

MARCH 2016

The Wagon Wheel

IDAHO AREA 18

NEWSLETTER



GOD
grant me
the SERENITY
to accept the things
I cannot change,
COURAGE
to change the things I can,
and WISDOM
to know the
difference.

The The Greatest Gift of All

“The greatest gift that can come to anybody is a spiritual awakening.....So we do awake, and we are sober. Then what? Is sobriety all that we are to expect of a spiritual awakening? Again, the voice of AA speaks up. No, sobriety is only a bare beginning, it is only the first gift of the first awakening. If more gifts are to be received, our awakening has to go on. And if it does go on, we find that bit by bit we can discard the old life - the one that did not work - for a new life that can and does work under any conditions whatever. Regardless of worldly success or failure, regardless of pain or joy, regardless of sickness or health or even of death itself, a new life of endless possibilities can be lived if we are willing to continue our awakening.”

by Bill W.
from the December 1957
Grapevine Article.

Dear Idaho Area 18 Friends,

I would like to introduce myself to those who don't know me. My name is Susan Orison and I am an alcoholic. I currently will serve the Area for the next 2 years as your Newsletter Editor. I live in Bellevue, ID.

My sobriety date is January 28, 1989.

I am looking forward to your feedback, questions, or suggestions you might have, but mostly to share with you the stories of recovery, unity, and service.

If you would like to submit an article, story, joke, or picture

please email me at

Newsletter1@idahoarea18aa.org.

*I want to thank my graphic designer, Morgan
for all her help in putting this together.*

It wouldn't be so bright and colorful without her help!

Also Theresa O. for her amazing photo!

Thanks, too, to Kathy our previous Editor for her guidance.

I hope to see you on the road of happy destiny.

May God bless you

and keep you

until then.

In loving service,

Susan O, the Wagon Ho!

“Just to the extent
that we do as we think He would have us,
and humbly rely on Him,
does He enables us to match
calamity with serenity.”

Page 68, Alcoholics Anonymous.



Photo by Theresa O.

CONCEPT IX

Good service leaders, together with sound and appropriate methods of choosing them, are at all levels indispensable for our future functioning and safety. The primary world service leadership once exercised by the founders of A.A. must necessarily be assumed by the Trustees of the General Service Board of Alcoholics Anonymous.

Concept IX focuses on the necessity of good leadership inside of Alcoholics Anonymous to protect the fellowship's present and future. Without good leadership, A.A. may never have gotten off the ground in the first place.

When I think of the early leadership roles for A.A., I often think of the conversation Bill and Lois had before Bill had met Dr. Bob. During this conversation Bill was lamenting at the fact that none of the prospects he had worked with had stayed sober. Not a one. It was at this moment that Lois showed great leadership in pointing out to Bill that he had indeed kept one alcoholic sober; himself. From that moment on Bill was convinced that working with another alcoholic was the only way that any alcoholic could assure themselves the chance of sobriety.

The second early example I think of in A.A.'s early history, is the leadership the New York group itself showed when Bill approached them with the idea of being paid to work with drunks to try and share the gift of sobriety for a price. After listening to Bill's proposal the group showed great leadership by being honest with their founder; the gift of sobriety had to be given away, without strings or a price. Despite the awareness of the financial perils of Bill and Lois, the group stayed firm through strong leadership.

Leadership at the group and individual level has often been shown throughout the Fellowship's history. The formation of the Trustee Board, the surrender of control from the founders to the Fellowship, and the establishment of the annual General Service Conference are just three other examples of the great leadership A.A. has been given.

Is this the end of the need for good leadership inside of the Fellowship? I believe not.

As is written in the essay on Concept IX in the Twelve Concepts for World Services there is still the need for leadership at both the group and individual levels. Bill writes, "With leadership we shall have a continuous problem. Good leadership

can be here today and gone tomorrow." It is with vigilant awareness that the groups of A.A. at every level must develop individuals inside of their ranks to be the leaders of the future. Sitting inside groups that are meeting today will be the future Group Service Representatives, Intergroup Representatives, District Committee Members, Special Committee Chairs, Delegates, and Trustees for our Fellowship. It is from these people that the future of Alcoholics Anonymous will rely upon.

The time to show leadership at the group and individual level is now. Apathy to the issues affecting our Fellowship locally and at the world level can cause great harm. It is not some other group or individual's job. Inside of Idaho Area 18, District committees and intergroups are looking for assistance from leaders in the Fellowship on how to survive and better serve the alcoholic that still suffers. A.A. as a whole is facing the probability of great change in the near future to assure the availability of the Fellowship for future generations. What might this new Fellowship look like? The many home groups in Alcoholics Anonymous are being asked by the General Service Board to brainstorm for new solutions to old problems. If leadership is not shown in the groups for this activity, the Fellowship that we all owe so much to, might cease to exist. In each of these cases there are small groups of leaders doing a lot of work.

So who is the leader that Alcoholics Anonymous is looking for? It is you, your group, and me. We all must play the role. There is a spot for each and every one of us at the leadership table.

Submitted by **Barry S.**
Kuna, Idaho
Area 18 Delegate

Jettied To Sobriety

My relationship with AA began in Del Rey Beach, Florida, where I celebrated my 21st birthday in the courtyard of a rehab residence by hurling a Carvel ice cream cake against the surrounding stucco walls and screaming at the top of my lungs. I was young and wild and resentful at the situation I found myself in. I'd learned not only what an alcoholic was, but that I was one. This came as a relief actually, I had always wondered what was wrong with me and why I felt and was compelled to act differently from those around me. It was the course of treatment for my newly diagnosed disease that I found unacceptable.

During my 6 months at rehab, I came to two very important conclusions: One, that I was an alcoholic and that AA would indeed grant me a daily reprieve, and two, that there was no way I was going to stop drinking

The next seven years were a kind of purgatory, in which I alternated between using and not going to meetings, using and going to meetings, and brief, painful stints of sobriety. It always began the same way, I would clean up, put on a suit and tie, go apply for a job I wasn't qualified for, lie on my resume and charm the pants off the person who interviewed me. I would keep it together, only drinking beer or using on the weekends, but eventually I would let my use spiral out of control, and the people in my work and personal life would realize I was a complete fraud and a liability in their lives.

Eventually, my life would get too painful. Phone calls from family and friends and sometimes full interventions where I would come home to find half a dozen people in my living room, who amazingly still cared for me, and read letters about how I had hurt them and wanted me to get help.

On one cold gray New York day, I had reached what I later came to realize what was a state of pitiful and incomprehensible demoralization. It was September 30th, and I was going to be evicted from my apartment on the next morning. I was strung out and jonesing for a drink, and though I knew the jig was

up, I would have done anything to be able to stay there, drinking, for just one more day. I had one thing to do, make a 7am plane departing from Newark airport to Sun Valley, Idaho the next morning. I sincerely doubted that I would.

Sick as a dog with withdrawals, I somehow dragged my ravaged body and brain onto the plane and readied myself for the hours ahead. When the flight attendant announced they would be serving a free local lager, I jumped at the chance to calm my nerves, and somewhere 30,000 feet over the Idaho-Utah border I downed the last drink of my life.

Waiting for me on the ground was my friend Doug, who had seen me decorate the rehab stucco some seven years prior. He had bought me that plane ticket, as I was incapable of saving money to spend on anything other than my habit at that time. He greeted me with a hug, and at that moment I knew I was ready.

It was here in Blaine County that I took the next steps in my recovery. I started going to meetings every day, sometimes twice a day. I began learning how to be honest with myself and with those around me and as the fog lifted, I began to believe in something greater than myself. I started to realize that the taxi sitting in front of my building when I left my New York apartment for the last time on that fateful October 1st, 125lbs of luggage in hand --that agreed to take me to the airport, on the promise I would send him a check once I got to my destination was the universe doing for me what I could not do for myself.

I went to meetings at the Sun Club North mostly in those days but headed down to Bellevue on Mondays for the Birthday meetings. It was in AA that I met the people who taught me how to live a sober life and I met my first sponsor, Thad, who taught me to work the steps and participate in the program, get commitments and be available for others. I spent the next six months learning to be a part of a world and life that was way beyond my expectations. I paid rent on an apartment, on time, and held a job that I liked in a

ski shop at the base of the Warms Springs ski lift.

I went back to New York after the ski season and experienced what I considered my only relapse. In a dark moment, while staying with my mother, I stepped out of the shower and into my room to find her holding my habit in her hand with a look on her face that melted me into the floor. I had again reached the point of desperation, and threw myself into my program like I had when I first arrived in Sun Valley and I have been sober ever since. I live a life that I could not have fathomed was available to me, and every January I make the trip back to Sun Valley to pay homage to the place that put me on the path, and gave me a gift that I can only repay by sharing it with others.

Dan H.



"It was my sponsor
He suggested I grow a pear!"

Whose Decision is it Anyway?

So, I'm new to this whole service thing, I'm at my first assembly and my group has told me exactly how I need to vote. They have reminded me several times over the past few months that my job is to carry their voice and vote. Being new to this deal, I am pretty nervous about getting it exactly right. All I have to do is make sure that I follow through with their wishes; I certainly don't want to hear from them about getting it wrong.

If you have ever thought that you aren't alone, being new to General Service can be intimidating at times. I remember my first time in an assembly and having the feeling that I just needed to do what everyone else was doing and no matter what, not to rock the boat! Fortunately, those thoughts aren't always the right ones. Now I'm not saying that I get to be a loose cannon doing whatever I want. I can, however, follow my heart and my head in certain situations.

Concept III gives us all something called a "Right of Decision." What that means is that we get to use our hearts and our heads when new information on a particular item is given to us. In the group setting, when the decisions are made on how the group would like to vote, we sometimes only have limited information about the item(s). We aren't fully informed and becoming fully informed happens when we all come together in an assembly and discuss it again. Often times, new thoughts and ideas come from that discussion. Occasionally, they come after the vote through Concept V, Minority Opinion. When we hear these new thoughts and ideas it is our duty as Trusted Servants to cast our votes according to what we now think of the item.

There are some that still might think that we should cast our vote as our group directed us. That isn't the thought process behind Concept III though. It gives us the freedom to let our Higher Power speak through us. It allows us to give a more reflective group conscience. It makes Tradition Two come to the forefront by letting God be the Ultimate Authority, not the group.

Our role as Trusted Servants means that our group or committee thinks we are responsible enough to carry their voice and vote. They also believe us to be able to carry back any information that pertains to the groups welfare. Whenever we feel it to be right we should follow the group's instructions and vote as they would like us to. Whenever we feel that newly shared information makes those instructions invalid, we use Concept III to make the correction. That's what makes us Trusted Servants.

Garren T,
Wendell, Idaho
Panel 66 Finance Committee Chair

Humility
Through
Service

Hello Everyone!

My name is Ashley Miles and I am an Alcoholic.

My sobriety date is October 10, 2000 and my home group is the Chubbuck Sunday Night AA Group in Chubbuck Idaho. I currently serve as the DCM for District 1, Idaho Area 18.

I have been given the topic: Does our Fellowship make Agnostics, Buddhists, Spiritualists, etc., feel welcome in our recovery meetings?

Through a lot of prayer and meditation I have decided not to give any of my own personal experience on this topic. Everything you will hear from me today is coming directly from other members of AA or from AA Literature. So without further ado here we go:

In the book *Alcoholics Anonymous* page 12 it says, "It was only a matter of being willing to believe in a power greater than myself. Nothing more was required of me to make my beginning." In the 12 Steps and 12 Traditions it states on page 26, "First, Alcoholics Anonymous does not demand that you believe anything. All of its twelve steps are but suggestions." In *The Language of the Heart* on page 848 it reads "The phrase, God as we understand Him, is perhaps the most important expression to be found in our whole AA vocabulary. Within the compass of these five significant words there can be included every kind and degree of faith, together with the positive assurance that each of us may choose his own."

So yes in our literature I believe we have done our best to be all inclusive not exclusive but what about in the groups and as individuals? Do we make everyone feel welcome?

I interviewed individuals from Idaho, Hawaii, Colorado and Alaska to see if the fellowship in Alcoholics Anonymous is welcoming the Agnostics, Buddhists, Spiritualists, etc. and this is what I have found:

One member shared that sometimes the best way to answer a question is to put yourself in the exact same position as a Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist or Jewish person. If AA started in Jerusalem instead of the United States, would we be saying a Jewish prayer instead of the Lord's Prayer? Could you say that prayer openly accepting Mohammed as your higher power? Would you hang Buddhist prayer flags around your meeting hall? This member stated that they do not have any direct experience with not feeling welcome in AA because of their spiritual beliefs but it is easy for them to see how others may be offended or unable to attend because of our strong Christian beginnings. The responsibility statement says "I am responsible when anyone anywhere reaches out for help I want the hand of AA always to be there." This member believes we can cast a wider net if we were to get rid of some of the dogma that is in AA.

I interviewed another member and she shared that our fellowship does not make anybody *feel* anything. We are responsible for our own feelings. There are numerous ways, however, in which the fellowship can convey an attitude that is less than welcoming. She spoke directly about AA member's attitudes and actions, many of which are supported by common practices, and both supported and contradicted by our literature.

She has moved through the process of coming to terms with recovery in Alcoholics Anonymous as a non-believer and has felt increasingly that she would be ostracized should the truth become known. She is grateful to have some years of recovery and much practice at “fake it till you make it” which is great if you don’t kill yourself in the interim. She realized her part was that her dishonesty was driven by fear. To admit she was an atheist would be to risk her recovery in AA.

In 2006, she admitted she was an atheist and that she had lied for many years about it. It was at her town’s only closed AA meeting in the presence of many with similar durations of recovery—was at 18 years and change. Cross talk directed specifically at her share was immediate. “I thought you were smarter than that,” and “How can you NOT believe, given your recovery,” and “You’ll get there.” Seriously, this thinking comes straight out of *We Agnostics and Tradition Three* in the 12 x 12, not to mention a thousand other scraps suggesting we all get to God or die drunk.

That same year she came out as a non-believer, one of the local fellowship’s beloved old timers was asked to lead the closing prayer. Circling up and joining hands, the old timer didn’t start with “Who makes the stars and keeps us out of bars?” or “Who keeps us sober?” He started the prayer by saying, “Who keeps Amy sober?”

She believes it is less true today than in the past, but that there has been an institutional discrimination, by word, thought and deed, against non-believers in AA. Right, we’re spiritual not religious, but we religiously conform to habits and convictions that are deliberately or potentially alienating to those who believe differently.

When she came into the program a common phrase was “God will scare them out and booze will scare them back.” She keeps it in the forefront of her mind that God will scare them out and booze will kill a whole lot of them.

Unfortunately, the members I interviewed were all asked the same question: To give me examples of when they felt discriminated against and when they felt like they were being supported in their beliefs. It saddens my heart deeply to tell you that their experiences with being discriminated against were significantly higher than that of being supported. One member said that she felt supported when she was asked to be the Sunday Spiritual Speaker, and at her home group they closed with “Zippidy Doo Da” instead of the Lord’s Prayer. Another member stated that she finally felt that she was being supported when she found an Atheist/Agnostic meeting.

I would like to share one more quote from the *Language of the Heart* page 853, where Bill shares his experience. “In AA’s first years I all but ruined the whole undertaking with this sort of unconscious arrogance. God as I understood him had to be for everybody. Sometimes my aggression was subtle and sometimes it was crude. But either way it was damaging—perhaps fatally so— to a number of nonbelievers. Even now I catch myself chanting that same old barrier-building refrain, “Do as I do, believe as I do—or else.”

In closing, I would like to thank the PRAASA Committee for asking me to present because I have made some great new friends and learned a lot diving into the literature.

Ashley M.

Gems from AA Literature

Drunk Number One: "Have you ever had an income-tax cocktail?"

Drunk Number Two: "What's that?"

Drunk Number One: "Two drinks and you withhold nothing."

April 1999 Grapevine

After the husband's fifth trip to the host's bar for refills, the wife asked, "Aren't you embarrassed to go back so many times?"

Hubby: "Nope. I keep telling them it's for you."

November 2006 Grapevine



UPCOMING IDAHO AREA 18 EVENTS

For details please click the link below (pdf version)

Or go to the website: IdahoArea18aa.org

Treasure Valley Intergroup Central Office New Hours

(effective February 1, 2016)

10AM - 6:00Pm (Tuesday - Friday)

10AM - 3:00Pm (Saturday)

1111 S. Orchard St., Suite 180, Boise ID

Malad City AA 63rd Anniversary

Dinner and Meeting

April 2, 2016 78 North Main St. American Legion Building, Malad City, ID

Annual TSNAC (H & I) Awareness BBQ

Saturday, June 4th, 2016 Veterans Memorial Park, 930 N. Veterans Memorial Parkway, Boise, ID

District 6 and H & I Workshop

April 9, 2016

Serenity Hall, 600 S. Blvd in Idaho Falls, ID

Pacific Northwest Conference 2016!

June 24th, 25th & 26th,
2016 Pendleton Convension Center,
1601 Westgate, Pendleton, OR

Annual Chili Feed Cookoff -

Joy of Service

Hosted by District 3 and 5

April 16, 2016

Five Mile Church - Nazarene,
2701 S. Five Mile Rd. Boise, ID

2016 Gem State Roundup

August 5, 6, and 7, 2016

Riverside Hotel, Boise, ID

Honoring AA Old Timers

April 16, 2016

Magic Valley Fellowship Hall,
801 2nd Ave. North, Twin Falls, ID

15th Annual Teton Canyon Campout

August 19, 20, and 21, 2016

Reunion Flats Campground Site #C, ID

District 2 and 10 GSR Workshop

April 16, 2016

Jerome War Memorial Hall,
N. Lincoln and 7th Ave E., Jerome, ID

2016 Idaho Area 18 Fall Assembly!

October 7th, 8th & 9th,

2016 Shoshone

Bannock Hotel & Event Center,
Fort Hall, ID

2016 Idaho Area 18 Spring Assembly

May 27th, 28th & 29th, 2016

The Riverside Hotel, Boise, ID

2017 Idaho Area 18 Spring Assembly!

May 12th, 13th & 14th,

2017 Nampa Civic Center, Nampa, ID

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ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS

