

THE NORTHERN LIGHT

September/October 2012

Note from the Editor: Many thanks to those who did service by writing about The Gifts of Service, and about what they find easy about recovery, what helps with the hard parts.

For our next issue, please share your experience on "Sponsoring through the Twelve Steps", writing on any or all of the following three questions for Lifeline: How do you and your sponsor (or sponsee) work the Steps together? What life lessons has having a sponsor (or being a sponsor) taught you? If you are a sponsor, how did you prepare for your role?

*The submission deadline is **December 15, 2012**. Thank you for your service! ~Rebecca S, Editor*

Gifts of Service:

"Give what you can when you can. A life of happy usefulness is what we are promised by following the 12 Steps. Service fulfills that promise. No amount of service is a small amount. We never know how what we do will impact the life of another compulsive overeater." That is what I was told when I came to this program. My first sponsor told me that the most selfish thing I could do is come here, lose weight, and then leave. He said that I had to give it away to keep it. Well, today I know that if I ever leave the program that I will be back. I will be back to the weight I came in or more, and God willing; I will be back to the meetings. I am a compulsive overeater that came here pretty badly mangled. I will always have this illness.

I believe that many people freely gave this program (the 12 Steps) to me and that I must freely give it away to anyone who both needs and wants it. The first person that gave this program was a man named Art. God put Art in my life when I needed him and was ready for the program. He shared the program and told me the time and day of a meeting. I never saw him again. He was my Ebby. Although he was not my sponsor as Ebby was Bill's.

There are many ways to give service. Simply coming to a meeting and sharing recovery is a form of service. That newcomer, who knows nothing about the program, but knows all about the pain of compulsive overeating, and knows about the guilt, remorse, and shame that follows that binge, needs to hear about the hope of this way of life. Only you can pass on this way of life. You know the problem and you are armed with answer. It is such a blessing to watch a person come to a meeting defeated with that look of hopelessness, pick up the simple tools and Steps, and then to see him or her recover. You must not miss that experience.

Sponsorship is a form of service. When are you ready to be a sponsor? When you are asked. It is just that simple. You do not need to be in the program for a long time, have many days of abstinence, or be on a certain Step. You just need to be asked. I was told that if I am on Step Two then I could give away Step One. If I have a day of abstinence then I have a day to give to someone that has none. I always get more than I can ever give when I sponsor someone. It is so cool to see the light of recovery return to a sponsee's eyes. It is truly a wonderful experience to walk the Steps with someone.

One day someone might ask you to lead a meeting. Or a group, during a steering committee meeting, may put their trust in you and elect you the group's secretary or treasurer. Perhaps you arrive early to the meeting, you can set-up the literature or make sure the chairs are arranged for the meeting. Maybe your meeting has coffee during the meeting, then you can make the coffee. Some members, after a meeting, go out for coffee. You can tag along and have a meeting after the meeting. A lot of recovery happens after the meeting over a cup a coffee.

You can call a newcomer or an old timer. One day you might be elected to serve your group at the local intergroup, region, or World Service. Perhaps you can provide a ride to a meeting for someone. Those are forms of service.

I have heard that service is slenderizing. I do not think so. Service must be freely given, and it must naturally flow from recovery. I can only give what I have. I cannot give away something I do not have. My level of service must match my level of recovery. As a newcomer, I could have never given service by being elected the local intergroup chairperson. However, I could put away the chairs after the meeting. I could talk about the day of abstinence I experienced. Service cannot be forced.

I suppose the best service I can do today is simply living these 12 Steps, to be a walking example of the Big Book. I must remember that I am only an instrument of God. I am serving God. We are all disciples of God. I give service because I am paying back the people that gave it to me. I have a sense of duty. Also, I give service because it gives me a sense of pleasure. Plus, I always get more than I give. Lastly, I give service because every time I do I provide myself with some assurance against taking that first compulsive bite. Bill W. said that every time he felt a little down his spirits would be lifted by helping an alcoholic. If he had not reached out to another (Dr. Bob), we might not have our program. Remember, you are the **ONLY** one that can help another compulsive overeater.

~ Anonymous

Service is the easiest tool for me. Any service I've done in OA has been appreciated; any mistakes I make are met with understanding. Doing service has taught me to accept myself. There are always more gifts from doing a service than any hassle in accomplishing it.

~ Anonymous

When I do service (make calls to be sure folks will actually be at a meeting, arrived, remain abstinent, serve as delegate, or whatever), I am making myself part of a larger community of abstaining compulsive overeaters. The blessings come back to me. In other words, I am the beneficiary of service. How could I possibly deny myself these blessings? Program works for those who do service. It's a way of "not just hanging around, but of recovering". **SERVICE!!! HOORAY!**

~ Anonymous

Service is my lifeline to OA. Having a job at my home group or Intergroup keeps my body coming back on the days my head would rather stay home. It's one of our tools, and it's part of the 12th step. It's part of the other steps too, such as step 4, which says I ask God to remove my fear, and then I turn my attention to someone I can help. Service can be as simple as emailing somebody I haven't seen in a while, buying literature for my meeting, helping on a retreat committee. Those are actions I can take no matter my length of time in program. What I learn is that I really **DO** have something to share with others that I can show up for others and for myself.

~ Anonymous

S: someone to share laughs with as we set up a room, organize a table, handle registration

E: everything getting done in God/HP's time

R: recovery demonstrated at all levels with newbies, not-so-newbies and long-timers willing to help

V: voices united to share what works and drown out the sounds of the disease

I: interdependence and reliance on others and God/HP learned as we all share in tasks

C: compassion and caring clearly demonstrated by working toward a common, healthy goal

E: energy levels multiplied as the work of OA is divided among all willing to participate

~ Anonymous

Required disclaimer: the personal stories printed in The Northern Light express the experience of the individual member and not of OA as a whole.

I arrived at OA with big zeroes in my life, my heart, my self-esteem, everywhere except the scale. I stumbled into giving service because a meeting needed help and no one else was willing, and I didn't know enough to know I didn't know enough to help! But I volunteered, and all of a sudden, I had a service position. I was struggling with all these new ideas about food plans, abstinence, surrender, and letting God do for me what I couldn't do for myself. I kept coming back because I had hope that somehow, maybe this program could help me, but I knew the "miracle" talked about would never happen to me. Despite that knowledge, I wanted to give back somehow, and I felt you deserved me to give my service abstinely, and so that one day a week, for that meeting, I would be abstinent. It wasn't for the "right" reasons, but it provided abstinence, little windows of sanity in my compulsive eating.

That experience was several years back now. Today, I am abstinent for me first, but also still for you, too, because I want to have a program of attraction and to have something to offer to those who are still suffering daily from compulsive eating. I have remained in service, giving at the group level always, often at intergroup, and have even had the honor of serving as a delegate. I "knew" those miracles were for other, luckier people, yet I am living a number of them today - maintaining a healthy weight, regaining mobility and stamina, and learning to live life on life's terms, and making my way through life's highs and lows. Service was and is foundational to my recovery - it got me out of my little "me, me, me" refrain for short periods of time, and it kept me coming back, week after week, month after month, year after year. I need OA, and I need to keep coming back. Service is one way I know I will. Thank you, God and OA, for the opportunity to give back what has so freely been given me!

~ *Anonymous*

What's easy/hard about OA recovery

There are certainly aspects that are not easy, but even they are preferable to the pain of compulsive overeating! I have found that some of my defects of character have been surprising allies in my Program of Recovery, and made my experience easier. For example, I have the tendency to be rigid and compulsive. I dove in 100% to the concepts of making commitments and being accountable to a sponsor. I completed all the reading and assignments on time. I was fairly desperate to escape the pain of compulsive eating, but honestly in those early days I was much more worried about "doing it wrong". I'm also a people-pleaser. I cared so much what others thought of me that in the beginning (and even now!) I feel like a "better" OA when I show up to meetings, share honestly, and help others. For several years I was almost addicted to the ritual of reading and writing, and had a belief that I might "jinx" myself back into the food if I didn't do it at a certain time, a certain way, for a certain period of time. Now, I know that I feel more connected to my HP when I read and write - but it's not the ACTUAL ACT of doing it that magically voodooes me into a normal eater!

These defects kept my feet moving, and kept me immersed in the Program until the miracle happened for me. Ironically, the true relief I finally received had nothing to do with following any rules or prescriptions, so ultimately I overcame the very habits that kept me grounded in OA.

The hardest thing for me to relate to the newcomer and to remember for myself is that recovering is a journey. It doesn't happen overnight. I am impatient, and extremely attracted to instant gratification (binging! Diets!). OA never promised me that. OA promised me this solution: a daily reprieve contingent on my spiritual condition. OA promised me that HP was present and available to help me recover. OA promised me I didn't have to do it alone.

Things still get hard. In fact, today I'm sitting here romancing the food. It's only 10 am and I want to eat eat eat. Well, God has better plans for me and I've learned to listen to them (most of the time). I opened up my email and saw this wonderful opportunity to be of SERVICE today, writing an article for our wonderful newsletter ;) Next, I'll do some prayer and reading/writing (a commitment - yes I still use that tool when my self-will wants

me to choose the food). Another essential and non-negotiable tool for me is a Plan of Action which includes daily physical exercise, so I'll get out and do that later today too.

This program is simple, but not easy: trust God, clean house, help others. The food will never be perfect, nor will I. And, Just For Today, that's ok with me :)---
~ *Anonymous*

OA is just too **HARD**:

Hoping someone else will make me quit overeating

Assuming overeating really won't kill me

Raging and resenting

Drowning in a vat of self: self-pity, selfishness, self-seeking and self-absorption

What make it **EASY**?

Eagerly seeking HP, sponsor and OAers with ESH

ASKING for **H**ELP

Surrendering for Serenity

Yes, to the Tools, Steps, Traditions and Concepts and **N**O to excess food

~ *Anonymous*

It is not weakness that binds us; at least that is what I believe. We have a common problem and a common solution; that is what binds us. When I came to the program, they told me that it wasn't because I was weak-willed as others had said of me all during my life. Nor was I a bad person. It wasn't a moral issue, they said. They were honest with me about my condition. I have an illness. I was told that the spiritual answer for this illness was in the Big Book. Further, they told me that this way of life, the practice of the 12 Steps, was simple, but not easy. However, that this program wasn't practiced perfectly, that I could simply look for progress.

I came to OA, not weak, but instead, I came here defeated and powerless over compulsive overeating, and I was looking for an answer. I thought the answer was in the form of a better diet, but I wasn't given a diet. Instead, they dwelled on the illness, the twisted thinking, the desire for that ease and comfort that came from the first compulsive bite, and the guilt, shame and remorse that followed the binge. They talked about the manner of eating, the behaviors they did, and they shared things I thought were only known to me. It is strength, not weakness that binds us. There is strength from admitting we are powerless over food, trusting in a Higher Power, and accepting this way of life.

I came to OA, not weak, but instead, I came here hopeless, and I was looking for an answer. I was given hope. They shared the spiritual answer, the 12 Steps, and placed them before me. They showed me how to live the 12 Steps. They showed me the program by example. There was something I could do, apply the 12 Steps to the way I was living life. They told me that if they could do it, that I could do it too. And then they told me I had a choice (I never even thought I had choices), to either do what they do or go to the bitter end blotting out my intolerable situation.

I came to OA, not weak, but instead, I came here alone, and I was looking for an answer. I was given a fellowship. I was told that we aren't a support group. We are all humans and eventually we will fail each other. Our real power must come from a Higher Power. There is strength in surrendering to a Higher Power. However, we need each other to share our recoveries. Only another compulsive overeater will ever know what I have gone through and what I go through. We need each other to share the message of hope.

I came to OA, not weak, but instead, I came here deject and couldn't see a way out of the pain in my life, and I was looking for an answer. I was given the gift of acceptance. I felt at home in the fellowship. They knew me like no one else. I belonged for the first time in my life. They loved me when I couldn't love myself. They

reached out to me and invited me out for coffee after the meeting. Also, they told me that I had my magic magnifying glasses on wrong. I learned to reduce my expectations of myself and people in my life. I was taught how to let go and let God.

So, when a newcomer shows up to a meeting I will never tell them that he or she is too weak to use this program or that weakness is what binds us. Instead, I want to share about the pain of overeating. I want explain the illness. As they did with me, we will offer him or her hope. We will explain the 12 Steps, the spiritual program of action. We share how we practice our 12 Steps and remind him or her that if we can do it anyone can do it. We share our fellowship and invite him or her to join us on the road of happy usefulness. Lastly, we offer him or her the gift of acceptance. Everything that happens in our lives happens for a reason.

~ *Anonymous*

E-LATED ABOUT E-RESOURCES:

Lucky us! Intergroup purchased the CD set of speakers from the 2012 Region One convention. Check them out at Oasis! We appreciate any contributions you make so we can continue to expand this resource, and we appreciate you returning them timely so that others can enjoy too.

Treat yourself to the Gift of Serenity this holiday season. OA has many of our favorite publications available in electronic format, so they're easy to pack along on trips and great to read while standing in line. Go to www.oa.org to buy the OA 12 steps and 12 traditions book as a pdf, subscribe to e-Lifeline plus lots of free downloads too. Our daily meditation books are available at your favorite e-book retailer.

ACRONYMOUS

NUTS - Not Using The Steps

QTIP - Quit Taking It Personally!

HOPE - Hearing Other People's Experience

Am I getting sidetracked by SHIT? (She, He, It, They)

LOVE - Letting Others Voluntarily Evolve!

ANNOUNCEMENTS & SERVICE NEEDS:

Relapse and Recovery Workshop: November 11, 2012. 1-5pm. Alaska Regional Hospital, Ivy Room (first floor, across from cafeteria). See flyer or email Wanda: drwandee@hotmail.com

Winter retreat: we're in the beginning stages of planning a 1-day workshop/retreat for January or February 2013. Contact Paula K 907-745-8337

MEETING SCHEDULE

Anchorage

Day	Time	Address	Type	Contact (907)
Monday	6:30pm	OAsis Turnagain Arts Bldg. 4105 Turnagain Blvd, #D1(in back)	AA Big Book	MaryJo 227-5078
Tuesday	5:30pm	OAsis Turnagain Arts Bldg. 4105 Turnagain Blvd, #D1 (in back)	OA/HOW	Meg 248-0300
Wednesday	5:30pm	North star Hospital 2530 Debarr Rd. Private dining room, past seating area.	Steps/Trad/Lit	Gail B 332-0049
Thursday	Noon	1st Congregational Church, 2610 E. Northern Lights Blvd	Steps/Stories	Alice 243-3056
Thursday	6:30pm	Lutheran Church of Hope, 1847 W. Northern Lights Blvd	There is a Solution	Carolyn 279-1942
Friday	6:00pm	OAsis Turnagain Arts Bldg. 4105 Turnagain Blvd, #D1(in back)	Step Writing	Jean 345-9805
Saturday	9:00-10:30am	St. Mary's Episcopal Church, Lake Otis & Tudor	AA Big Book	Paula Z 522-9910
Sunday	9:30am	Kaladi Bros 6921 Brayton Dr,	As Bill Sees It. VOR & For Today	Candy 350-5255 Jean 345-9805

Eagle River

Day	Time	Address	Type	Contact (907)
Monday	7:00pm	Holy Spirit Episcopal Church 17545 N. Eagle River Loop Road, in Library		Bev 694-7448

Mat-Su

Day	Time	Address	Type	Contact (907)
Monday	Noon	Wasilla: Mat-Su Regional Hospital, Matanuska Room (by cafeteria)	Big Book	Brenda 240-6331
Wednesday	6:00pm	Wasilla: Alano Club Snohomish/Fishhook Rd	Topics	Gail 357-4644
Saturday	9:00am	Wasilla: Mat-Su Regional Hospital, Pioneer Peak Rm, 2nd floor	Varies	Paula 745-8337
Sunday	6:00pm	Palmer: St. Michael's Parish, 432 E Fireweed Ave, downstairs		Randy 745-7485

Homer

Day	Time	Address	Type	Contact (907)
Friday	12:00 noon	Homer United Methodist Church, 770 East End Rd. Knitting Room - upstairs		Angela 299-6404
Sunday	6:00pm	Homer United Methodist Church, 770 East End Rd. Knitting Room - upstairs		Julie 235.6696 Nancy 235.5944

Juneau

Juneau OA Hotline: (907) 463-1224

Day	Time	Address	Type	Contact (907)
Monday	5:30pm	Northern Lights Church, 400 W. 11th St. Room 8 downstairs		Sara 209-6164
Wednesday	Noon	Unity Center, 119 Seward St. #1		Wendy 364-2240
Saturday	10:00am	Juneau Public Health Center, 3412 Glacier Hwy Downstairs Conference Rm.		Leslie 586-3259

Ketchikan

Day	Time	Address	Type	Contact (907)
Wednesday	5:30pm	Pioneer Home Conference Center 141 Bryant St.		Lesley 225-3278

Kodiak

Day	Time	Address	Type	Contact (907)
Tuesday	7:00pm	St James the Fisherman Episcopal Church 421 Thorsheim St.		Denise 942-0045

Unalaska

Day	Time	Address	Type	Contact (907)
Thursday,	5:30pm	Burma Rd Chapel 28 E Broadway, Rm104		Rosie 359-5084
Friday	Noon	Baha'i Center Unalaska 390 Bayview, Rm 104		Rosie 359-5084
