



Virginia Al-A-News

A newsletter written by and for Al-Anons and Alateens in Virginia **Summer 2009**

My First Assembly

It was rainy, and cool, and quiet at first. Arriving early for my first Al-Anon Assembly was a calm and fun time of saying hello and helping out. I came early with friends from my group to help with the hospitality room.

The drive up was pleasant and chatty, without much traffic as we headed out of the DC suburbs for the green, green hills of the Shenandoah Valley. Georgianna, my friend and our driver, is quick to laugh and fill a silence. Gladys, a new friend, has interesting stories to tell and a dry wit. Two hours passed quickly.

The rain was intermittent, but our smiles were genuine as we met up with other helpers who had brought tons of supplies. We hauled coolers and cases of soda and coffee creamer down from their cars to our hospitality room.

Set up was a logistical challenge for about fifteen minutes, and then we had our plan. (A bunch of women will have a bunch of opinions -- being in Al-Anon we all wanted to do whatever someone else suggested, at the same time trying to listen to our own plan and validate its possibilities!)

It feels good to host, so setting out food and coffee and tea was a pleasure. Time passed quickly, decorative details added a nice touch to the tables and even the walls. The butterfly garlands were perfect, thanks Harriet.

Okay, the set up was done, someone else was in charge of coffee pots, and I had hot water ready for tea and cocoa, and we were set! A good sized crowd swarmed through the book sellers area, grabbed their drinks, and we all headed upstairs for the first business meeting.

I had no idea such a long introduction was necessary, but each point in the Chairpersons' instruction served the group well when it came time for the business of presenting arguments and voting the next day. A key quote explains this process well. "The well heard minority opinion is our chief protection against an uninformed, misinformed, angry majority." It worked.

With hospitality taken care of, I snuck off for a nap after the first big introductions and instructions were over, while group and district reps continued their roll calls and presentations. I arrived back just in time when the group took an earlier than scheduled break. I had the key! I hurried to unlock all the doors again – and next time someone else kept the key.
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Inside This Issue

...Area News...My Alcoholic...ESAC News...From The Delegate...

Hi Family,

I've been in the rooms for quite a few 24 hours and today I am eternally grateful for the alcoholics that have crossed my path.

Originally, every time I thought or said something about the addicted family and friends in my life, I thought of them being people with no moral values. I thought they were "BAD" people that needed to become "GOOD", not "SICK" people that needed a "HEALING".

It was difficult for me to separate the person I loved from the disease I hated.

With the help of "GUS" (my Guy Up Stairs), I've learned a new way of thinking and speaking of ...



MY ALCOHOLIC



"My alcoholic" is a phrase I hear quite often as members of our fellowship share during meetings. The phrase never fails to pique my interest, my mind always plays with images that appear like cloud formations.

If I remember my grammar, lessons correctly, "my" is a possessive pronoun and if so doesn't it imply ownership? It's sort of humorous to think of someone owning an alcoholic. If you don't own one, is it possible to rent or lease one? Do they come with warranties so that if one doesn't meet your expectations, can you make a change? Maybe instead of a daily drinker, you could have one adjusted to being a periodic or if the one you have is a little boisterous, you could make an exchange for a closet drinker. Could you have one mounted on a skateboard so you can tow it behind you? No, now that I think about it; it really isn't funny at all, it's rather dehumanizing.

I remember back in the olden days or was it golden times, people lived in relationships to others, "my" implied kinship in some instances, espousal or friendship in others. People had nice labels like father, mother, son, daughter, aunt, niece, nephew, cousin, grandmother, grandfather, etc. What ever happened to "my" husband, wife, girlfriend or boyfriend? What the h__ is a co-alcoholic, a significant other? What has all this got to do with "my" alcoholic? I believe it has everything to do with the subject.

The people in our lives are blood relatives, spouses, friends, and numerous others who comprise the human family. All have something in common, all are something to someone before they become "my" alcoholic. Think about it, what image is one reinforcing by using this phrase? Al-Anon teaches us to say "my spouse who has the disease of alcoholism," for instance. What about other relationships in our lives, aren't they all something more than a disease?

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Dear Serene;

I am wondering how to get a sponsor. I am so nervous that I can't even go up to someone to ask them! I know that having a sponsor will help me grow, yet I feel stuck. I'm a ... Wilting Flower in the Mountains...

Dear Wilting,

Don't despair! We have all been there! It isn't easy to muster the courage to go up to someone new. It may help to do a few things first. Getting a sponsor is great, as long as she/he is the right sponsor for you.

When I started looking for a sponsor, I decided to check them out. I began in my home group, but eventually I attended many other meetings. I wanted to find a sponsor who had a program I wanted to have. Listening and getting to know people may seem time consuming, but it is worth the effort.

In the past, I often made quick decisions, prompted by others or pressure from myself. In Al-Anon, I can take my time and get to know my future sponsor. Invite her out for coffee. You will know when it feels right.

In service....Serene

My First Assembly...

Continued from the front page...

Dinner was a welcome social event, I met a few more friends of my friends, and the food was good. Laughter seems to be the biggest ingredient in these weekends, although I also experienced plenty of patience during Sunday's business meetings when I stayed and observed the whole process of voting.

I greatly respect the Al-Anon principles I saw in action. Every voice was heard with respect – no cross talk or advice was given, only further opinions. There were late night and early morning Al-Anon meetings for personal feelings, and plenty of friendly interaction all around.

I never expected to see a process of argumentation be so un-argumentative!! I'm proud to be a member of Al-Anon anyway, but this Assembly group made me prouder still. Watch that Twelfth Step, it's a good one!

Carolyn R.



Al-Anon News from the Area.....

The Virginia Beach and Norfolk Districts combined efforts and held an Alateen Sponsor Workshop May 30th. Several newcomers to the Alateen program were delighted to be in attendance.

Sponsors from the Peninsula were also there, and they shared their version of sponsorship. Here is their story.

In Williamsburg, there are five/six sponsors for one meeting. One sponsor enjoys coming each week, while others take turns. One sponsor keeps tabs via a sign up document, such as a table. The sponsors sign up in advance and have access to the schedule. Changes are made if a sponsor can't attend. There is always an opportunity for a sponsor to step in for another!

The advantages are numerous for sponsors and Alateens alike. The Alateens gain more opportunity to know and grow with many adults, trusting more sponsors. The Alateen sponsors gain in experience. It is a win-win situation.

Thanks to the Williamsburg Alateen group for sharing their success!

A Conference for Alcoholism and Substance Abuse was hosted by District 8 and generously supported by the Virginia Area.

The three day professional conference was coordinated by Anne Marie L. As a result of this conference, 300 professionals passed the Al-Anon booth which was enhanced with the Area display panel.

In addition, a new meeting has started and over fifty professionals requested additional information, books and literature.

District 8 would like to thank the Area for their support with literature, contributions and time.

Please remember to support the Area...by your loving contributions...



FROM THE DELEGATE

Hi everyone! – I want to take this opportunity to highlight a part of my report to the Assembly in May about this year's Conference. It has to do with the abundant resources that you, the members of Al-Anon and Alateen, represent to World Service Office and our Area.

At the Officer's Meeting on August 1 we were discussing how we as an Area can better utilize our member's talents. As an example, we might have members who work with the media in their jobs who can be a big help to our Convention Committee in publicizing our Conventions. Or maybe another member might have computer skills that would be helpful to those handling registration for our Assemblies. I'm sure that there are those among us who have artistic abilities that could be a big help in preparing fliers or helping in designing effective and affordable decorations for Al-Anon and Alateen events.

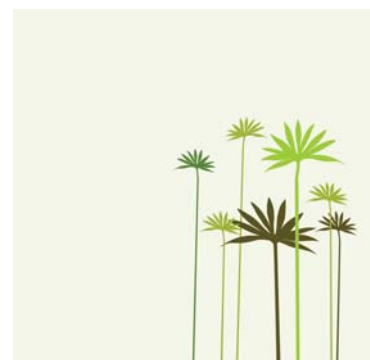
But, if we don't know you are out there, we can't make use of your talents and abilities.

On the Members Web Site www.al-anon.org/member there is a survey you can complete which will enable you to tell the fellowship about your talents. Your password to the Members Web Site is your home group name followed by AFG. Click on "Membership Survey" on the left side of the home page and then click on "Surveys for Members" on the left side of the next page. By then selecting "Unlimited Abundant Resources Skills Inventory" you can complete the survey and submit it to WSO. This will alert WSO to your talents and when they have need of your expertise, they may contact you to see if you can help.

At the end of the Survey, you can check a box which will allow WSO to let us know of your talent if we need your help. I hope that you will check that box. WSO will not tell us that you are out there but it will allow them to reveal your talent to us if we ask them for the type of help you can provide.

As it says on page 21 in the *Al-Anon and Alateen Groups at Work* book we use to open our meetings, "Carrying the message, as suggested in the Twelfth Step, is Service, Al-Anon's third legacy. Service, a vital purpose of Al-Anon, is *action*. Members strive to *do* as well as to *be*."

Don F
Virginia Area Delegate





What's going on in your part of the world?
Drop us a note, send us a workshop flyer
Let us know what is happening! (nettles1@hotmail.com)

Calendar of Events

August 29	VAWSC MTG
September 18-20	ESAC
October 24 th	Gratitude Breakfast Norfolk
Nov 7	Gratitude Brunch Alexandria
Nov 14-15	Fall Assembly

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In a social setting, would you introduce your husband or wife by saying "I'd like you to meet my alcoholic" or "This is my disease?" Would they in turn say "I'd like to present my enabler" or "This is my Al-A-Nut?" Pretty silly isn't it?

Al-Anon has so much to impart to all of us because of its vast resources of experience, strength, and hope. There is so much help available that it is possible to grow beyond our wildest dreams. As this program takes hold in our lives, we begin to understand those character defects that prevent us from having the very happiness we desperately seek. When we gain a perspective on our own humanity, it helps us to see others in a different light. As this unfolds, it becomes possible to say "my" husband, "my" wife, "my" friend, "my" lover.

My God how wonderful!

Submitted by Khayriyyah A. Centreville, VA

ESAC 2009

Life is Beautiful

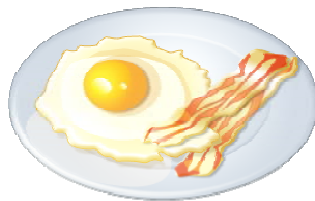


September 18-20 2009

Regular \$90 Postmarked by September 5th

Walk in \$99 Bring to Conference

ASC Gratitude Breakfast



Saturday
October 24, 2009
8:30 a.m.-12:00

The Murray Center
455 E. Brambleton Ave
Norfolk, Virginia

Speakers: Bill A. AA
Juanita P. Al-Anon
Torrie Alateen

Tickets: \$17 each or 2 for \$30
See you there!!!