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LETTER OF RECOMMENDATION FOR ASH ELFORD

I first met Dondrup/Ash Elford while he was still a high school student on the island of Nantucket in Massachusetts. In 2011, I had moved to Nantucket from Kagyu Thubten Choling (now Palpung Thubten Choling) in Wappingers Falls, New York, and opened an affiliated Dharma center for island residents. Ash became a regular participant in our weekly Chenrezig/teaching/meditation sangha meetings. He soon requested Refuge and personal instruction. He undertook Ngondro, which he completed in its entirety within months.

It was apparent from the beginning that Ash was experiencing a reawakening of his past karma with the Dharma, specifically with Tibetan Buddhism. Some of his first words to me were his concern for the well-being of other sentient beings. His steady, over-riding wish during the decade that I have known him has been to pursue awakening awareness and compassion. We chose KTD in Woodstock as the best monastery for him to train in (rather than KTC/PTC, since it was in flux at the time). He applied and was granted residency. He went on pilgrimage to India and Nepal, and took ordination with HE Tai Situ Rinpoche. Back home at KTD, he is now the main Chopon, held in esteem by the sangha; the Khenpos, the Lamas and the lay community.

I felt early-on that Dondrup/Ash was an excellent candidate for ordination, monastic life, and the Three Year Retreat. He exerts himself with diligence, maintains one-pointedness of vision, and takes enthusiastic advantage of every opportunity to learn and practice. I advised him to start learning Tibetan, which he did last year. I advised him to train towards Three Year Retreat by undertaking a series of shorter retreats in order to accustom the mind to looking at itself within the silence of a retreat setting, which he has done. I advised and worked with him to gain the therapeutic tools to shift and transform difficult emotions that arise in meditation. For the past ten plus years he has assiduously embraced every preparation for the Three Year Retreat.

I highly recommend Dondrup/Ash to your generous and kind financial support for a Three Year Retreat. This young man went straight from high school to college to monasticism, without getting sidetracked by the busy glitter of the world. He sees right through shallowness, and has one-pointedly pursued depth and meaning through the Dharma. Please support him.

(In case it is helpful to know as support for my evaluation of Dondrup's capacity, I am a student of the previous Kalu Rinpoche since the 1970s, ordained by Tai Situ Rinpoche in 1996, graduated from the 4th cycle of the Three Year Retreat at KTC Wappingers Falls, after which I served as drupon for Niguling for three ensuing retreats-5th, 6th, and 7th cycles-before moving to Nantucket.)

Sincerely,

Lama Yeshe Palmo



Affiliate of Palpung Thubten Chöling