

# Ananda Sangha News

Ananda Sacramento

10450 Coloma Road, Rancho Cordova, CA 95670

916-361-0891

## Where is your bank?

Where is your bank? Have you filled it up, yet? Remember that cute little "Treasure Box" that you got last summer at the World Brotherhood Day Celebration? Or maybe you picked yours up in the foyer of the Mandir. Is it full of coins yet? We'll accept full banks at the mandir any time. Or, dump out the coins with us and fill it up again. When we get enough coins, Laura and the Sunday School kids will make a project out of rolling the coins. Remember, this money goes to the Instruments of Master's Light Campaign.



Our current total for the campaign is more than \$60,000. We have just 10 more months to reach our goal of \$100,000. Thanks to all of you for your energies, donations, contributions, and support. We're more than half way there!

**As Instruments of Master's Light,  
We embrace prosperity from the Infinite source  
To fund His great work.**

The Ananda Sangha is a family of souls seeking Self-Realization through the scientific methods of raja yoga as taught by Paramhansa Yogananda. As divine friends, we seek to know, love and serve God in one another and in all life; we share a respect for the underlying spiritual essence of all religions. The Ananda Sangha is the heart, mind and hands for the work of Paramhansa Yogananda through Ananda with the inspiration, example and guidance of its founder, Swami Kriyananda.

Ananda Sangha



# The most successful Joyathon ever!

## Energy & Service: The Secret Ingredients in the Success for the Joyathon (and for You)

Spiritual teachings in themselves have no value, wouldn't you agree? They are like recipes in a cookbook. A recipe may sound good, in theory, and look good on paper, but left there, what is its value? Until we do some actual cooking and taste the results—until we apply ourselves, take action and test the results—recipes, like spiritual teachings, remain just words or ideas.

I was thinking about this fact—the need to apply the spiritual teachings we have been given on our Path before we can achieve the spiritual benefits—during this year's Joyathon fund-raising event. The Joyathon brings together nearly all of our teachings, the most important being the need for all of us to put out energy for spiritual growth—our own and for Master's great work. The success of this year's Joyathon is proof of Master's mantra, "The greater the will, the greater the flow of energy." The day of the Joyathon, the air was literally vibrating with divine energy.

This year Kathy and I somehow became coordinators for the Joyathon on the actual day of the event. I'm still scratching my head how that occurred, but there we were the morning of the Joyathon as the "go to" people. We didn't have to do much because everyone that had already taken on an assignment or an event was so well organized that the day flowed very smoothly. This gave me time to walk around and just check-in with the great souls that were putting out energy in a variety of ways to make the Joyathon such a success.

There were people doing healing prayers, chanting, cycling, running, walking, massaging, doing Origami and hitting golf balls (not simultaneously), Karate Katas, and strolling bhajans. So much was happening, and it was all happening because individuals chose to put out energy and serve. There was also the quieter and less visible energy in the form of funds flowing in



from generous souls sponsoring all of these events. Walking around Ananda Lane that morning, I could feel God's and Master's Grace and energy flowing through it all.

An event such as the Joyathon is an important opportunity for us to act as channels for God and Guru and bring forth energy to make great things happen. What if instead of taking part in the Joyathon, we had all decided to just sit around and "wish" for thousands of dollars to drop into our laps to help fund the Mandir? I would say that we would have had a very unsuccessful, low-energy day. Instead, look at the results of putting out energy to create the spiritual magnetism to bring in over \$16,000!

Instead, we had an energizing, fun-filled day that incorporated all aspects of service to manifest prosperity for the Mandir and Master's work.

Any time we serve-whether at an event like the Joyathon, preparing a meal, vacuuming the Mandir, or making phone calls for upcoming events, we are making a conscious choice to bring forth energy to serve. And when we are putting out energy to serve, we become more and more receptive to taking on other opportunities to serve.

And it's important to recognize when it's time for each of us to take the next step in our levels of service and the amount of energy we are willing to channel for Master. How does one go from helping in the kitchen one afternoon to routinely serving the work by making a monthly or weekly commitment to help at the Mandir, or even teaching an ongoing Yoga class? My experience has been that there is no "right" or "convenient" time. The time is now. Someone will ask you to help, and you will be in a receptive mode because you are on this path and practice these teachings and you will say, Yes, before you've had a chance to think of all the reasons to say no, and then there you will be... teaching a class or coordinating a fund raiser... and being grateful for the opportunity to serve. The good news is that serving is energizing. But don't take my word for it, and don't leave it sitting on the shelf like a recipe for a fine meal. Take action and test the results for yourself.





**Mark, Louise, Elise & Isabella Czopek**

### **Louise , what brought you to Ananda?**

I have been a spiritual seeker my entire life. Even some of my early memories from childhood had to do with things spiritual. Although not necessarily in a deep sense. I was raised Catholic and I remember being 6 and coming to my Mom and saying, “I want to be a priest when I grow up!” I was crushed when she said, “Girls can't be priests.” My first question was, “Why not!?!”

I didn't have a meditation teacher, but by college I had read enough that I had begun a practice of a breath-based meditation. I really responded to the part in *The Path* when Swami talked about hanging out with friends and talking philosophy but just not getting where you needed to be. I tried to go back to the church, but I'm such a heretic as far as the Catholic Church is concerned that I just don't feel comfortable in that environment. I also think that

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**Christian Salisbury**

### **Christian, you've been here almost a year now, what is most inspiring about living in Community?**

Definitely being around gurubais. It's a huge change from just hanging out with my buddies watching some band play. It's a really fun energy to be in. I'm able to catch my funky little mood swings 10 times quicker. I'm able to get myself out of it a lot faster as I realize that it's just my own mindset it's not necessarily the outside surroundings that are making me upset - it's just me thinking that things are funky. So that's been really nice to be able to get out of that.

### **What changes have you seen in your personal life?**

I've recently starting working in the Community. Words can't explain how cool that's been. Just being able to hang out in the Community all day keeping it beautiful and talking with neighbors. I'm definitely working, but at the same time I'm definitely not working. I'm outside, and I can't thank my lucky stars enough. I wake up, I walk outside to a beautiful

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garden right outside my front door and I'm at work. I get to hang around Matt and Ananta all day and see everybody. You can't really go wrong with that.

I was working at a guitar shop, which definitely wasn't like working either 'cause I was playing with guitars all day. But atmosphere wise, it's totally different. My boss was a good guy, but compared to Ananta, it's like night and day. That's been the biggest blessing that's come to me. It's a huge blessing.

**You recently did Karma Yoga at Ananda Village, was that what motivated you to quit your more worldly job and come to work for Ananda?**

I'm sure that had something to do with it. It was definitely one of the best months of my life. The whole grounds are so beautiful. Everyone there is cheerful beyond cheerful, people are just happy and doing their thing. It's just such a blissful experience. Everyone you talk to has a smile on their face. Being here is definitely that same vibe. Everyone has a smile and everyone's having fun and I just realized I wanted to be in that – I needed to be in that as much as I can.

I started going on the road with a touring band 4 days after I took discipleship. It was a very weird transition. It was the beginning of my spiritual life, and at the same time doing other stuff that I wanted to experience out in the world. I couldn't have been happier with the band. They weren't big partyers or anything. But trying to meditate when you're staying in hotels and driving a van 15-

hours a day is tricky. I did it for a year, but I knew I had to stop.

Then I spent a month at Expanding Light and wondered, "Why didn't I do this sooner?" Jyoti, Trimurti, Premdas, they are all such wonderful people, everyone there. I have a hard time even talking about it because I don't have words that can explain how much fun and how insightful it was. It was really a blissful experience, but it was weird because I was being very stubborn at the same time. Things came up that I know I'll be working through, I hope sooner rather than later – just challenges. At the same time just being in that environment for a month...it's like being able to work on Ananda Lane full time. It's that same thing – you have happy people everywhere.

**You spent a whole month in the Karma Yoga Program. What is a typical day in a karma yogi's life?**

It is beautiful, beautiful, beautiful. You wake up and start with morning sadhana at 6:30, which is energization followed by an hour of yoga followed by half an hour of meditation. All three of those things just go together so well. I did more yoga than I've ever done before. They have 2 sadhanas every day and you're required to go to at least one. I made a determination to go to both every single day because I wanted to soak up as much as I could.

After the morning sadhana you have silent breakfast, which was absolutely amazing. Everyone is just sitting in silence eating and it's very calm and peaceful. Everyone is just in this great spot – just soaking up the vibes.

When the bell rings we'd have our morning meeting with Trimurti. He'd have someone in the group pick out a reading that they had enjoyed. So we would meditate on that reading and he would talk about any questions people had and we'd get our daily activities for the day. Once a week we studied the book, *Essence of Self Realization*. Often we'd meet for that at Lotus Lake or in some other really nice spot like the Lahiri Shrine.

The karma part, or work-study, is 5 days a week. You work 2 shifts, either morning and afternoon or afternoon and evening or however they want to split it up. And then one day a week you work just one shift and you have one day off. So at the morning meeting you figure out what you'll be doing for the day. Either in the kitchen doing dishes or in the dining room cleaning up, or doing general maintenance, taking out recycling and compost or at one of the guest houses making beds and taking care of people rooms...any number of things like that.

At noon there is meditation followed by lunch. Then, depending on your schedule, either back to work or have the afternoon off. Afternoon sadhana was followed by dinner. So you're always doing stuff during the day, which is really nice. Even the time you have off, often you're just out helping others with their jobs.

When I first got there it was during the Joyful Arts Festival, so it was a busy weekend. People were doing dishes nonstop in the kitchen. So even when people had time out, they

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were really cool, “Oh, do you need some help?” It’s not about working, you’re not working, you’re serving. The guest is God. The Expanding Light is the retreat center, so they have classes and people are there on retreat. The Karma Yogis are there to help in any way they can with the upkeep of the Expanding Light and making sure that the guests are well taken care of. You feel really good about it because you know that they really appreciate it. You’re just there to serve them - to make sure that their stay is pleasant. And you’re happy because they’re happy and it’s just really cool.

### What kind of people take the Karma Yoga Program?

There was such a wide age range in the program. I think I might have been the youngest person for the most part. Anywhere from 20 to 60 and everyone in between. People were from all over the world, one from Belgium, Bulgaria and then from all over the United States. A wide array of people who are all there to better themselves and soak up the energy made for good satsang.

Being at the Expanding Light gave me a firm grasp of how powerful thought is. Power of intention and thought can really mess with people. And you have to be careful and make sure that you are even-minded and cheerful, that things are neutral ... not get too huffy over things. It is really easy to be cheerful and even-minded and it is really easy to be happy and not worry about things as long as you’re well balanced. And being there I could see how balanced I can be. It was really good food and I realized what proper diet, right sat-

sang and daily practices of just doing energization and some yoga and some meditation makes all the difference in how you feel body mind and soul.

### Have you been able to bring those practices home with you?

It has definitely been challenging for me to keep that up, I don’t do yoga every day, although I wish I did. But realizing what that does for you really solidifies things. I’m surprised that I haven’t kept up my yoga practice, at least doing the postures, because it makes such a huge difference!

### You are also helping out at the Living Wisdom School?

Playing guitar for the school, just filling in for one day has turned into a regular job. It’s cool, I really enjoy doing it, but I have to figure out how to deal with kids. Trying to get a group of kids to sit down and sit still for 10 minutes is a challenge and a half. The kids are adorable – I wish I’d gone to a kindergarten like this. I’m more than blessed to be able to help out.

## Interview with Louise Czopek

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every faith has a right to have like-minded people there. My mother-in-law is very devout and I would never disabuse her of anything because she really does her best to practice in her daily life. So that’s where she belongs right now. But I felt so much that I wasn’t a part of it and that the rituals were too empty. I had problems philosophically with things that I saw as deeply metaphorical that I

was being asked to take as literal facts. So I grew away from the church at that point.

Since then I have kind of drifted. My husband and I discovered the Theosophical Society and their library when we lived in the Chicago area. We didn’t go much to talks, but I loved the library. There were over 10,000 spiritual books – east and west. It was so much fun to poke around. That was one of my few psychic experiences, I actually had dreamed of this bookstore. Six months later I opened the door and realized, “Oh my God! This was it.” I remember seeing *Autobiography of a Yogi* there and thinking, “I’m going to have to read that next time.” But for whatever reason, next time didn’t come. So it’s really been a long path.

### Did things change after you had children?

After our first child was born, I tried going back to the church because I think children should have some type of spiritual upbringing. That was hard because my husband didn’t support it. He’s kind of like me and he wasn’t going to anything empty. I didn’t know what to do because you can’t explain the way you think to a small child. So I kind of let things slide. I would read on occasion and I’ve been practicing Hatha yoga for about – I had a car accident in ‘94 and I began practicing yoga after physical therapy. I was fortunate to have teachers who were serious about yoga and I think even though they weren’t talking about it in those classes, they were probably practicing Raja or Karma yoga as well.



We moved to California and still hadn't found anyplace to settle, spiritually. A couple of years ago I started getting an intuition that said, "You need a Sangha." It wasn't a church, it was you need a Sangha. I was really surprised and began looking around on the Internet. My husband gave me a trip to the Expanding Light for my birthday and that was obviously exactly where I needed to be. I think it's so funny because neither of us in all our travels through all our things and spiritual explorations ever found Ananda.

### It's not an easy drive from Roseville to Rancho Cordova. How is that working for you?

At first I was resistant about coming from Roseville to here, because it's so far. Then I felt, "You idiot! There are people that are taking correspondence courses that are 500 miles from anybody. How blessed are you to have this right here?" So I've been coming most every Sunday since. It feels like home. I had some very powerful experiences at the retreat and I would love to get my husband up there. That was part of our plan for our 20th anniversary, but it will have to wait. I'm still in flux and feel like I'm in a big life transition. When I meditate on it the only answer I keep getting is, "wait." I know part of it is to let myself get spiritually settled here. The more I'm here I realize that there are only so many changes you can do at once.

### How old are your children?

Isabella is 7 and Elise is almost 16. One of the things that I feel deeply is that I came here, in part, to be a mother. I know every parent thinks

their kids are special, but it feels as if there is a specific reason that I have these particular children – that I've been asked to baby-sit them. So I'm an at-home Mom. I've been doing a Party Lite Business for the last few years, but mainly I'm an at-home Mom. And I'm feeling the need to challenge myself more now that they're bigger.

### Are they part of Ananda? Do they come to Sunday Service?

When I started coming, I told my family that I wasn't going to make any of them join me, but they were welcome to come along. Mark and Isabella started coming in July. She loves Ms Laura and Sunday School, so she's always asking to come. Elise is just starting to come now. She's got many many questions and they are deep questions. She's fairly cynical, as teenagers are. I get a lot of, "How do you know? Why are you sure about that?" She came to the St. Francis concert with me, so I guess music was the way to her heart because then she came with me to kirtan. The first time, I suggested that she bring a book and if she got tired or bored, take a break, check out the gift shop or just sit and read. But she was only out for 10 or 15 minutes and then she was right back in. And she made it until 8:30.

My husband comes when he can. I don't think he's as drawn to it as I am. Part of needing a Sangha, for me is satsang – having time with spiritually like-minded people. It's very important in my personal life. Mark is more of a go-it-alone type. But a few years ago I realized I just couldn't do that anymore, I know where I want to go – I have these spiritual

feelings, but I can't do it on my own. The discipline isn't there – the contact that I want and need isn't happening by myself.

### How did your meditation group start?

When I first came, I wished there were more people from Roseville, then Carla and Mark started coming. I felt, during Service one Sunday that I should start a meditation group. So I walked out and asked Carla what she thought. She said, "I was thinking the same thing." We're not very structured, yet. I think the specifics will change over time. Right now we chant together for about 10 minutes and meditate for 20 minutes. I think we'll build to about 45 minutes over time.

We're pretty informal. We've just started meeting Tuesdays at 12:30. The first time there wasn't a lot of meditation, we were just trying to figure out what to do and get to know each other. We take turns bringing lunch and then we meditate for a bit and then we check in with each other. I think as we go on there will be more meditation time and less talking time

### It's kind of unusual to have a group that meets during the day.

We all work from home so evening time is difficult between kid's stuff and work stuff and Ananda stuff. So this is what works for us. We realize that others may find it more difficult, but this is what works for us, and if it works for others, we'd be happy to have them join us.



# World Brotherhood Day

Saturday, December 8, 3:30 - 5:30



*“The Whole World is my home,  
and the human race, my family.*

*With God’s kindness I embrace all men.”*

World Brotherhood Day this year will feature a delicious High Tea, an inspirational service and offering and entertainment by the Victorian Singers.

The Victorian Singers are a traditional, Dickens-style dressed Christmas caroling group that has been thrilling Holiday audiences for more than 20 years. The group originated in Ananda Village to participate in the traditional Victorian Christmas festivities held every December on Wednesday evenings in Nevada City.

The Victorian Singers offer traditional Christmas carols, arranged in four part harmonies, and sung either a cappella or with acoustic guitar accompaniment. They sing popular classics such as Joy To The World, Angels We Have Heard on High, as well as less frequently heard favorite pieces like Good Christian Men Rejoice, Here We Come A Caroling,

and, or course, Swami Kriyananda’s Christmas songs.

Through the years, The Victorian Singers have been featured on the covers of Sunset and Via (AAA) magazines, have appeared on Holiday TV specials, and have sung in high profile events and locations including Nevada City’s Victorian Christmas, Grass Valley’s Craft Faire and Cornish Christmas events, Sunrise Mall, Galleria Mall, Auburn Valley Country Club, as well as private parties, corporate events, and other festive occasions.

World Brotherhood Day is one of our primary fundraisers. Your donation will help to share with others the teachings and techniques that have brought so much harmony and upliftment to our lives and directly contribute to the “Instruments of Master’s Light” campaign.

## Interview with Louise Czopek

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Where do you see yourself going from here?

I’m taking discipleship class now. We’ll see where that takes me. I haven’t asked yet if Yogananda is my guru. I would like to have some firm confirmation so I know that I’m not injecting my own feeling into it. That’s my trepidation right now. Is it just me thinking this, or do I really belong on this path? I’ve just had so many odd and wonderful things come up. For example, I was reading *The Essence of the Bhagavad Gita* and found something that I’ve actually told other people. That was, to me, a confirmation that, yes, I do belong here because where else am I going to work with that again? It was especially interesting because it was the esoteric side, it wasn’t the scripture side. I wouldn’t have known that unless I’ve been here before. That was both exciting and humbling, because I’m still here. I must have needed to come back for another set of lessons.

**Celebrate Christmas  
upon the altar of the  
vast inner silence, and  
upon the sanctuary of  
every living thing in the  
world, and the Cosmos.**

**Paramhansa Yogananda**



Last year, for the first time, we did our annual Christmas Pageant and Creche Scene during Sunday Service the last Sunday before Christmas. It worked so well, we decided to do it again. Sunday, December 23 will include special Christmas music, a visit by the Christ child, the Holy Family, the Wise men, the shepherds and of course, the angels. Don't miss it!



## Feb 17 – Mar 1, 2008 Mysteries of Egypt & The Yuga Cycles Of Time

This summer a group at the Ananda Institute (Ananda's college) heard a talk on Egypt & the Yuga Cycles of Time by Byasa Steinmetz. Byasa had traveled to Egypt in 1981 with Swami Kriyananda on a tour much like we'll be presenting. He showed us Swamiji's Egypt slides, told us about all the beautiful music Swamiji was inspired to write from this trip, and the significance of Egypt as one of the few countries in the world with monuments from the higher ages. It seemed that Egypt would be the perfect choice to begin our series of Institute led tours on the Yuga Cycles of Time. If you've ever wanted to travel to Egypt in the company of devotees, contact the Ananda Institute at [anandauniversity.org](http://anandauniversity.org) or call 530-292-3024