



Weekend of Unity and Peace

Communities across the country come together to celebrate the Dalai Lama's message

By Samantha Scott The Dalai Lama's autumnal journey to the United States — to meet with President Bush, receive congressional honors and continue to speak in various national venues on the importance of Tibetan autonomy — illustrates the religious leader's commitment to bringing the dialogue of human peace and unity to the world stage.

Although protested by China, which his holiness was quoted as saying "always happens," the extended visit served as the impetus for many consciousness-raising events throughout the country. Among them was the national Weekend of Unity and Peace.

This nation-wide celebration, timed to coincide with the Dalai Lama's visit and the release of a new documentary on the holy man, *Ten Questions for the Dalai Lama*, was sponsored by Monterey Media and involved over 140 communities. Spread throughout the continental United States, Hawaii and Canada, the cities, towns and other communities involved spent the weekend of October 19-21 coming together "in a celebration of understanding, unity, tolerance, peace and oneness" and

using the film and other fun activities as catalysts toward better understanding of the complex changes going on in our world right now.

According to Michelle Glenn, marketing director for Monterey Media, the weekend's events were designed to foster a sense of global community, while allowing citizens all over the country and continent the opportunity to view the film and use it as a source of inspiration in their daily lives. It was "a fun weekend, raising awareness and creating the unity our communities strive for, simultaneously allowing for your group to raise donations, which are not easily forthcoming these days," Glenn says.

The weekend's events and the film screenings served as binders, bringing together people from all over the country and giving local nonprofit organizations the opportunity to bring economic attention to themselves through meaningful activities, such as inviting local vendors to sell goods at the event (organic bake-sale goodies, hand-made items, free samples, etc), featuring members of local spiritual communities, and reaching out to the community at large.

Monterey Media is an independent film studio located in Thousand Oaks, Calif. Since 1979, the organization has focused on bringing quality, independent films to the marketplace. *Ten Questions for the Dalai Lama* is no exception, and Monterey's unique marketing strategy of tying community events to the films they distribute has been proven successful with the Weekend of Unity and Peace.

"In its continual efforts to increase awareness for limited theatrical run independent features, Monterey has had much success with alternative marketing strategies," Glenn writes. "The philosophy of doing good while doing well is practically a mantra at Monterey Media, with a team of distribution experts skillfully guiding each film into less risky, yet successful, waters of distribution while keeping their charitable partners thrilled to be included."

Corporate sponsors of Monterey's latest ingenious combination of spiritual awareness and marketing visibility included a variety of New Age, nonprofit and earth-aware organizations. Friends and supporters of the Weekend of Unity and Peace include Amnesty International, which was responsible for another spiritually based event the weekend of October 19-21, the National Weekend of Faith in Action on the Death Penalty. Other sponsors included The Association for Global New Thought, a leading new-thought collective; the Kid's First! Film Festival; Friends of Tibet; the New Consciousness Review, an "information hub for what's new and what's hot in the world of holistic media;" and the Bioneers, whose annual conference coincided with the Weekend of Unity and Peace.

As part of this enlightening weekend, the writer and director of *10 Questions for the Dalai Lama*, Rick Ray, shared his captivating experience with participants in a live question-and-answer session.

It is amazing that all of these resources have been brought together to engender the dissemination and provide an impetus for discussion of the film *Ten Questions for the Dalai Lama*. The film "allows the viewer to participate in an intimate conversation with the Dalai Lama — most likely asking the very same questions you would ask," says Glenn. ☺

