



Lifelines

The Newsletter of the RI AFG, April 2007

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reach out a hand. ~ Betsy*

District Representatives: Vital Links in the Chain of Service, Part II

In last month's issue, you met Betsy, Ellen, and Marie, our three District Representatives (DRs) for Rhode Island, and learned about the responsibilities of a DR. Part II of this interview covers the gifts of this type of service.

How has the program helped you in your role as a DR?

Marie, District 4: The program has helped me understand that I alone cannot control situations or people and not to take it personally if a group disbands. I was a new DR (3 months) and a group was experiencing difficulty; my goal was to visit each group and ask that they vote on a group representative, to ensure their group would receive Area information. This was progressing better than I expected, I was learning to simply ask—someone would come forward. The group that was in crisis had low to no attendance; I contacted members of the group and they did not want to attend and wanted to disband. I felt that this was a reflection on me and all I could think was *NOT ON MY WATCH*. Well, I did attend and sat there for an hour and a half alone. I felt like a failure. I may add the group did disband. Yes, my ego was hurt, but I learned that some things are out of my control, I learned to be humble and to hold my head up, be proud of what I can do, and move forward.

Ellen, District 1: I have a Service sponsor! When I am unable to be as perfect or even good at what I am doing, I use the program over and over again to remind myself not to be so hard on myself. My sponsor makes me laugh at myself, which is great. I know I will get back to being good. The program also taught me the skills of organizing and prioritizing, also giving myself plenty of time to reach goals. Also, I am not alone in this. I have GRs and the Area and all of AI-Anon.

Betsy, District 2: The program has helped me achieve my role by giving me the confidence that I have always lacked to be a public speaker and a front person. I had always attended large meetings because I thought it was great place to get lost in the crowds and have no one pay attention to me. I always would stick with the people with the loudest mouths because they would do all the talking. I learned in the program that I just might have something that is worth sharing (contrary to my alcoholic's belief). I began to share a little bit at a time; when nobody laughed at me and they actually agreed with me, then I started to believe in myself and shared a little more. I realized that I was not alone. Anywhere I went, all I needed to do was reach out a hand. I grew as my program grew. Today I have the confidence just to share the message as spoken. I know that my thoughts, fears, and sharings are all real and valid. When I have this kind of confidence, then I know that I can do my job—keeping it simple and not having unrealistic expectations of myself.

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Vital Links

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What are the gifts of this kind of service?

Ellen: New friends, new skills, new opportunities, new experiences, joy, exhilaration...It has taught me that, with a little help from my friends (GRs), I can do anything, ie, begin a new meeting in South Providence. On Monday, April 16, at 7 PM, we will have our first meeting at St. Joe's Hospital at 21 Peace Street. This will be accomplished with help from all our Al-Anon friends everywhere. Thank You!!!!

Betsy: My gifts include self esteem, confidence, love of self, pride, serenity, a feeling of completion and of giving back. These gifts have taught me to be more open and honest with myself and others. They have shown me that each and every person has the same or similar fears that I have and that I am not alone. These gifts have given me humility and gratitude and confirmed my relationship with my higher power. This role has confirmed that we all have varied ideas, mine are not the only ones that are right (ah shucks!), and I respect others more for the courage that they have shown to be verbal in their ideas, thoughts, fears, and differences.

Marie: The gifts I have received are countless. I have had the opportunity to meet Al-Anon members from the district I may have never been privileged to meet. To know that help is just a phone call away. That to ask for help is a gift. To know I am not alone in serving the district. That the words "PASS IT ON" makes us united.

What would you say to anyone considering becoming a DR?

Betsy: I would tell them that it is a great job! It opens up the world to many new people, places, ideas, and opportunities. I have been to meetings that I never thought that I would go to. I have spoken at an anniversary on the topic of service for the first time. It has kept me aware of the need for more groups and more involvement at the group levels. I would tell them to try it just for 90 days and then, if they didn't enjoy it, quit. But if they did enjoy it, then they would be open to a whole new experience of Service and it is well worth it!

Ellen: That it can be a roller coaster ride, but you have lots and lots of help for the lows—and the highs are fabulous. You will meet lots of wonderful new people you probably wouldn't have met otherwise. This is a three-year position and usually you have been a GR for a couple of year, so perhaps 5 or 6 years. Is this too much to ask? This is the organization that saved my life. So no!!!!!! I started small, just chairing a meeting and helping at the workshop. Small steps led to larger ones and trained me for larger steps. All part of getting better.

Marie: GO FOR IT...It truly is in the giving that we receive.

To learn more about the role of a District Representative, copies of the guidelines are available at the Area office (see last page). You can also access a copy from the WSO Members' Web site at www.al-anon.alateen.org/members. The password is the name of your home group plus the letters "afg". Click *Group Services, Guidelines*, then select *District Representative (G-37)* from the menu.

Are you interested in becoming a DR for District 3 or District 5, or maybe an Alternate DR for District 1? Please come to the next Area Meeting or call the office (see last page).

e-CAL

The WSO is launching a 3-year trial of e-CAL, an electronic form of Conference Approved Literature. Sharings can take on any form—music, poetry, graphics, etc.

See what members are sharing, or submit a sharing yourself. Log on to: www.al-anon.alateen.org/members. This site is password protected. The password is the name of your home group plus the letters "afg".

New Meeting!

A new beginner's meeting has started in South Providence. Monday Night Let It Begin with Me meets on Monday nights at 7:00 PM at St. Joseph's Hospital on Peace Street. We meet in the conference room, second floor east. The meeting focuses on Steps 1, 2, and 3 and the slogans.

Gentle Reminder...

Crosstalk

It is believed that crosstalk originated with other Twelve Step fellowships and found its way to ours. There are varying definitions of the word among Al-Anon members. Thus, in 1991 at the World Service Conference, members came up with this simple one: "Crosstalk occurs when one member monopolizes the meeting with one-to-one responses to another member (advice giving). This includes the chairperson who feels the need to comment on each sharing (coming off as an expert)." Other definitions of crosstalk include not using "I" statements, side conversations, and mini-meetings within a meeting. Most members agree this type of sharing is not in keeping with Al-Anon principles.

There is some conflict between what some members call "crosstalk" and others call "loving interchange," as mentioned in the Suggested Welcome. Here is an example: "A member shares a personal problem or a painful experience and another member, in an effort to help and give comfort, shares his/her personal experience on handling a similar problem and how the tools of the program helped them to find solutions to the problem." Some members would refer to this type of sharing as "crosstalk" and others would call it "loving interchange" of help among members.

In the end, the definition is left up to group autonomy, keeping the Traditions in mind.

Alateen Spoken Here

Taylor

Minnesota

When I first came to Alateen, I was lonely and felt like I never fit in anywhere. I was quiet because I thought people would laugh at what I had to say. By attending meetings, I realized that others were going through similar things in their lives and that I wasn't alone.

The Serenity Prayer, slogans, and daily readings from Conference Approved Literature (CAL) changed how I felt. Alateen gave me the confidence to talk to people and now I am no longer alone.

Anonymous

As a newcomer, I didn't know other teens lived with problems caused by someone else's drinking. I didn't recognize alcoholism as a disease.

At first I was embarrassed to talk about my problems. Now that I know people in the group, I'm no longer afraid to speak up. Being able to talk honestly is a valuable tool in changing my attitude. I can be happy even though I can't change other people; they have to change themselves.

Used with permission from Alateen Talk, Vol. 44, No. 4.

Calling All Alateens

This space is for you! If you are an Alateen who likes to write or express yourself artistically, please consider submitting something for the next issue, either on your own or as a group. Here are just a few ideas, but feel free to come up with your own creative contribution:

- ▲ Write a couple of paragraphs on an Alateen topic or on your experience in the program in general
- ▲ Create a piece of artwork (program-related, of course)
- ▲ Create a word search using words that relate to a particular topic

Please e-mail your submissions to Deb E. at destre99@yahoo.com, or drop off or mail them to the Al-Anon office (see last page).

Please provide your first name and/or the town or group to which you belong, unless you wish to remain anonymous.

Service Has Taught Me...

Over the years that I've been a member of the AI-Anon program I have held various service positions, from bringing refreshments, to Group Rep, to Public Outreach. Every position has taught me things about myself, helped my self-esteem, and given me back more than I can say. Just like the pamphlet says, "When I got Busy I Got Better." Service can keep me busy enough to get the focus off of my problems and onto solutions offered in AI-Anon moving through feelings and being actively engaged and part of the strengthening of a program that has given me so much.

I particularly like Public Outreach, because it is something we can all do so easily and anonymously. Outreach is a way to help grow our program and perhaps give suffering people a chance to learn about the program who otherwise may not know it exists.

During the recent "Remember to Forget" literature campaign, I secretly "forgot" an issue of the forum on the magazine rack at my gym. Now, I love that whenever I look for it seems to have been placed on a different shelf. I envision people slipping it between their magazine pages and anonymously reading it under the guise of *Time Magazine*. No one is the wiser while they become informed about AI-Anon and the way it can help them or their loved ones cope and even thrive in the midst of this devastating disease.

I am also in the middle of writing two articles about AI-Anon for the local papers. I like to guard my anonymity carefully and I can do all of this without anyone knowing I am a member of AI-Anon. It feels good to give back in this way and reminds me of that statement on the "Just For Today" bookmark that suggests we do someone a good

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Service Opportunities

- ▲ Enjoy scrap booking? We need an **Area Archivist** to preserve the experience, history, and memorabilia of the RI AFG.
- ▲ An **Area Forum Coordinator** is needed to encourage groups and members to submit sharings to *The Forum* and to subscribe.
- ▲ **District representatives (DRs)** are needed for **Districts 3 and 5**. The DR is an important link between the groups and the Area Assembly.
- ▲ We have the funds, the meeting places, interested schools, and kids looking for meetings. All we're missing are **Alateen Sponsors!** You must have at least 2 years in the program (Double Winners included).
- ▲ Become a member of the **2007 Workshop Committee**; plans for this year's event are already underway.

If you are interested in any of the above positions, please come to the next Area Meeting or call the office (see last page).

- ▲ **Traveling overseas?** Consider attending a meeting, bringing CAL with you, etc. Send WSO a note about where you've been and how you brought public outreach with you.
- ▲ Does your group receive copies of *Lifelines*? Consider **making copies** for your fellow members.
- ▲ We would like to put an AI-Anon book in every library! If your group would like to help, please **donate a book to your local library** (eg, *How AI-Anon Works* is a suggestion) and e-mail lightdance1@aol.com with the book's title and the library's name for our records.
- ▲ Public Outreach is raising money by **selling refillable pens** with RI AFG contact information and the slogan "One Day at a Time." They are dark blue with gold writing and are on sale for \$2.00. We also have **coffee mugs** that are white with blue lettering on sale for \$4.00 each. These items make great gifts for meeting and member anniversaries! You can purchase them at the office.

Treasury Report

The following is a listing of the donations to the Area Office for March. Please remember to put the group name and entire group number on all checks when sending in donations. Group numbers are listed on the meeting list.

Peace in the Program,
Valerie B., Area Treasurer

Group		State	Alateen	Public Outreach
5-012437	Charlestown New Life	\$10.00		
5-064936	Christ Church Westerly	\$25.00		
1-012463	Fri Night Serenity	\$30.00		
53697	Open Doors	\$35.00		
5-0063170	Butterflies are Free	\$50.00	\$50.00	
4-025797	New Beginning	\$25.00	\$40.00	
5-012437	Charlestown New Life	\$20.00	\$20.00	
2-502037	Serenity on the Hill	\$20.00		
5-046984	South County Step	\$50.00		
2-037296	Change What you Can	\$25.00		
3-064596	There is Hope	\$20.00		
	Mugs and Pens sold			\$41.00
4-012443	Fri Night EG	\$75.00	\$25.00	
	March Totals	\$385.00	\$135.00	\$41.00

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turn each day and not get found out. I like secretly doing Al-Anon a good turn—I can't count the number of good turns it has done for me.

*~ Sharon, Tuesday Morning
Cranston/Warwick Day*

What Has Service Taught You?

Please e-mail your sharing to Deb E. at destre99@yahoo.com, or drop off or mail them to the Area office (see last page).

Please provide your first name and/or the town or group to which you belong, unless you wish to remain anonymous.

Forum News

Complimentary Group Subscription

The WSO mails a complimentary copy of The Forum to all registered, English-speaking groups in the World Service Conference structure using the current mailing address (CMA) for each group. Please ask to see your group's copy. If members haven't seen your group copy, ask your Group Representative to call the WSO to verify that the group's CMA is current.

Calling All Alateen Groups

Alateen groups, will you participate in The Forum by selecting a meeting topic and sending four to six questions to the magazine, just as if the questions were for your group's meeting? Please spread the news.

Alateen groups can submit "Alateen Meeting Topics" via e-mail, wso@al-anon.org; fax, (757) 563-1655; or mail, 1600 Corporate Landing Parkway, Virginia Beach, VA 23454-5617.

Have You Been to a Meeting Overseas?

We're looking for sharings from members who've attended a meeting outside the World Service Conference structure. Please share your experience, strength, and hope with Forum readers.

Upcoming Events

May

Speaker at Paths to Recovery Meeting

Tues, May 15th, 7:00 PM

St. Columba's Chapel Parish Hall, 55 Vaucluse Ave., Middletown

Steve C. will talk on the topic of "Public Outreach." All AFG members are invited to attend. Our group is very small and needs support, so bring some other members along in a carpool. Let's see if we can build up the Newport/Middletown attendance to a regular attendance level. We look forward to hearing about ideas to energize AFG and get the word out to our communities. Coffee and brownies will be served.

Area Meeting

Tues, May 22nd, 7:00 PM

Area Office, 106 Rolfe Street, Cranston

If you are interested in participating in service, please attend!

New Beginnings Anniversary

Tues, May 29th, 7:30-9:00 PM

St. Luke's Episcopal Church, Pierce and Church Streets, E. Greenwich

We will have Al-Anon, AA, Alateen, and ACoA speakers.

Refreshments will be served. Hope you can join us!

MAY 2007						
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13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30	31		

RI Al-Anon Family Groups Area Office and Literature Distribution Center

106 Rolfe Street, Cranston, RI 02910

Hours: Please call the office

Phone/Fax: 401-781-0044

E-mail: RI_Al-Anon@hotmail.com

Web: www.RIAFG.org

Lifelines submissions may be sent to destre99@yahoo.com or mailed to the office at the address above.

The deadline for the next issue is **May 16th**. If you wish to receive *Lifelines* via e-mail, please e-mail destre99@yahoo.com and type "Mailing List" in the Subject line.