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Share Your Stories & Group News

The newsletter can bring a world of local information your way. Send in your stories & news from your groups! Email the Newsletter Coordinator at district5news@ncbermudaafg.org You can find & print this newsletter at www.charlottealanon.org. Spread the word! - KC, Newsletter Coordinator

District News

* The District Literature Office is open from 10-2 Tuesdays – Fridays, and the 2nd Saturday of the month, 10-2. 2810 Providence Rd.

* Mary Margaret M., (home group: Wednesday's Easy Does It AFG) passed away December 25, 2023.

* Karen C., whose home group was Wednesday's Easy Does It AFG, passed away on Feb. 3rd.

Just When I Needed It

I came into Al-Anon just when I needed it.

My life was unmanageable as a result of focusing on others, trying to control outcomes, and fulfilling my ego. I ran from sunup to sundown bouncing between work, raising a 4 year old, completing a graduate

program, going through a divorce, pregnant and reacting to my mother's destructive behavior associated with her alcoholism. I was the textbook adult child of a long alcoholic family line.

I had spent my life trying to protect and keep my mother safe. She was married right out of high school, had me at 19 and divorced within 2 years. We had a very close relationship as it was just the two of us against the world between her 3 marriages and we were quite enmeshed in an unhealthy way. She was supportive of my interests and did the best she could to provide a home and education to help me succeed. However, by the time I was married and starting a family, her life was falling apart as a result of alcohol use.

A family therapist I was seeing to deal with my divorce, suggested I attend an Al-Anon meeting after hearing a few stories about my mother. My first home group was a small evening Adult Children of Alcoholics meeting with 3-5 regular attendees. It was small enough that I felt comfortable sharing and became friends with the members. One became my sponsor, and she graciously helped me work through the steps in the paths to recovery. Weekly meetings, step work with my sponsor, the daily reader, Hope for

Today, were the foundation for my program. God knew I needed Al-Anon to be there for me when my mother's drinking finally took her ability to live away.

As her drinking continued, the negative effects on her mental and physical health increased, ultimately leaving her homeless and in an assisted living facility at the age of 53. The disease had taken away her affluent lifestyle, marriage, beauty, friends, family, her joy in life. I stepped in with legal assistance, had her declared incompetent in court and put her remaining money in a trust for her care. That was one of the hardest days of my life to go before a judge with her looking at me confused. I felt like I had disobeyed her and would get in trouble like a young child but had to stand there as the adult. I repeatedly questioned my decision but deep inside, I knew it was in her best interest.

Not long after, her health declined to the level of needing hospice care and she was moved out of the assisted care facility to a hospice house for the rest of her days. It was a beautiful large room with a couch sitting area, round dining table and a sun porch. After work, I would bring dinner and my sons with me to visit. The last time I talked to her she was bright, cheerful and asked me to stop by



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TJMaxx to get her a few things for the room. I had to go on a trip for a few days and when I returned, she was in a coma. Her step-sister and I sat with her for hours, listening to music, rubbing her feet and talking to her. All of a sudden there was a crash of lightning and the sky opened with pouring rain. We looked over and realized she was not breathing. She waited for me to come back from my trip before she died. I believe that crash of lightning was her energy leaving her body and going to heaven. I can visualize spirit as electrical energy inside that leaves the body behind.

I miss all the good parts of mom, her fun loving personality, all the silly things she would do and say, her ability to become best friends with any one she met, her generosity and kindness to all, her welcoming friends into our home and treating them like family, her bright coral lipstick and nail polish that she wouldn't leave the house without, her Kalik perfume and most of all the feeling of her kissing my cheek with her arms around me. I'm sad for my boys to not have her in their lives because I know she would have been a fun, kind grandma that spoiled them. I tell them stories often to keep her energy alive in them.

I don't miss alcoholism's cunning, baffling and powerful effects on her mentally and physically and I am glad she is not suffering any longer. I am immensely grateful for being led to Al-Anon by that therapist. Today, I have a framework to handle life that is healthy, a fellowship of program members for support and the steps, traditions and concepts to guide me along God's path.

- Kelly W., Sarasota FL

Treasurer's Report

The District ended 2023 with sufficient funds to maintain our prudent reserves and address future operational needs. For the year, we brought in more money than we spent.

Donations and especially book sales increased more than we anticipated. Net book sales doubled from 2022 due to sales of the new daily reader. Expenses were well below budget due to money allocated to Alateen and Public Outreach not spent. While this would be welcomed under most circumstances, this isn't necessarily good for us as this money should have been spent on much needed services.

During our District meeting in mid-February, GRs addressed some of these needs by approving a donation to the Area Alateen scholarship fund and buying billboard space to reach

out to the public.

Service Work

As a newcomer to Al-Anon, when I heard the term "service work", I had two reactions: I'm too busy to do more work and I'm so new, I don't know what I'm doing. I had already added meeting attendance, meetings with my sponsor and working on steps to my crazy schedule, so how could I add more commitments? Plus, because I was new I had no confidence that I had the knowledge or skills to do whatever this service work was.

And that was part of the problem - I didn't understand that being of service and doing service work doesn't necessarily mean holding an office or serving on a committee. Being of service can mean staying after a meeting to welcome another newcomer, getting to the meeting early to set out literature, or even sharing in a meeting, because what you say may be just what someone else needs to hear. Service work doesn't have to be time-consuming, it just has to be giving of yourself to benefit another person.

My sponsor told me I didn't have to volunteer for something if I didn't feel ready. But she added that trying something new could build my confidence and grow my program.



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For example, leading a meeting can be intimidating for those who don't like speaking in front of a group, but having a script and a loving, non-judgemental audience makes it easier. And once you do it and members thank you for your service, you feel more confident about doing it again.

As I gained more time in Al-Anon, I got to know more people and felt a desire to contribute more to my home group. I held offices and participated at the District level. And guess what? I got to know even more wonderful people, learned more about how Al-Anon works at all levels and felt a deeper commitment to making sure Al-Anon is strong and available to anyone who needs it.

When I started spending half of my time in another state, I found meetings I liked and started attending regularly. Although I didn't know anyone at first, I knew from experience that doing service work, such as chairing meetings, would help me get to know people and vice versa. Eventually I volunteered to be the Literature Chair, where I learned more about the vast array of information Al-Anon has to offer and got to know staff at the AIS office.

I have learned I have choices,

including how to spend my time, and I choose to make Al-Anon service work one of my activities. This quotation from *Courage to Change*, Oct. 2, sums up my feelings:

"The Al-Anon program was there for me when I needed it. I will do what I can to ensure it continues to thrive. I know that any service I offer will strengthen my own recovery."

- Kerry L., Charlotte

Using the Twelve Traditions of Al-Anon

Something has changed, I heard. Something has been lost. Something has been added.

There it was. Someone in my discussion group was saying what I had been feeling for a long time: that some of our Al-Anon program was getting a little diluted and that we were long overdue for a group inventory.

The conference approved group inventory form was collecting a little dust at the literature office. I remembered the growth that took place in our last group inventory. When was that again, 2001? No, was it 1997? None of us really could remember. But I do remember how I felt back then, just like when I last

did my own fourth step inventory. I felt so much lighter looking at what worked and what did not work so well; looking at what was in good shape and what was damaged and needed attention.

At our group level; does everybody have an opportunity to share? Does everybody have the freedom and respect to pass as necessary; to just come as they are, often hurting from the effects of the family illness?

But then it went deeper. Are our groups joining together in our common sharing of experience, strength and hope or was I hearing some trendy outside jargon more often? Was property and prestige diverting us from our primary spiritual aim? Were the steps the underlying reference of our discussions or were they confined to a special meeting to go to when needed? Are we respectfully welcoming newcomers before, during, and after their first special meeting and beyond? Was the focus on how we could improve ourselves or on what others should or should not be doing?

Was our public relations policy really based on attraction or has some promotion around town seeped in? Was anonymity respected in and after meetings or was some of it slowly



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rusting away because some of us started to know one another as a spouse of, an employee of, a parent of, a child of or a neighbor of, etc., etc., etc.?

Were we sometimes overlooking the fragile place where some of us may be coming from? Or did we need to be another grateful member in the circle having found a safe moment from the daily internal conflicts of trying too hard to live with the effects of this disease?

Were we welcoming, accepting, and a healing circle of understanding from people who have been there too.

Hope at last! My answer was yes, for the most part. But, what about the parts that needed attention? What was I to do? When was I to do it? Just like my ninth step, my Higher Power has provided the time, the place, and the words to address an issue. A Higher Power is available in our groups also. Someone had the courage to share what I had felt and had long kept to myself.

Once again, my part is to be Honest, Open and Willing. Growth was once again to take place. A group inventory was likely going to happen. Then I remembered what my first sponsor had said long ago: "That all

the group answers, no matter how challenging, can be found in the traditions if we all look into them deeply enough.

It's good practice for me to say what I really feel when asked and then let go of the outcomes. I feel confident and optimistic that Al-Anon is like a fresco on a wall, with the substance of its color and endurance thoroughly mixed into the program's spiritual nature. Unlike paint that just covers the surface, the Al-Anon traditions have the depth to promote much harmony and growth. Although a little of our Al-Anon program may have been worn away by the elements and time, its spiritual nature and vibrancy for renewal is still alive and well for all of those who want it.

- Fred C.