



*Krotona Institute of Theosophy, Ojai, California*

Krotona is an international center inspired by a vision of the oneness of all life and dedicated to the spiritual awakening of the human family.

## Krotona Welcomes a New School Director

Elena Dovalsantos and Maria Parisen



Krotona School will have a new director in January 2025 with the retirement of Maria Parisen. Taking over will be Ananya Sri Ram, the school's current assistant director who has been actively involved in the school's activities since 2021.

Maria took over directorship of the school in 2009 after the excellent guidance of previous directors Joy Mills, Shirley Nicholson, and Nelda Samarel. She brought with her decades of TS leadership experience at the local and national level with a commitment to harmony in community. Soft-spoken and gentle mannered, Maria has overseen many important changes in the school's programming and technology in these 15 years. Keeping to essential theosophical study has been her primary focus, along with encouraging related programs that appeal to those seeking an interspiritual path of wholeness and healing. Under her guidance, the school's classes have become more interactive, with workshops to help students apply theosophical principles and ideals in daily life. Our theosophical intensives have

expanded with the Partners in Theosophy initiative directed by Pablo Sender, the collaborative biennial Secret Doctrine Forum, and the upcoming series on HPB's Wisdom Teachings. Maria will continue to assist at the school while attending to other Krotona activities.

Ananya hails from a well-known line of theosophical leaders. Her grandfather was N. Sri Ram, fifth international president of the Theosophical Society (TS), and her paternal aunt, who later raised her, was Radha Burnier, seventh international president of the TS. Upon her move to Krotona, Ananya quickly became an integral part of the school's staff. She has been assisting in programming, providing support for the classes, and conducting video recordings. Ananya was President of the Theosophical Order of Service in America, served on the board of the Inter-American Federation of the TS, worked on Quest Magazine while at the national TS center in Wheaton, and is currently editor of *The Krotonian*. Ananya presents programs locally and internationally and is currently serving as President of the TS Ojai Valley Lodge.

As she winds up her term as School Director, below are Maria's reflections:

A director's life and influence blends day by day with the lives of school assistants. Rochelle Voirol and Annie Johnstone have been a patient, skilled and steady support. Together we have enhanced and expanded student services and all elements of

*Continued on page 2*

outreach. The tech expertise of Richard Ellwood has been invaluable, keeping classroom audiovisuals updated and operational. Always mild and kind, Richard brings the quiet humor of a professional whose day job is with highschoolers. More recently, we've been inspired by Sue Prescott's enthusiasm and impressive digitizing work to preserve archived materials. Randall Bush and Jim Voirol help keep financial records and ever-changing payment options on track.

The sense of community, a joy in service, is strong in the inner life of our school. Residents who give of themselves in teaching, helping during teatime or with

registration, who participate in our classes, all enrich the experiences of students and guests. Each makes our offerings more meaningful.

These are rapidly changing times, calling for clarity in direction, resilience, and cooperation. Krotona has been imagined as a lighthouse, an unfailing guide for travelers in both calm and stormy seas, especially needed during cloudy days, darkness and a dangerous passage. Our school's light is part of Krotona's radiance, unseen but felt by many who come our way. Passing the torch to Ananya in full confidence and thanks, together we keep that Light bright and steady for all in need. ■

## Guest House Renovations



The four Kern Guesthouse rooms are getting a much-needed makeover. In March of 2024, in preparation for the Centennial Celebration, the first room was renovated under the watchful eye of Maintenance Manager Jorge Hermosa and with design input from Michele Sender. Two more rooms are scheduled to be renovated in 2025.

Built in 1958 as a donation from Herbert A. Kern, the Guesthouse offers visitors a beautiful view of the mountains surrounding Ojai. Each studio is simple yet comfortable in its furnishings, with its own

kitchenette, small dining area, bathroom and patio. It provides the perfect setting for a personal retreat alone or as a couple.

The updates consist of replacing carpet with modern flooring alternatives, sanding and painting over the dated paneled walls, shelves, and ceiling, updating the fixtures and paneling in the bathrooms, and installing new drapery and mattresses. The upgrades not only brighten the apartments, but minimize allergens for our more sensitive guests, in turn, providing a more restful and restorative stay.

The Guesthouse exterior and car park have also been renovated. The roofs were repaired and sealed, the walls power washed and given a fresh coat of paint, and the old wooden doors replaced with steel doors. Each room is now clearly marked, giving the whole building a warm and welcoming look.

We thank our donors for making these improvements possible. We invite you to stay with us for future classes or your next personal retreat. ■

## New Resident: Luz Tamarit Ananya Sri Ram

Born and raised in Spain, Luz says that she is 100% Iberian and doesn't know of any family member that isn't from the peninsula. She lost her parents as a child and was raised in a Catholic boarding school. Despite the sad circumstances, Luz states that the consistent schedule of mass at 7 am, regular prayer/meditation, and the structured way of life, opened something within her at a very young age.



Library's well-known former librarian. She met the Carbonell family while attending a Spanish weekend program at Krotona School and began attending Logia Espana in Los Angeles soon after. At the time, Luz was working at night in Orange County. After getting out of work in the early morning, Luz would drive to LA, sleep in her car outside the lodge building to attend the meetings in the afternoon. She did this for seven years! She eventually went on to become president of Logia Espana.

She received her teaching credentials to teach elementary school in Spain, but after coming to the US got her Associate in Social Work degree. Her ability as a bilingual speaker has stood her in good stead working at a domestic violence shelter for twenty years, facilitating addiction support groups in both Spanish and English. A family crisis worker, she has worked in hospital and correctional facilities. Today, she works as an interpreter for online therapy groups.

In the late 1990s, Luz would visit the Oak Grove School to attend the Krishnamurti Dialogues. A Spanish teacher from the school introduced Luz to the Krotona Institute. One of Luz's first encounters at Krotona was with Lakshmi Narayan, Krotona

"I remember I was always tired, but the Carbonells were such good motivators and Theosophy is priceless. I don't regret anything from that time. It was totally worth it."

When asked about coming to Krotona, Luz's face lit up. "I've wanted to be here for a long time. I was so much into Theosophy that coming here seemed like the perfect way to live. It's a perfect way to study and to keep learning."

Luz is the manager of Krotona Guest House, volunteers in the library, and anywhere else she is needed. Krotona is fortunate to have her. ■



*Nature has been sustaining life for over 4 billion years. As such, few things can guide us better than using nature as a teacher, not only in our home but in every aspect of our lives.*

Sarah Schley

# Work Study Participants

## Jennifer Montero & Chandler Fournier John Beers

From May to June of this year, Krotona enjoyed a visit from Jennifer Montero and Chandler Fournier who came looking to learn about Theosophy. The two had met at a Zen Mountain Monastery in New York state.

Jennifer is from Spain and is a professional pranic healer. She took her training from Grandmaster Choa Kok Sui, whom she recognizes as her spiritual teacher and who advised her to learn about Theosophy and The Secret Doctrine. She also practices Arhatic Yoga, which includes Raja Yoga, Karma Yoga, Kundalini Yoga, Jnana Yoga, Bhakti Yoga, Mantra Yoga and simplified Hatha Yoga--to build the foundation for spiritual development. Before Pranic Healing, she trained as a nurse and worked at a Cardiopulmonary Critical Care unit.

Chandler studied psychology and entrepreneurship at UCLA. From a young age he was deeply curious about the human mind, and at the beginning of Covid was practicing Buddhist styles of meditation. He spent nine months at the Zen Monastery under the guidance of several wonderful teachers. He enjoys spending his days selling ceremonial

grade cacao at Ojai farmers markets, practicing meditation, doing yoga, running, reading and writing, and bathing in the Ventura River.

During their Krotona stay, Jennifer and Chandler had discussion sessions with some residents and spent many hours reading in the library, studying, and meditating. Chandler also provided valuable help with grounds work during Krotona's fire abatement season. The residents were delighted with their enthusiasm and eager young minds. ■



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# VIEW POINTS, A GIFT OF VISION

Maria Parisen

On a late October afternoon, John Ruth was still at work in our school's Pollinator Garden, setting rocks along a new pathway border. His knit cap, long-sleeved jersey, faded jeans, and worn sneakers were covered in dust. John had been kneeling for hours, setting each rock in place with artistic care.



It had been a long day, one of many he has given with fellow worker Arturo Sanchez, renewing Krotona's garden paths. John recently formed a non-profit, View Points, to provide the design and creation of stonework, pathways, and sitting areas "to bring beauty and color into people's lives." Honoring his late wife, Karen, and sharing her sensitivity to nature and especially to beautiful views, John has donated his services for three projects, covering the cost of all materials and labor.

John, at 79 and retired from the software industry, invites collaboration with great enthusiasm. "Let me show you," may be for approval of an open space, the angle of a garden bench, a key rock placement or a "glorious" view of distant mountains. John experiments, observes, and adjusts the same way he lives, in incremental improvements.

Working with his hands is science, art, and prayer.

Arturo Sanchez, 55, is the team's planning consultant and heavy lifter. He brings strength, patience, and the practiced eye of a seasoned handyman. He and John share most details of their projects, from the bigger picture to managing the usual challenges. In addition to assisting John, Arturo works full time for other clients needing skilled interior and landscaping help. His life, from a childhood in Mexico, has been one of helping people in simple ways, fixing what's broken, learning how everything fits together. During sleep, he has dreamed of belonging to a group helping others in need.

Krotona is grateful not only for John's wonderful generosity, but for the joy these men bring to their partnership and to their respectful friendship with us. We look forward to each day of more beautiful pathways, as John's vision for View Points, and for Karen, is bringing new life to our gardens.

Thank you to Jorge and Jose Luis in Maintenance, and Dana in Land Management, for support and coordination.



# Furry Friends at Krotona

Doug Borgatti

Many humans and their furry friends walk daily on the Krotona grounds and sometimes one never knows who is walking whom. Krotona is a paradise for dogs because of all the scents from the wildlife that share the campus with its residents. It is one of the reasons the amusing sign walking up the hill reads: "Pets, please keep your human on a leash." Two dogs often seen walking with their humans are Minko and Mimi. They each want to share their story with you:

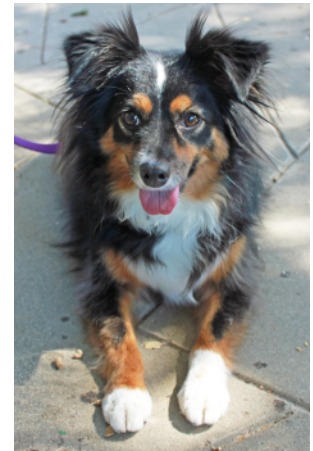
Hi, my name is Minko. I am about four years old and I'm a cross between a chocolate Labrador and a pit bull. At least that's what I've been told. I was rescued from the streets of Tishomingo, Oklahoma when I was about ten weeks old by Kevin Goddard. I was bounced around a bit, but eventually adopted by Bim and Tessie, Kevin's parents.



Bim and Tessie have lived in Ojai for thirty-six years. From our home on Villanova Road, we can see across the highway onto the meadow leading up Krotona hill. My job is to guard the house and announce whenever I see delivery vans, gardeners, racoons, rabbits or the neighbor's cat. I'm especially excited about the black bear that comes through some mornings.

My humans and I love our daily walks together at Krotona, especially around the Sanctuary of Connections garden and Nghia's Rose Garden. Everyone who sees me says that I'm a happy dog and I would have to agree with them. We meet lots of other dogs walking, including Mimi with Father Jim, Indy with Marguerite, Charlie with Julie, and Anboo with Anan. We hope to see you soon on a Krotona walk with your furry friend!

My name is Mimi and I am a toy Australian shepherd mix. In 2017, I found two people, Jim and Rochelle Voirol, wandering around the Ojai Humane Shelter. I told one of the shelter volunteers: "This couple needs a new dog to take care of them." The rest is history. I was less than one year old when I was adopted and brought to my new home in Krotona. The Voirols have been Krotona residents since 1997. During the daytime Rochelle works at the Krotona School while Jim is Krotona's bookkeeper. Jim is also co-rector for the Ojai Liberal Catholic Church, along with Richard Ellwood, another Krotona resident.



My humans have rescued a number of greyhounds in the past. When I first arrived home I met my adopted brother, Kalb. I heard from Kalb that Mom wanted a lapdog, but I'm having none of that. I need my space! Unfortunately, Kalb crossed the Rainbow Bridge over a year ago. I miss his sleepy company, but now I have Mom and Dad all to myself! My primary job, besides herding my pack, is to bark furiously at any coyote, bobcat, dog, deer, or person who walks past our backyard fence. How dare they intrude on our space! This job is fraught with danger, however, as I must be on the lookout for red-tailed hawks and great horned owls that frequent the telephone poles adjacent to our yard looking for small animals like me. When I take Dad out in the morning for his walk around the upper circle, we often meet new people and dogs which I love. Aussies are very smart, so when I was younger, I would easily escape from Dad as he was beginning our walk. But now I am older and only want to be with my humans and my furry friends around Krotona! ■

# Krotona Library Reorganized & Sparkling Susan Johnson

Over a year ago, Cristin McVey, Borrego Springs Public Library's head librarian, offered insightful suggestions for reorganizing the Krotona library in order to make the entire collection more accessible to users. Cristin's regular visits to Krotona have helped her get a feel for what would benefit our patrons. Her suggestions were implemented in stages that have resulted in wonderful changes to the library's physical space.

The library's encyclopedias and dictionaries were moved to the loft by Ann Hermosa. Ann, a Krotona resident, then catalogued their titles in a binder for easy research and reference. Our Spanish collection was expanded thanks to a number of books donated from the estate of the late Gaspar Torres. Ed Moskowitz contributed funds that made it possible to create four new shelves and to refinish eight others.

Cristin returned in June 2024, to help move most of the library's collection of 8,000 esoteric books. We emptied bottom

shelves, created a large new Manly P. Hall section, shifted the J. Krishnamurti section to a more visible location, and consolidated several other sections. We also thoroughly cleaned the books and shelves.

With the assistance of Luz Tamarit, Kern Guest House manager and a library volunteer, Theosophical and biography books were reorganized, thus making additional space for the Blavatsky, Besant, and Hodson collections. Elena Kolesnykova, a work-study volunteer, scoured the veranda and cleaned the magnificent wrought iron front door. She and John Beers, another library volunteer, did the final work of cleaning the biographies section, the shelves containing duplicate books, and the numerous empty shelves that reach the two-story ceiling.

With thanks to the many hard-working volunteers who lovingly tend the library, our jewel of Krotona is reorganized and sparkling. We invite you to come visit!



*Cristin McVey*

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RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

*Let nothing of duplicity, nothing of insincerity,  
nothing of falsehood soil the inner sanctuary of  
your life, for if that is pure your actions will be  
spotless, and the radiance of the eternal truth  
shall make your lives strong and noble.*

- Annie Besant



As a Theosophical community, Krotona:

1. Nurtures living in harmony and compassion with self, others, and nature.
2. Inspires spiritual transformation through an earnest quest for Truth and living the ageless wisdom, Theosophy.
3. Offers a peaceful, welcoming environment to encourage a life of self-inquiry, study, meditation, and selfless service.