

MESSENGER

The Bi-Annual Newsletter of
Region 6 of Overeaters Anonymous

Fall 2004

CHAIR REPORT

My name is Margaret Ann and I am a compulsive overeater and food addict, gratefully living in the solution offered in the Twelve Step program of Overeaters Anonymous, which has enabled me to abstain from compulsive overeating since November of 1990 and release 75 pounds.

I took part in a public forum on obesity at the Boston Museum of Science. The Museum wanted to bring together a number of stakeholders – people in the professional community who have an interest in the issue of obesity – as well as a wide variety of ordinary citizens, who are also affected by this growing (!) problem. We were asked to consider information presented by the professionals. We then met in groups and deliberated as if we were an advisory council to an HMO, making recommendations to the insurer as to how it should use its resources in dealing with its clients.

It was a tremendously exciting and rewarding day. I heard presentations from the heads of two hospital-based obesity treatment centers (one focused on gastric bypass surgery, one not), a fitness coach and a professor of pharmacology. I participated, not as a panelist, but as a member of OA sharing my story. There were attendees from the food service industry, journalists, individuals struggling with their own weight-related health issues, and the spouses of those who have dealt with their partners' hypoglycemia and diabetes.

The participants from the medical community used strong language to describe the epidemic nature of the increased incidences of obesity and related diseases in the US and they all agreed: *Any therapy that focuses solely on the physical WILL NOT WORK.*

Frankly, I was prepared to be skeptical, and rather closed-minded regarding anyone who advocated surgical or pharmacological approaches. But I found myself being more open to other views because everyone there showed such passion – so much compassion and concern – and a recognition that the underlying cause of obesity is a disease that does not respond to quick fixes or diets. Each professional recognized the vital importance of long-term support – physical, emotional, and spiritual.

I had some wonderful conversations with people at this forum and was able to hand out some literature and give information. I will follow up to see if there may be opportunities for OA's

participation at future presentations and health fairs; or to start meetings at some of the institutions who participated.

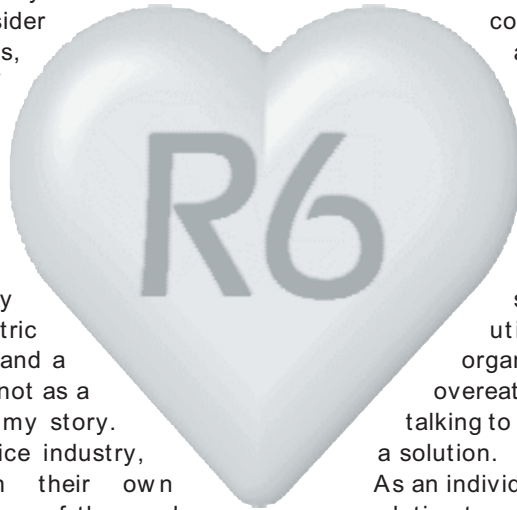
This event made me realize how fortunate I feel to be part of OA service at this particular time. There is so much going on at all levels of OA, from the individual groups to WSO, and I feel our service efforts are very well supported. One of the best examples is the Region 6 Public Information Blitz, an idea which has received a lot of interest throughout OA. This is an excellent example of the effective use of our multilayered structure. We

know that the message is best transmitted from one compulsive overeater to another – but there is also strength in numbers. These kinds of numbers can organize a public information event to reach people who want to find out more about OA; facilitate publication of newspaper articles which give a demonstration of OA recovery from an outsider's viewpoint; place radio and TV spots informing people that there is a solution. All these methods of reaching out utilize OA's financial resources and organizational size to bring the compulsive overeater who is still suffering in contact with and talking to another compulsive overeater who has found a solution.

As an individual OA member, I can be a living example of our solution to my own doctor. I can tell her to refer potential members to a group that meets near her clinic, and know that because of OA's strength at the group level, her referred patients will find hope. They can call my intergroup's hotline number or visit its website to find out more. I am confident that my Region has been active, placing ads in papers and on radio, sending mailings to doctors, so perhaps a few more people will become curious and want to know more. WSO also maintains an excellent website, with information for overeaters, professionals and the media, all aimed at increasing OA's visibility regionally and nationally. These tools make it that much easier for me to extend the hand and heart of OA to one who shares my disease. I am confident that those who share my disease will be able to find OA, the invitation we offer, and share in the three-fold solution we have found.

Thank you for being here for me year after year. Thank you for being there – through your presence at meetings, your bucks in the basket, and your service efforts – for those yet to come.

Margaret Ann B., Region 6 Chair



REGION SIX CONTACTS

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Please make checks payable to: **REGION SIX OA**

The following information allows us to properly acknowledge your group's contribution.

WSO Group Number
 Meeting Name
 Meeting Day & Time

Your cancelled check is your receipt. Your intergroup will receive an acknowledgment at either the next R6 Assembly or mailed with the next issue of The Messenger to your intergroup. Please ask your groups to be as generous as possible. Thank you for your support, service and contributions.

**THE MESSENGER is the publication of
 Region 6 Assembly of Overeaters Anonymous
 7 Porter Park
 Cambridge, MA 02140-2107**

WHAT IS REGION SIX?

Region Six consists of Overeaters Anonymous meetings and intergroups from the following geographical locations: New York, Connecticut, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, New Hampshire, Maine, Vermont, Central and Eastern Ontario, Quebec, Newfoundland, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island.

The purpose of Region 6 of Overeaters Anonymous is:

- To further the OA program in accordance with the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions of OA;
- To maintain a communications center for Region Six. Specifically excluded is the endorsement of any outside enterprise as outlined in Tradition Six;
- To provide a forum for the selection of Regional and General Service Trustee nominees;
- To provide unity of groups and organization of Intergroups within Region Six;
- To host Region Six Marathons and Conventions as deemed necessary by Region Six;
- To work for OA as a whole within the Region or Committees appointed by World Service.

**The next Region 6 Assemblies are scheduled for:
 October 2, 2004
 April 9, 2005
 September 24, 2005
 at the Quality Inn, Albany, NY located Route 9W,
 just south of Exit 23 on the NY State Thruway.**

Editorial Policy

The Messenger is the bi-annual newsletter of Region Six of Overeaters Anonymous. The deadline for copy is the July 1 for the Fall Edition and February 1 for the Spring Edition. Material cannot be returned nor can payment be made. All submissions to the editor must be signed and when published, will appear with first name and last initial unless otherwise requested. Names will be withheld upon request. The Messenger reserves the right to edit all submissions for length and clarity. Other OA groups may reprint without permission. We ask that you cite the writer and The Messenger as your source. Courtesy copies of reprinted articles are appreciated. The opinions expressed are those of the writer, not those of Region Six or OA as a whole. Please address all submissions and correspondence to The Messenger via e-mail to: Newsletter@OAregion6.org or via US Postal Service in care of the Region Six Coordinator at the address designated above.

THE MESSENGER STAFF

The Messenger is produced through the efforts of the members of the Region Six Newsletter Committee. We are:

Steve Mayer Chair
 Gil P. Editor
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 Raffaella Content Coordinator
 Sarah Committee Member
 Neil R. Shammass

TRUSTEE'S MESSAGE

Dear Fellow Region 6 OA Members,

Hello, my name is Dexter and I am a compulsive overeater. In my last newsletter article, I described the struggle I had to accept my role as trustee. During a meditation session this past spring I developed further insights into my history of avoiding challenges. I was given the grace to be able to observe my thoughts and see them for what they were. During the meditation, I had drifted off into a grandiose scheme whereby I would win the lottery and change the world. I would be a hero.

Observing the thought, I realized that it must have arisen from a grossly inflated ego somewhere inside me, which I had kept hidden. It appeared as if my external persona was merely a shell propped up by a balloon of ego inflated inside the shell to mask deeper feelings of unworthiness, a sort of "Wizard of Oz" construction.

It occurred to me that my unwillingness to accept challenges was probably an effort to protect this balloon of internal puffery from the pinpricks of reality lest it explode and collapse my ego structure. This realization has helped me to see that success and failure are terms which my ego uses to maintain its sway over my actions. I now understand that my activities either help me to progress on my spiritual path or hinder me in my journey. Either way, I learn how to move forward so that I may better travel a life journey of sane and happy usefulness. I no longer have to stand on the side manning the bellows to keep my shell inflated.

Shortly after this discovery, I was able to send letters to the editors of three different publications expressing my views on two different subjects. I was no longer afraid that someone would ridicule me publicly and so puncture my balloon. This acceptance of myself has helped me in my trustee role. I believe that I have developed more compassion for my fellow sufferers. I seem to be better able to understand differences we have in the interpretation of OA's Traditions. I am no longer threatened by such differences, since I no longer have an ego investment in my view of reality.

For example, here in Region 6, I continue to encounter efforts to structure group meetings in such a way that a hierarchy of sufferers is

developed. The hierarchy is used to define sharing privileges at meetings. Some people who meet various criteria, depending on the meeting, get to share first or others who fail to meet those criteria don't get to share at all. It is inescapable to me that newcomers are being told by these actions that there are entrance fees to the club of sharing privilege, fees which in some cases can only be paid by service to specific sponsors or adherence to an "approved" physical or spiritual recovery regimen.

I am saddened by these practices, but I no longer feel personally threatened by them. I am saddened, because when I came into OA the meetings I attended had no hierarchy. I immediately felt at home, one of the family of sufferers, united in our common disease. I believe that if I had found a hierarchy or the presence of an external measuring scheme for my actions, I would not have stayed in the rooms because of my own mistrust of hierarchies. It seems to me that hierarchies bestow power and power is an addictive substance; I was trying to free myself of my food addiction and substituting power for food would have been substituting one prison for another. To me, power and the pursuit of it are other ways of inflating my balloon, other ways of maintaining my illusion of control, other ways of my refusing to surrender.

Our Twelfth Tradition is very precious to me. Our tools pamphlet tells us that we are all equal in our fellowship. There are "no stars or VIPs. We come together simply as compulsive overeaters." Our First Tradition tells me the coming together in our common disease to find our common solution in OA's 12 Steps is the unity upon which our common welfare depends. OA is very precious to me. It has shown me the path to a new life and freed me from 94 pounds of excess body over the course of more than 12 years of abstinence. My greatest hope is that other compulsive eaters may find their recovery as I have found mine. My belief is that OA's Traditions help insure that others will find the same sense of family and belonging that I found when I entered the OA rooms.

- Dexter J., Region 6 Trustee
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COMMITTEE REPORTS

Region Six Assembly - April 17, 2004

BYLAWS

Attendees: Lee R. (South Central IG), Mary D. (Western New York IG), Margaret Ann B. (Region Six Chair, MetroWest IG), Jill M. (Bylaws Committee Chair, North Shore IG), Ann Warner (Parliamentarian).

1. Discussed modifying policy re: conventions to include only items related to the Region Six Assembly and creating a new policy specifically for the Region Six Convention Committee that would contain information for the Committee.
2. Discussed modifying Committee Membership policy to generate a more equal participation across all committees. Will be presented to the floor at the Fall Assembly.
3. Worked on strategic goal of simplifying policies and procedures manual. These will be brought to the floor at the Fall Assembly.
 - daily prayer policy (remove)
 - location of assembly policy (update)
4. Discussed motions to be brought to the floor this afternoon.
5. Discussed creation of an appendix containing procedures for Region Six committees. The content of this appendix would be approved by the Region Six Board. It will be developed through the cooperation of each committee.
6. Adjourned.

OUTREACH

Two committee reports were submitted:

Report 1: Outreach committee of one. We had two requests. One was late and turned down for World Service. One for Region Six. Applications at back table.

Report 2: Five people were present. Agreed with merging of Outreach with Intergroup Committee after suitable discussion. Some members adjourned to attend the Intergroup Committee. *Respectfully submitted.*

INTERGROUP

Highlights of Intergroup committee meeting:

At least twelve in attendance.

We made a motion to hand the responsibility of the intergroup e-mail list to the coordinator. The motion passed.

We talked about our strategic plan for two years: construct recovery quilt and create policy and procedures for the Intergroup/Outreach committee.

Five-year goal: to have every intergroup send a minimum of one delegate to Region Six Assembly.

We broke down intergroups that did not show up to this Assembly and assigned them to committee members to contact via e-mail.

We created policies and procedures for the Intergroup Committee to be voted on at the next Region Six Assembly.

We talked about a Region Six quilt that all intergroups could participate in and discussed approaching a specific OA member with details about the idea.

Zazu's term is up as chair in the fall, so we need to be thinking about a new committee chair.

FINANCE

Four attendees: Sid B. (Mass Bay IG), Region Six treasurer; Ed S. (MetroWest IG), Finance Committee chair; Kelly C. (Mass Bay IG); Rhea Q. (Western Mass. IG)

Opening: Serenity Prayer and introductions.

The treasurer reviewed, line by line, the proposed 2004-2005 budget, explaining the need to reduce the budget for the upcoming year. This procedure took longer than usual since the treasurer was leaving early. He suggested that all intergroups should have a budget and not just list income and expenses. The larger the group or intergroup, the more important having a budget becomes.

Several members discussed intergroup treasury issues.

(continued)

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Region Six Assembly - April 17, 2004

NEWSLETTER

Seven members in attendance: Neil R. (Mass Bay IG), Gil P. (South Coastal IG), Raffaella (Staten Island IG), Sarah C. (Western Mass IG), Beth M. (New Hampshire IG), Steve M. (MetroWest IG), Diana G. (New York Metro IG)

I'm happy to report the smooth transition as outgoing chair of the Newsletter Committee into the hands of what seems like a committed and enthusiastic bunch of new volunteers. After two and a half years, it's very gratifying to know that the newsletter is a forum that people feel is an important expression of the voice of this region.

There were volunteers who expressed a personal interest in the following areas:

1. Content/Formatting;
2. Editing;
3. Proofreading; and
4. Mailing.

We spent the majority of our time discussing the actual duties required to produce the newsletter; copies of the new policies and procedures were circulated to facilitate that process.

Steve M. (MetroWest IG) will be the new Newsletter chair. His manner seems extremely well-suited to the task.

- Gratefully yours,
Neil R. (Mass Bay IG)
Outgoing Chair

FINANCE continued

No changes were made to policies and procedures for the manual. This work still needs to be done.

Closed with Serenity Prayer.

- Ed S. (MetroWest IG)
Chair, Finance Committee

TWELFTH STEP WITHIN

Twenty-three people attended the Twelfth Step Within (TSW) Committee meeting.

We began with the Serenity Prayer.

Gloria volunteered to be Secretary.

Carol B. reported that many intergroups have been contacted about whether they have a Twelfth Step Within committee. Some meetings could not be reached.

Members of the committee agreed to contact or re-contact those not reached by June 1, 2004, to ask if they would like to start a Twelfth Step Within committee. In addition, members would describe what the Twelfth Step Within is and ask if they need some ideas about how to develop a committee.

The committee members also agreed to present the idea of the meeting of the month to our own intergroups by June 1, 2004.

We discussed relapse survivor meetings. Eleven meetings have been started with this focus.

Shelley offered to write an article and submit it to Lifeline magazine.

The rest of the time was used for the committee to share experience, strength and hope about Twelfth Step Within ideas.

Two-year Goals

1. Present "meeting of the month."
2. Present OA care package to give information to those in relapse.
3. To motivate someone at a meeting to begin a Relapse/Recovery meeting.

Five-year Goals

1. Encourage a TSW committee member to adopt an intergroup without a TSW committee.
2. Encourage intergroups to put on a Sponsorship Workshop (if possible several intergroups could collaborate).
3. Offer a Region Six morning workshop on Sponsorship at an assembly.

- Prue S. (MetroWest IG), Chair
Twelfth Step Within Committee

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Region Six Assembly - April 17, 2004

PUBLIC INFORMATION/HOSPITALS, PRISONS, INSTITUTIONS, MILITARY (PI/HIPM)

Began with the Serenity Prayer.

Twenty-two attendees with 14 returning members

Tina C. (North Shore IG), chair; Mary, vice-chair; Mary T., secretary

Howard from New Hampshire IG presented his intergroup's proposal in detail. Their's was the only submission received – the deadline is 45 days in advance of Assembly. Provides extensive detail of plan to place WSO advertisement in six local newspapers, monitored by local group members in economical market areas where there are fewer groups. Plans in place to monitor success of program since the toll-free number will be answered by an OA member (live). Noted that money needed to be spent by 8/31/04 even if the ads don't actually run until later in the year.

Discussed success and progress of previous two blitzes. There was a misunderstanding about spending by the end of the fiscal year in which the funds were distributed. This misunderstanding resulted in the reduced amount being given to New Hampshire IG (\$2411).

First PI Blitz: New York Metro intergroup, purchased and made videos and/or Beta SP from World Service Office for Public Service Announcement (PSA) spots (10, 20, and 30 second spots). Manhattan and Queens got \$409,400 of advertising value on numerous Time Warner channels. (Queens had statistics: In September and October the ads ran 324 times, in January they ran 532 times for a value of \$96,600 and \$159,600 and their hotline received 300 calls.) Brooklyn is

beginning to air its copies and the Bronx is still working on the project. The tape for Westchester United intergroup is being taped today, with the telephone number for Westchester United. Pointed out that you must have contact with local cable stations, a local OA for each area. Most cable stations will only play the PSA for one month at a time.

Second PI Blitz: Western Mass. provided Lifeline subscriptions to healthcare professionals, schools, and libraries.

Third PI Blitz: Ads placed in papers resulted in 147 calls by 4/15/04 – 32 people have been re-contacted and eight have gone to meetings; 24 still plan to attend; one asked not to be contacted again. Newspapers have written articles about OA since then, as well.

Question: Are health fairs okay? YES. Need a host close to Plattsburg to attend one (fair is on June 17 – \$25 registration fee due May 3).

Keep Tina updated by e-mail about what your PI group is doing.

Previous Strategic Plans and Results:

Two-year Goals

1. Increase OA membership in Region Six by 1% – OA member increases in Region Six are hard to quantify.
2. Each intergroup will have a PI representative – yes, 12 of 15 intergroups at the committee meeting have established PI committees

Five-year Goals

1. Every Region Six meeting will have a PI rep – NO.
2. Have all Region Six PI reps attend Region Six PI meeting – NO.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Region Six Assembly - April 17, 2004

CONVENTION

Ten members were present.

Opened with the Serenity Prayer.

1. Report from Niagara Falls (2003)
 - numbers were down a little from previous year
 - 470-480 people attended
 - profit for Region Six – \$9,500
 - feedback – overwhelmingly positive
 - recommend keeping registration fee low to encourage as many people as possible to attend
2. Cape Cod (2004)
 - going well
 - 78 convention registrations
 - 70-80 rooms booked
 - committee chairs working diligently
 - encourage people to buy raffle tickets, printed more
3. Keynote Speaker tapes
 - need to be in by end of today
 - need to be recent
 - need to have minimum of three years of continuous abstinence
 - focus on OA experience and recovery
 - committee will be evaluating and choosing keynotes
4. Presentation from New Hampshire (2005)
 - October 21-23, Nashua, NH
 - Live Free and Recover
 - similar rates with meal package – double \$270.77
 - if approved, will need two motions from committee
 - the Convention Committee approved its proposal as host committee
5. Some interest from two areas for future conventions
6. Region Six Bylaws and Policies and Procedures manual – goal is to update. Subcommittee headed by Bob A. to review and develop a Convention Manual, to look specifically at how we select a site, the role of the Region

Convention Committee with the host committee, and keynote speaker selection guidelines

7. Updated Strategic goals – added developing Convention Manual
8. Volunteer as secretary for our committee – Donna

Closed with the Serenity Prayer.

- Marilyn C. (Montreal English IG)

PROGRAM "BITES"

Program has made me so grateful and appreciative of all things in my life. I've recently been given gifts beyond my wildest dreams. I'm pregnant, I have been promoted and now have four people directly reporting to me. I also have a new husband and a big tax bill, (yes, that means I'm earning enough to have to pay taxes).

OA lets me see the joy in all of these major life events rather than focus on the negative aspects of these things.

Thank you OA and thank you HP.

- Anonymous

My 45-minute commute was tedious, and I was tired at the end of a long day. Passing a hardware store, I saw the words "BAKE SALE" on the large sign. Instinctively, I hit the brakes. Close up, I saw that the sign said "RAKE SALES".

- P.D., Concord, NH, Lifeline, May 2004

Each morning I write a prayer to my Higher Power asking for help in areas of my life and giving thanks for the gifts I've received. I end my prayers with, "Your will, God, not mine." One day I was late getting up and hurriedly wrote my prayer, but forgot to place it in my God jar. When I returned from work, I read what I had written and laughed. The last line read, "Your will, God, rot mine!"

- M.B. Lake Odessa, MI, Lifeline, May 2004

12TH STEP WITHIN WORKSHOP

Reports from the Committee Members

FIVE IMPORTANT POINTS FOR RECOVERY FROM RELAPSE MEETINGS

1. **Is there a need for a Recovery from Relapse meeting?**
 - a. Are there a number of OAers committed to doing service, starting and maintaining a meeting?
2. **What does it take?**
 - a. Location (time of day)
 - b. Publicity (support from intergroup and other meetings)
 - c. Literature (source TSW handbook)
 - d. Format (source TSW handbook)
3. **How to keep relapsers coming back?**
 - a. Encourage members to do service for the meeting. (secretary, leader) – a commitment to the survival of the group
 - b. Invite members to support each other with the recovery insurance policy. (have extra copies available)
 - c. Help each other (sponsorship, hugs)
 - d. Keep a telephone list and encourage members to call each other
4. **How do we keep the meeting fresh and interesting?**
 - a. Try a new and different format
 - b. Read and share from "A New Beginning: Stories of Recovery from Relapse" and encourage all members to share on the story
 - c. Invite OA members with long-term abstinence to attend and share their difficulties in relapse – history, experience, strength, and hope in recovery.
5. **How do we encourage those in relapse back into recovery?**
 - a. Keep goals simple
 - b. Ask your Higher Power for help
 - c. "Let go and let God"
 - d. Remember that each day is a new beginning
 - e. Lighten up on yourself
 - f. Use the tools of recovery

- Virginia P.

CAREFRONTATION & SPONSORSHIP

(from pages 4 & 5 of 12th Step Within Handbook)

We talked about our experience with:

1. Recovery from Relapse all-day workshops.
2. Starting Recovery from Relapse meetings. (We handed out a sample suggested format.)
3. Sponsorship Workshops, noting that one was planned for June 19 at Newton - Wellesley Hospital
4. We handed out the six-point sheet which read:
 - Share your own uncertainties, pain and experience in becoming abstinent. No one can help the way another compulsive overeater can. Your experience is your greatest asset.
 - Call someone you've stopped seeing at meetings. Be patient. Seeds sometimes take a long time to show fruit. You can't rush it.
 - Encourage members in relapse to do service – commit to a weekly job.
 - Hold a Welcome Back all-day workshop or start a Recovery from Relapse meeting.
 - Hold a workshop on sponsoring.
 - When sponsoring, be clear and patient, and pray. You never know when what you share or do will mean something. Share what you did or would do. Keep the focus on yourself. Keep abstinent and do service.

- Priscilla M. (Mass. Bay IG) and
Marilyn V. (Metro New York IG)

It was a pleasure participating as a presenter on the 12th Step Within Workshop. I was able to make my five major points but I felt we were pretty rushed. I think five minutes more would have helped since it was a lot to take in under "extreme conditions."

Overall, it was a great workshop and I do think that people really got a lot out of the experience.

Thank you and Prue for giving me the opportunity to do service.

- Shelley A. (Moravian IG)

12TH STEP WITHIN WORKSHOP

Reports from the Committee Members

INVENTORIES FOR GROUPS & INTERGROUPS

1. Stress the importance of doing an inventory, both for individual meetings as well as intergroups. Compare it to the necessity of doing a personal inventory for our own recovery. Inventories are healthy.

2. Decide on the structure of the inventory. Decide on a time frame. Group inventories may be completed in less than one hour (using the format on page 25 of the Twelfth Step Within handbook), whereas intergroup inventories (on pages 26-28) take longer, up to several hours. Determine whether you want to complete the inventory over one, two or several weeks, or even a year. Decide if you want to work on it during a regular meeting, a business meeting, or set-up special time.

3. Set boundaries within the process. For example, decide ahead of time basic principles of sharing. Determine if you want everyone to share on every question or whether you want to get a consensus of ideas. Decide whether you want to go around the room or ask people to raise hands to share. It is important to choose a person to take notes during the process, either the secretary or someone else.

4. Decide the purpose and goals – whether the process or the outcome or both are important. Also, decide how you are going to make sense of information gathered. For intergroups in particular, there will be a considerable amount of material. Think about collating material. For example, when we did our intergroup inventory, we pared down information to 11 or 12 points. At the next meeting, we prioritized those points and established a strategic plan with four goals, including short-term and long-term goals.

5. Leave enough time to publicize upcoming inventory at all your OA meetings. The inventory is a great way to get more OA members involved in the process.

- Carol B. and
Marilyn C. (Montreal English IG)

SPONSORSHIP, SHARATHONS & WORKSHOPS

I talked about retreats and sharathons.

1. handed out retreat tips and retreat leader tips to everyone.
2. shared on organizing a retreat or sharathon.
3. noted that the organizing committee does not have to be large to be effective.
4. offered that the retreats and sharathons usually run themselves once they get going.

In January, we had retreat with the theme: *Finding God through the Twelve Steps.*

On Friday night, we did the first three steps conducted by three committee members. Another OA shared on the 4th Step Inventory through Steps 8 and 9. We had another speaker for Steps 10 and 11 and a keynote speaker on Saturday night.

On Friday night we held a circle of meditation. We also had meditation and sharing on Sunday morning. We taped the speakers. It was a wonderful retreat.

- Bill P.

HOW IT WORKED

On April 17, 2004, at the R6 Assembly, the Twelfth Step Within Committee presented a workshop. Pairs of the Committee members addressed the assembly who were divided into small groups. The presenters then spoke to each group in a round-robin manner on the topics reported on above.

THE GOAL: was to acquaint the R6 Assembly Delegates with the Twelfth Step Within Handbook.

THE PRESENTERS: explained the main points of major topics outlined in the Handbook. Pairs of 12th Step Within Committee members spent 10 minutes at each station. When time allowed, the assembly delegates within each group also shared experiences on the topic.

12TH STEP WITHIN WORKSHOP

Reports from the Committee Members

SLIPPIN' & SLIDIN'

I talked about how:

1. I used the questions personally.
2. We used the questions at a group level.
3. The questions helped me stay focused long enough to get abstinent.
4. Writing on the questions helped me work with my sponsor so that I had something to read to her when we talked.
5. I felt that without those questions I would not be in recovery now.

I felt really good doing this workshop in that people seemed really interested. Most of the representatives had never really paid attention and had a few questions. It wasn't until the last table, where there was someone who had actually worked through the Slippin' & Slidin' questions, that there was acknowledgment of their benefit. There was particular interest in these questions because they were conference-approved. A delegate commented that a non-conference approved 30-question sheet was circulating in that delegate's area and had generated a great deal of controversy.

Most of all I want to express how much I got out of doing this service. Going to each station and sharing my personal growth through using these questions and the Twelfth Step Within Handbook has kept me in the rooms for a period of two years, kept me working with a sponsor, and helped me to get abstinent.

- Marilyn F.

STRATEGIES FOR 12TH STEP WITHIN WORKSHOPS, RETREATS & MARATHONS

1. Three-hour workshops have been done with:
 - alternating speakers and open sharing.
 - alternating speakers, writing, and sharing.
2. Need for diversity among speakers – gender, age, and approach to recovery.
3. Follow-up by calling attendees and thanking them for coming.
4. Additional suggested topics for writing by attendees.
 - Am I ready to give up self-will regarding food?
 - A day in the life of a compulsive eater.

- Dorothy B.

I want to thank the 12th Step Within Committee members for the workshop they presented today.

We've had the 12th Step Within Handbook for some time, but it took walking through it with those experienced in reclaiming relapsed members to make it come to life.

Our Intergroup will carry the message to all our member groups with confidence that the suggestions in the handbook add value to our Program of Recovery.

- Anonymous

ADDICT

- A = Accepting
- D = Daily
- D = Direction
- I = Instead of
- C = Controlling
- T = Today

Some OA Acronyms For Your Consideration

ISOLATION

- I = I
- S = Stand
- O = Outside
- L = Lonely
- A = And
- T = Timid.
- I = I
- O = Only
- N = Need to reach out to recover!

Brought to you by GOD (Guaranteed Overnight Deliverer) courtesy of Western Mass. IG

THOUGHTS FROM A BLUE DOT

I am reminded by a respected OA that thinking is not an action. Mix this with the suggestion that I write my impressions as a first-time delegate to a Region 6 assembly and I'd say I was left with the single option of composing this essay.

First, a little background is in order. Since returning to OA in the summer of 2002 after a 14 year relapse, I've relied on service to help keep me coming back. As you would expect I started at the group level setting up chairs, and maintaining a phone list. I learned quickly that vacuums form around service positions and like a piece of lint on a hardwood floor, I get drawn to a vacuum. At my home meeting, a vacancy for Intergroup representative went unfilled for a number of business meetings (note: I think I'm remembering this correctly). So, finally, I agreed to take on this position.

I've tried to participate to the level of my experience in each of these service roles. But when, after just shy of a year at the intergroup level, I was asked to consider the position of Region 6 representative, I was somewhat hesitant. Still, I have to state in writing that it is very hard for me to say no when there is a need and I can, I believe, meet the need. I accepted the nomination.

Today I woke before 4 a.m. to prepare for the 2-1/2 hour drive to Albany for the Region 6 Assembly, scheduled to begin at 9 a.m. My breakfast and lunch already had been prepared the night before so all I had to do was my morning routine. I said good-bye to the family and hit the road at 5:50 a.m. Knowing I was going to be in the car for a while, I had asked at my meetings for people I could call early. I had one name and I used it around 7 a.m. For the rest of the trip I listened to news and music.

I ate my abstinent breakfast at 7:40 a.m., which is early for me, a sure sign of too much thinking. I was wondering what to expect at the Assembly. Like my eyes at a buffet, my brain had imagined huge crowds of people in a big hotel. I'd been to meetings like this, I thought, and braced myself for lots of strangers and strange ways. What I found was what I should have expected all along: friendly faces ready with a hug and a kind word; lots of faces I knew from meetings; lots of new faces, too; OAs of all shapes and sizes who had come together to form the Region 6 group conscience from its constituent parts.

For those who have never been, let me say some things about being a new representative. The first impression I got was the absolutely honest feeling that the "regulars" are thrilled to have a fresh face on board. For good reason, all OA service positions have time limits. New people are the life blood of OA. There is no doubt that new comers are welcome.

Upon registration, all new delegates have blue dots affixed to their name tags. The Region 6 Trustee gave us a 30-minute orientation on how the Assembly works. We received a copy of the Region 6 Bylaws and Procedures and then the work of the meeting began.

Like most OA meetings, this one opened with the Serenity Prayer. Following some opening remarks, the first hour was spent in a workshop in which the 12th Step Within Handbook was presented. The exercise gave us a great opportunity to learn about this resource. It was also a time to ask questions and make suggestions.

It's worth noting that the meeting follows Robert's Rules of Order, so certain business items were dealt with next, followed by a liberal dose of OA announcements, and then lunch.

Lunch was great. Many OAs brought their lunch. I don't

know about you, but I have roving eyes and I had to examine, clandestinely, the lunch of everyone else at my table. I had confirmed for me that food plans differ but the definition of abstinence remains the same: Adherence to MY food plan is my abstinence.

Committee meetings followed lunch, and it was here that I learned you can never say the Serenity Prayer too often. OAs are, first of all, human beings with human emotions and human passions. OAs have a resource many others do not. We have a way to call time out and regroup. Our Higher Power is that resource and the Serenity Prayer the tool we can use to call on that resource. Again, committee work confirmed for me that, even as a blue dot, my thoughts and input were as valued as any seasoned long-timer.

Following committee meetings, the Assembly as a whole regrouped. The Region secretary took attendance (for voting purposes), then volunteers read the 12 Step, 12 Traditions and 12 Concepts of OA. Introductions of various sorts were made, minutes were approved, officer reports were read and committee reports were...reported.

All of the preceding went so well that the meeting was ahead of schedule and moved on to dealing with motions to change Region 6 policies and bylaws. This is the time when you really come to appreciate parliamentary procedure. This is also the time when you have confirmed, before your very eyes, that the making of OA sausage is every bit as messy as the original recipe. Some proposals passed easily but most raised honest debate.

Maybe it was just the way I heard things but, as in the committee meeting I attended, OAs had really invested their honest passion into the discussions. The Serenity Prayer was invoked as needed and business was conducted and concluded. At the close of business, around 6:20 p.m., the first-timers got to peel off our blue dots as a symbolic gesture that we had survived and passed our first "Region," as the veterans refer to the Assembly.

I enjoyed a nice dinner with OA friends following the Assembly and then headed out on my drive home. As I had arranged the day before, I had a sponsoree call me at 8 p.m. We talked for about an hour. I was grateful for the company.

I did something on this drive that I wouldn't have thought to do before attending the day's Assembly.

I was driving in the right lane with the cruise control set. Several times over the course of about 30 minutes, the same car passed me, pulled in front of me and slowed down. Without touching my cruise control, I pulled in the left lane and began easily to overtake this car. As a drew even with this car, it sped up just enough to slow my progress to the point where I either had to speed up or back off. I sped up and passed, resuming my prior controlled speed when a safe distance had been established. Lo and behold, a few minutes later I got passed by this car again and the cycle repeated itself.

All this time I was on the phone with my sponsoree. Finally, I explained what was going on and what I planned to do if that car pulled this stunt again. With that, I asked my sponsoree to say the Serenity Prayer with me. We did and, amazingly, or maybe not, the next time this car passed me, it just kept going and I never saw it again.

The program works if you work it.

- Steve M.

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“TOGETHER WE CAN DO WHAT WE COULD NEVER DO ALONE”