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Residents of Massachusetts town eager to welcome Dalai Lama

Claire Schaeffer-Duffy | Oct. 12, 2012 NCR Today

The Dalai Lama, religious leader of Tibetan Buddhism, will soon visit the working-class town of Medford, Mass., and the residents, many of whom are Catholic, are more than eager to welcome him. His Holiness, who will be in Boston this weekend participating in a conference on ethics and transformative values, is expected to visit the Kurukulla Center for Tibetan Buddhist Studies in Medford on Tuesday.

The occasion requires significant arrangements for the center, a large house on a residential street. Fences are coming down. Aluminum bleachers are going up, and a crew set up a 280-foot-long tent to accommodate the 1,800 people invited.

But no one in Medford is complaining about these disruptions. Quite the opposite, writes Lisa Wangsness in this cheering tale [1] of interfaith hospitality that appeared on the front page of Thursday's *Boston Globe*. Wangsness writes of neighbors asking the center how they might make their guest feel more welcome. My favorite is the account of "three burly men" who told one of the center's members they were going to be having a backyard barbecue on the day of the Dalai Lama's visit, and "if His Holiness would like to join them, they would love it."

The Buddhist religious leader is well-remembered for his friendliness during a 2003 visit to the town. Medford Mayor Michael McGlynn tells of him jumping out of his car to greet neighbors. "I was only with him for 45 minutes to an hour, but I feel he's one of my best friends in life," McGlynn said. "Everybody pretty much felt the same way."

Several of Medford's Catholic priests are among those seeking tickets to see the "pope of the Buddhists."

Read the full story [2] if your schedule allows. It is a heartening reminder that hospitality and generosity toward the stranger are contagious.

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Links:
[1] http://articles.boston.com/2012-10-11/metro/34364249_1_dalai-lama-street-closings-buddhists
[2] http://bostonglobe.com/metro/2012/10/10/upcoming-visit-dalai-lama-thrills-medford-neighborhood/DJlIuAWCJZdmdRabfm2rzI/story.html