hear inspirational speakers and performers, and connect with others trying to make a better world.

People stopping at the Taktse booth received Taktse bookmarks, and learned about Taktse's progressive approach to education. Aka, Sao and Katie described their recent experiences as resource people at Taktse.

Many attendees signed up to receive the Taktse newsletter, some of whom expressed interest in volunteering at Taktse.

Aka sold Sikkimese products such as tea, fabrics, handbags and biodegradable leaf plates. Aka's business, [Kada Imports](#), donates a portion of its sales to Taktse.

Keynote speaker Greg Mortenson, author of bestseller [Three Cups of Tea](#), made an inspirational talk about education in mountainous regions of Central Asia, where his efforts have provided basic education to over 64,000 students. He emphasized the importance of education, saying, *"We tend to think about poverty in monetary terms. We should think about poverty as a lack of education, of the ability to make decisions. Education is part of the answer to peace."*

Resource People

Aka Denjongpa escorted **Nancy Bonne**, **Sao Pires**, **Katie Ryan**, and **Katie Wandtke** to Sikkim in June.

Aka helped organize the administration office and helped schedule the resource people. He arranged trips to the Samdruptse statue, Tsongu Lake, and Enchey Monastery, and blessings from His Holiness **Dodrupchen Rinpoche**.

"Taktse is a powerful and energetic place, a blend of Himalayan culture and modern technology, addressing issues typical of developing countries. The people are shy, but when they open up, their faces light up into brilliant smiles."



Debbie Hilbert and her husband **Andy Knapp** were so inspired at a Taktse House Party hosted by **Ann and Dan Lasman** that they traveled to Taktse in October to see it for themselves.

Debbie commented, *"We were impressed by how bright the students are, by their command of English, and by what they are accomplishing in the classroom."*

Andy provided leadership training for the faculty and staff, with a focus on specific skills that can be incorporated into a formal leadership curriculum for students as well as a professional development program for faculty/staff.

Debbie, who has extensive experience with non-profit organizations, did staff training in grant writing and foundation relations. She also explained to ninth graders how U.S. non-profits operate, worked with teachers and



students on knitting projects, and taught first and second graders arithmetic and probability (under the guise of the game of Yahtzee).



Eric Fingleson spent two weeks at Taktse last summer, attending classes and teaching international business to 9th and 10th graders.

"Taktse's vision of progressive education is unparalleled. It was incredible to see the excitement and energy of children from diverse places all speaking English and working extremely hard to master the curriculum. Based on what I saw at Taktse, I have high hopes for the future of Sikkim."

With the help of the Evergreen High School Boosters Club, **Katie Ryan** of Arvada, Colorado raised funds to purchase volleyball equipment for Taktse. She then journeyed to Sikkim and coached students and faculty, especially Mr. Karma and Mr. Namgyal, on the fundamentals of the game. In addition she taught reading and math, and has continued to mentor teachers via Skype.

"Taktse is so different from other schools in India. The teachers at Taktse never hit the children. Seeing positive reinforcement and great teaching was so wonderful!"



Katie Wandtke, a recent graduate of Denver University in international health care administration, visited Taktse in July. She worked on administration with Ms. Rekha, Ms. Tenzingla, and Ms. Tshering. She also taught Health and Wellness to the older students.

"The thing that struck me is the dedication of the Taktse teachers. They work so hard to ensure that their students are learning, absorbing and becoming individuals without limits. They are supportive and encouraging, and have me longing for more educators of their caliber in our school systems."

Linda Tobin, who tutors public school students in Cleveland, OH, has visited Taktse three times. In 2010 she spent two weeks tutoring Taktse students and meeting with parents and teachers to share her enthusiasm and love of books and learning.

"It has been a wonderful experience to come back and see the progress that the children have made during the past year! It is also fun to get to know some of the teachers, and see how devoted they are to helping their students expand their horizons."



Sneha Titus and **Kalpana Suryanarayan** of the Mallya Aditi International School in Bangalore, South India, spent three days at Taktse, helping teachers better understand the International General Certificate of Secondary Education (IGCSE) curriculum, 10th grade

exams, and university options in India. Of the time she spent at Taktse, Sneha said, *"It was a true meeting of the minds!"*



Miles Evans, a junior at Deerfield Academy, heard about Taktse at the Bioneers conference in New Bedford. He spent several months at Taktse, living with students in the dormitory, and organized Taktse's first science fair.

Peggy Steinhagen, an English Language Acquisition Teacher, visited Taktse after meeting Aka Lauenstein at a summer enrichment program for disadvantaged youth at Northern Arizona University. At Taktse, Peggy taught social studies, math, science and creative writing. She recently donated a microscope and other learning tools for Taktse's science room.



Sam Lasman, a Yale University senior, returned to Taktse for a second visit last July. Sam worked with Ms. Yolmo and her 7th and 8th graders to put on scenes from Shakespeare's Henry IV. Sam said, *"That the students were able to tackle and express the language of one of the greatest and most difficult writers in English was truly impressive, as was the dedication they put into making the show a success."* Sam also worked with Ms. Denjongpa and her 9th and 10th graders on structured, persuasive writing.

"Taktse has a truly magnetic quality - both times that I've left now, it's been with a firm conviction that I'll have to return. The two-year separation between my Taktse stints allowed me to see the changes that are occurring, and the creation of a vibrant school culture and community."

São Pires, a pediatric nurse at Children's Hospital in Boston, stayed at Taktse from late June through the end of July. She worked with Miss Sudha Gurung, Taktse's school nurse, and taught health classes for kindergarten through 10th grade, focusing on hand-washing, basic hygiene, and what to do in an emergency.

"I feel truly blessed that I was able to work with such dedicated faculty. The students and faculty were so welcoming, and my hosts made me feel at home."



Trish Crapo, a professional photographer and writer from Leyden, MA, visited Taktse for the second time this fall. She taught Taktse students how to take great photos, and combine them with creative writing and design to tell stories.

"It gave me such joy to watch my students gain confidence with cameras, have fun and capture some great shots. Most of all, I love that they are becoming more complex 'see-ers,' looking at the world around them with more developed concepts of story-telling and design."

Trish asked **George Rosa** and **Tony Downer** of the Hallmark Institute of Photography to donate cameras for students to practice with. They generously donated 15 cameras.



Jim Watras, an instructor at the Waring School in Beverly, MA, and **Dianne Jirka**, a staffer at Waring, traveled to Taktse last summer along with Waring students **Walker and Sam Staples**. They taught classes in English and math, and also helped Taktse 9th graders put on a production of Arthur Miller's play, The Crucible. For more on Taktse's production of The Crucible, see the September, 2010 issue of the Taktse Update newsletter at www.taktse.org.

Zoe Lauenstein visited Taktse in August, and stayed through the end of Taktse's school year in late November. She helped design the Taktse calendar, and served as liaison between other resource people and Taktse teachers and students. Zoe tutored a visiting Thai student in English, and assisted teachers and coaches. Zoe generously donated her laptop to the school.



Other Visitors

Anais Galli, a high school student from Switzerland, spent a month at Taktse working one-on-one with students, helping them put on a production of The Crucible and assisting with administrative projects.

Julia Kowalski and **Alex Hsu** spent a few days at Taktse. Julia made a presentation to the Taktse assembly on her human development doctoral dissertation.



Peter O'Keefe and **Renee Schlatter** taught theater exercises and made a presentation on their Peace Corps work in northern Thailand.

In-kind Donations

Taktse's circular library is the heart of the school, and each classroom has its own mini-library. Many supporters have donated their favorite books and videos to Taktse.



Nancy Bonne, whom students lovingly referred to as "Grandmother of the Library," passed away unexpectedly in July during her second visit to Taktse. At the memorial service, friends and relatives donated many books to Taktse in her memory.

Susan Long donated a Kindle e-book reader, opening a new realm of reading opportunities for Taktse students.

Thurston Tarter, **Jessica Anderson** and staff from the **Marion Institute** arranged for EMC Corporation to donate four laptop computers.

Kaye Hamilton-Smith and **David Johnston** are sponsoring a student at Taktse, and donated DVD movies and a DVD player.

Donate Books and Videos!

Share your favorite books and videos with Taktse students! Contact Lonnie Friedman at: lonnie.friedman@comcast.net





In addition to donating books, **Ann Lasman** donated English language tutorial CDs for primary and upper primary grades, to help Taktse students improve their English.

Taktse students now exercise their creative talents using Lego building blocks donated by **Harriet Kaufman**, who also donated books.

Tsering Yangzom, a production assistant for WGBH, generously donated wonderful DVDs, such as the [Arthur](#) series. Taktse Principal Pintso Lauenstein-Denjongpa was thrilled: *"We want our students to be active listeners and watchers. It helps so much to have engaging materials that stimulate in-depth discussions."*

Julia Rhodes, inventor and founder of [Kleenslate Concepts](#), donated some of her award-winning whiteboard paddles with erasable markers. Maria Denjongpa enthused, *"They are a fantastic assessment tool for whole-class teaching. All students write down their answers on their paddles, and show them to the teacher, who ascertains at a glance who understands and who needs help."*



Richard Wainwright, [author of books](#) for young people, stopped at Taktse's booth at the [Connecting for Change](#) conference in New Bedford. He generously donated several of his inspiring, beautifully illustrated books.

Kristen Bowers, President of [Secondary Solutions](#), gave Taktse a discount on literacy tools.

Paul Haskell of [Ram Design](#) donated FileMaker Pro software with an inventory module.

Trum Cary researched alternate ways of sending books to Taktse.

Heartfelt thanks to the many people who donated books, and to those who lugged suitcases full of books to Taktse. Through their efforts, Taktse has built a remarkable library of over 8,000 books.



House Parties

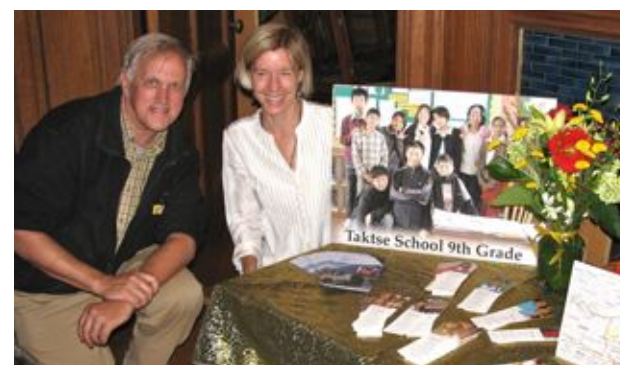


House parties are a great way for people to connect with each other and get involved with Taktse.

Emily Cherniack of Boston, **Sherry Dickstein** and **Kurt Lauenstein** of Greensboro, NC and **Ann and Dan Lasman** of Essex, MA all hosted parties to support Taktse in January, 2010.

In March, **Zahava Friedman** and **Aka Lauenstein-Denjongpa** hosted their second fundraiser in San Diego that raised \$690 for the school.

In September, **Sally Knight** organized a gathering of friends at her home in Brookline, MA with planning



Host a Taktse Party!

We'll help you put on a party to introduce your friends to Taktse School. Contact Lonnie Friedman at: lonnie.friedman@comcast.net

assistance from **Louisa Heyward**. After a slide show, guests who had been to Taktse shared their experiences.

In December, **Maria Lauenstein** of Beverly, MA hosted her annual New Year's Eve Taktse party.

New Hampshire Readers

As in past years, **Helen Lauenstein** organized the New Hampshire Readers, a group of volunteers who record children's books so young Taktse students can read along while listening to a native English speaker.

Mimi and Tom Adams, Milt Lauenstein, Janet Phypers, Mary Remensnyder, Hank Snow, Lois Swick, Sibyl Waterman, and Virginia Widmer narrated books, and **Jack Taylor** recorded.

Reading Buddies

Sheila McBroom, Debbie Hilbert, Andy Knapp, Trish Crapo, Lonnie Friedman, and Taktse teachers **Suman Pradhan, Grace Lepcha and Dawa Yolmo** all volunteered to be reading buddies with Taktse 9th graders. Volunteers will mentor students about The Book Thief through email correspondence over winter break, expressing how they connected to characters and themes, learning new vocabulary, and relating the book to what they learned in their WWII history classes. The 9th graders made a video to introduce themselves to the volunteers.

Technology Assistance

Aka Denjongpa created a Facebook presence for Taktse. Over 1,000 people are now Taktse fans. So far, Taktse's Facebook supporters have donated approximately \$3,000.

David Dvore patiently answered technical computer questions.

Friends in New Delhi

Thank you to our friends Karma Paljor at CNN-IBN, Pratap Penumalli at Google India, Anushka Ravishankar and Sayoni Basu of Scholastics India, and Jo Williams of Bookaroo for helping us expand our students' horizons.





2010 Donors

The Taktse Board of Directors, faculty, staff and students are deeply grateful to the following donors for their generous support of our school over the past year. We also acknowledge the generosity of past donors whose support has contributed so much to our success.

\$10,000 and up

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\$5,000 to \$9,999

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Ruth Gillies***

\$10 to \$99 (cont.)

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***in memory of Nancy Bonne

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(To add a friend, or unsubscribe to the Taktse UPDATE newsletter, email Aka Denjongpa at oneaka@gmail.com)