

The Wagon Wheel Idaho Area 18 Newsletter

October 2020

Editor, Margie P.



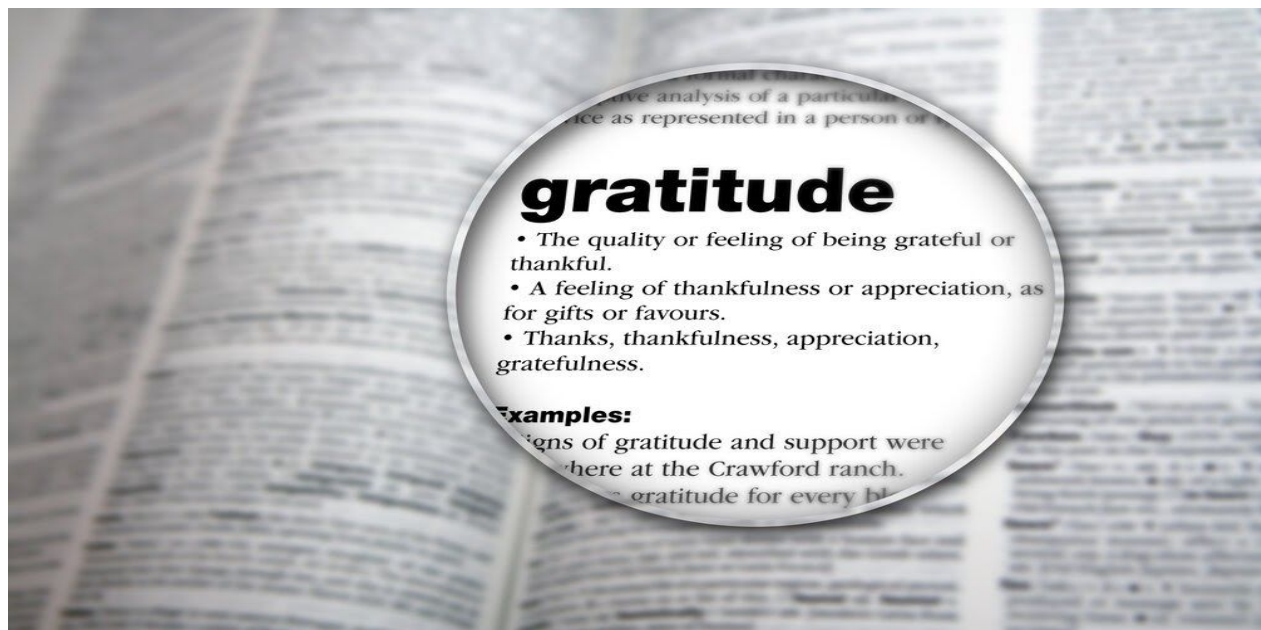
We All Need To Be Recharged

Note from the Editor:

Hello Idaho Area 18 members and beyond. If I am being honest with you and myself, this has been one of the most difficult times I have had in service. When I was first asked to do the newsletter, I thought; hmm.. That'll be pretty easy. I can do it from home, I will be able to round up articles from people in the meetings that I already attend and so on and so on. Then the Pandemic hit. This should have been an ideal time for me to dedicate the optimal amount of time to the newsletter. I don't even have to print a newsletter, I can do it all online. Well...depression, worry and fear set in. I was not attending meetings in person and I felt isolated and alone. I attended many zoom meetings and talked to people on the phone, but that somehow wasn't enough. Days turned into weeks and weeks turned into months. I can hardly believe it has been 7 months since PRAASA. March was the last newsletter I did, skipping May and August. After this October edition, I will publish one more newsletter at the end of the year and then I will be back on track. I want to thank all of the people that have kept information flowing during these crazy times and have done together what I could not do at all!

Margie P.

Newsletter Editor Idaho Area 18 AA



... And the Message goes Zoom!

Who would have thought it? Here we are, the human race transitioning to the "Information Age". We knew it was going to happen, but wasn't it years into the future - you know, like "The Jetsons" cartoon with flying cars and the like? 2020: the year we began the evolutionary step from one-on-one, physical, face-to-face, close, human interaction and communion to that of seeing our bodies as images on a screen and transmitting information via all forms of technology through the world wide web system of air waves! For us, in Alcoholics Anonymous - this has been quite a shift of perspective and experience, as we have all had to acclimate to this new way of communication and way of living in our daily reprieve of our disease. So how are we doing? How have we scrambled to find innovative and creative ways to carry out our Primary Purpose of helping the alcoholic who is still suffering? How are we meeting the needs of the newcomer without providing a physical room for them to walk into and be greeted by a handshake or a smile or a warm cup 'o joe?

We did what we had to do, and continue to do, to keep Bill W's and Dr. Bob's message alive - we made the leap into Virtual Reality... a leap that is the beginning of a new future for A.A.. We all, in essence, reached deep within ourselves for the willingness to "go to any lengths" to stay sober and to help others achieve sobriety. There are many online technologies available to carry the message and ONE seems to be the most popular - that is the system of Zoom technology for A.A. meeting rooms all over the world. The move into the life of Zoom rooms has catapulted the program of A.A. to a new level of carrying the message! It has been 5 months since an unfortunate pandemic gripped the world and forced governments to "close down" places where many people gathered, to stop the spread of the deadly virus. When our meeting places closed, the doors were locked and we were left on the sidewalks with nowhere to go. After the initial shock, the only option (to abide by the social-distance dictates of the law) was to initiate the Virtual Reality approach to keep the A.A. message alive!

Zoom meeting rooms have become a way of fellowship for all of us around the world. In our own Idaho Area 18, many "Zoom Operators" stepped-up to the plate to create Zoom accounts for our groups. A.A. phone contacts were our life thread by which we carried-out the mission of gathering our fellows and connected, online. Mission Impossible? Of course not! This is a time when we witnessed heroes in our community, our Trusted Servants, commit hours and days to this endeavor. A.A. online meetings via Zoom has served as our new way of life in the Virtual Rooms of Alcoholics Anonymous. Like ants whose home had been dealt a lit match on fire, we all scrambled to find a way to create a new and welcoming environment where we could all continue to meet, feel secure in our sobriety, and fulfill our primary purpose of being available to help the newcomer.

It is important to acknowledge that one very integral element that was key to the success of implementing Zoom meeting rooms for our area was the way that Margo, from our Treasure Valley Central Office, demonstrated hard work, dedication, commitment, stamina, and patience as she compiled a whole new list of Zoom meetings that updated daily! Not only did she keep the list accurately posted at the website, but she also showed courage and commitment to service by keeping the TVICO store open for as long as she could to have at least ONE physical place the doors were still open for newcomers to find help so desperately needed. TVICO served and continues to serve as the central hub for all information related to our Treasure Valley A.A.'s current state. Here one can find a list of Online Zoom meetings and of course a plethora of A.A. literature to keep us all sober during these times! In the beginning it was Margo who held all our ships afloat with the constant changing of the Zoom Meeting information she promptly kept current at the TVICO website for immediate use! Those ID numbers and Passwords! Margo serves as a testament to what the program of A.A. can do, as she demonstrated selfless service in Action giving attention to every single new Zoom meeting listing which required accurate posting for immediate access to the fellowship! So next time you see Margo, tell her "Thank You for all you do for us!"... it's good to acknowledge all those behind the scenes!!

Initially there was concern about how Zoom meetings would accommodate the newcomer walking into the rooms brand new off the street. What we have found is that many, many newcomers have started working the steps of A.A. by joining the Zoom world! All it takes is a phone or computer, and the willingness "to go to any lengths"! In a Zoom meeting, sponsors are available and phone numbers are given so the newcomer knows they do not have to do this alone. At a time when our society is being forced to social-distance and limit human contact, the Zoom meetings are a lifesaver for the newcomer experiencing loneliness and isolation as well as even for the oldtimers who thrive on the fellowship found in our meetings - now it's all just advanced to a new level - that of Virtual Reality!

So how Real is Real? What has been the result of this new way of carrying the message? The reality is that the past 5 months of A.A. Online has demonstrated that our program, our recovery, our Unity, and our fellowship is Rock Solid... we are adaptive, flexible and willing Trusted Servants who give freely of ourselves to keep the program running, this program which gave to us a new life. The best way we can "pay back" what was given to us is by our ability to respond to the present moment with what is needed of us. There are so many inspiring stories of how our fellowship has become stronger through this - here are just some examples:

*District Eight of Area 18 purchased a Zoom Account for all groups within the District to use for their meetings. Groups who chose, were given training sessions on how to use Zoom. The District Eight Zoom account currently serves 10 meetings per week. In addition, the District hosted an online Zoom GSR Interactive workshop that received rave reviews. Topics included Group Conscience, the GSR's role at the Area Assembly, and the 12 Concepts and Minority opinion. Panelists were: Bob R., Marti H., and Shannon C.! The workshop was audio recorded and if you would like a copy of the transcript please contact District 8 at district84u@gmail.com

*Individual groups have purchased their own Zoom accounts to accommodate their meeting times. Each meeting in our Area has its own Zoom flavor. For instance, Journey of the Heart, which meets at 10 a.m. on Saturday on Zoom has an average attendance of 40 participants with a maximum of 70 at one time. Their meeting format begins with a 20 minute speaker sharing their spiritual journey in A.A., after which the rest of the group members share. Since becoming a Zoom meeting, this meeting now hosts speakers from around the world, creating a weekly curiosity and anticipation the Area 18 Webmaster, Melissa has gone over and beyond her duties to ensure the Area Website is updated with current meeting information, which then reflects on the Meeting Guide App.! Most recently Melissa discovered a way to add instant pay buttons on the meeting list for groups who are using digital baskets like Venmo! One easy click, and pay! So cool!*The General Service Office! OMG! For the first time in history the office in New York was forced to close shop... yet find a way to continue our Mission, the many tasks of serving the fellowship of AA in so many ways. (For a detailed account of just how giving, attentive, willing and hard-working all the employees are of the GSO, please read the Summer Issue of Box 459. It can be found at aa.org/newsletters) One of the best stories that demonstrates the powerful spirit of determination to carry the message to all is the work of the GSO employee who serves as the Mail/Shipping Manager. His name is Aubrey and he currently sorts all of G.S.O.'s mail right in the middle of his apartment in the Bronx! That is commitment! He says, "When I go to the post office, I mask up and glove up. I take the mail back to my apartment, and I use a disinfectant spray on it and let it sit for an hour." Aubrey decided to do this to keep some line of communication open for the fellowship so that literature orders, contributions, address updates, and inmate mail could continue to flow. Aubrey forwards the inmate letters to Brenda B. on the Corrections Assignment, and she replies to every single one of the about 400 a month they receive. The letters arrive at her apartment via the courier service. In addition to answering inmate letters, Brenda also answers emails and phone calls from the fellowship. This shows the commitment and energy that has magically and effortlessly appeared these past 5 months from everywhere within our fellowship.

*The General Service Conference was held online via Zoom! Our very own Idaho Area 18 Delegate, Thad attended! There were 135 participants at one time in one Zoom room! The usual six-day in-person conference was condensed into a four-day online Virtual conference which covered all the needed business items to keep our message carried. Here, also, in Boise, Idaho, we had our very first online Zoom Virtual Conference on June 6th. The day featured speakers, panels, and even entertainment in the form of a Jeopardy game to conclude the evening. At one point there were 74 participants at one time in the Zoom room during this event. Of course the funnest part was listening to Thad N. give us his Delegate report! These gatherings are just the beginning of a new way of how we all continue to conduct our business to ensure help is available anytime, anywhere for the still suffering alcoholic.

We don't know if things will ever be the same again for us in Alcoholics Anonymous. All we know for sure is that as a fellowship, we have demonstrated that, yes, we have escaped disaster together, since 1935 when Bill W. got sober, and NOW, as a whole we have taken a giant leap into The Information Age - the world of Virtual Reality and carrying the message as we talk with each other through our images on a screen! Zooming our message has created an opportunity for even more UNITY as now we can attend meetings all over the world without having any travel costs! All we need is a plug-in, an ID number, password, and we ENERGIZE (just as the Star Trek crew travels!)

Bottom line is: we have all received "Upgrades", we have entered into the Spiritual Realm - where we are being called upon to forsake the physical meeting and embrace the experience, strength and hope of each other from a distance. The Big Book says, "We Shall be with you in the Fellowship of the Spirit", and this is our reality now. In "A Vision for You" it says, "Someday we hope that every alcoholic who journeys will find a fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous at his destination... Thus we grow... it became customary to set apart one night a week for a meeting to be attended by anyone interested in a spiritual way of life... the prime object was to provide a time and place where new people might bring their problems...". ... and here we are!

As we begin this new way of working on carrying the message, we work hand-in-hand with our Creator to find innovative ways to accommodate the newcomer - i.e., Virtual Newcomer packets? Phone lists? Signing court cards? As of now there are some who are returning to physical meetings, if they abide by certain rules like mask-wearing and keeping a register of meeting attendees, should a member test positive for COVID, there will be a way to trace contacts. It is a distinct likelihood that many will prefer to continue the way of Zooming to ensure their health. No matter what, the future of Alcoholics Anonymous is bright and bursting with potential to reach many, many more who suffer from the disease... and that is certainly something that can bring us all a smile on our face as we sit in our homes, in isolation, or quarantined, and know without a fathom of a doubt, that we are never alone. One of us is just an ID number and a password away! Zoom! Zoom!

In Service,

Brenda M.



Staying Sober through a Pandemic

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O W O P U D Y L T K A C D O U F W O C Q
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O S I H N L M O J R E B M O B M O O Z W
O S S T Q T V M P M O H E S P O N S O R
B X O K R V E G R W Y R C N M R U T Y D
G G H C S U N R I U M B O S W K M I Z A
I J V R I A J G G J L I T E R A T U R E
B S V A I A M M S R T O I Q M Z P N R R
P V R K A I L J O A O W P W M W C P F L
F I C A U Z J D L U L U K R E S O E E F
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Y S Q D X F S U P S X D V Y M K C H I N
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ZOOM
BIGBOOK
SCHEDULE
GRAPEVINE
MASKS

ZOOMBOMBER
PHONECALLS
READ
INTERGROUP
SOCIALDISTANCE

SPONSOR
STEPS
LITERATURE
ISOLATION

Send Stories to : newsletter@idahoarea18aa.org

Thank you Brenda M. for your article

Upcoming Events

Because of the COVID-19 Virus, Please Check Area Website to Make Sure the Event is not cancelled

2020

***** 2020 Fall Assembly Will be Held as a Zoom Meeting *****

2020 Fall Assembly Roundtables

Friday, October 2, 2020 – 7:00 pm

This will be a Zoom meeting

2020 Fall Assembly Business Meeting

Saturday, October 3, 2020

This will be a Zoom meeting

District 8 – 12 Concepts Illustrated Online Workshop

Saturday, October 10, 2020 – 2:00 pm – 4:00 pm

Zoom Meeting ID: 896 4237 5398 / Password: Awaken!

2020 Fall Convention

Saturday, October 17, 2020 – 9:00 am – 11:00 pm

Zoom Meeting ID: 818 2235 6902 / Password: Area18ID

District 6 – The Realm of the Spirit

Saturday, October 24, 2020 – 10:00 am – 3:00 pm

Zoom Meeting ID: 962 5899 7280 Password: PAGE46