

# CAMEL COURIER

VOLUME 28 ◉ ISSUE 5 ◉ MAY 2014

## SERVICE WITH A SMILE

***YOU HAVE TO GIVE IT AWAY TO KEEP IT.***

### ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS

**District 11 – Area 34**  
coverage area includes:  
Antrim, Benzie,  
Grand Traverse,  
Kalkaska, & Leelanau  
counties.

**Central Office**  
124 N. Division Street  
Traverse City, MI 49684

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**Hot Line**  
(231) 946-8823  
24/7 Service

**Business Line**  
(231) 946-6716

**Business Office Hours**  
Mon – Fri 10AM - 5PM  
Saturday Call for Appointment

**Email**  
district11centraloffice@yahoo.com

**Website**  
www.district11-aa.org

**Board**  
Rick C., Chair  
Kip M., Secretary  
Ken W., Treasurer  
Victor F., Literature Buyer  
Jodie S., Webmaster  
Mike H., Newsletter Editor  
Phil S.

**Volunteer Coordinator**  
Susan N.

If you attend 12-step meetings, you’ve probably heard people say “Service keeps you sober.” This nice little aphorism is usually followed by a sweet mid-meeting PSA of a service commitment that has just been made available. Back in the day, newcomers were given such “service” positions with the thinking that such responsibilities would help keep the newbie sober: making coffee, putting away chairs, cleaning up before or after a meeting. No one ever really explains how cleaning a room or making coffee would help keep someone sober. The idea is, it just does.

I’ve always been the martyr type so even before coming to AA I was big on helping others. I was a young activist in my teens—anti-nukes, anti-meat eating, anti-corporation. I got a zing out of igniting my anger, and protesting helped tap into and prolong that zing. Marching and screaming on behalf of others made me feel like I was actually doing something to change the world. Plus, I felt better. I was marching while everyone else (or so it seemed) was at home watching television. I was part of the solution. Everyone else was part of the problem.

I also volunteered quite a bit: I helped mothers and their children in a homeless shelter. There, I read to the children and taught the women to read. I spent time in a refugee camp in the Middle East where I was a witness to atrocities, and also walked children to school and back to protect them from being shot at by soldiers. I volunteered in the eating disorder wing of a psychiatric ward where once a week I brought in a writing workshop and helped the girls there give voice to their grievances. But the thing is, though initially I volunteered to help others because I felt I had something I could give, somewhere along the line the volunteering became a kind of badge. It fed my ego.

An alcoholic, I have always suffered from the two extremes of “I am the worst, most useless person in the world,” and “I am the most gifted, brilliant, genius in the world.” Volunteering was perfect for this because it targeted both of these. I felt good when I was helping others because it made me feel grateful for what I had, but also, like I said, because by doing so I was telling myself I

was better than other people. This helped my low self-esteem, making me feel like I wasn’t completely worthless. But at the same time, it fed into my ego. Most people don’t volunteer, therefore, I told myself, I was better than most people.

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Early on in my sobriety, I did loads of service. At one point, I was chairing three meetings and doing additional service at two other meetings. I was also sponsoring other women. Though I was, no doubt, helping others, I also got an ego boost. I got to tell people about all the service I was doing which made me feel important and special. And, of course, better than everyone else.

So service is a complicated issue. Or is it? When I first got sober someone gave me a card that fit into my wallet. On it were a bunch of slogans from AA. Among them was one that said something along the lines of: Do one good deed for someone else without telling them or anyone else. If that person finds out, it no longer counts. When I read this, I knew this to be true. Helping others is less helpful when I use it to make myself feel better. Something else happens when I do something for someone else and don't tell them or anyone else. It's magical, actually. And though it does make me feel good, it does it in a different way.

Because, in fact, there are several ways of doing service. One way is doing service because you've been told that you should. This is what I did for much of my sobriety. My sponsor told me to get a service commitment and I heard people in the rooms talk about the importance of service. So, being an addict, I got myself a bunch of service commitments. The second way of doing service is doing it to feel better for having done the service, wearing one's service as a kind of badge. This I also did for much of my sobriety. Connected to this is a kind of crude commerce-like transaction which works like this: if I do service, I will stay sober. If this is what I am thinking when I'm talking to a newcomer or a sponsee, then really, all I am thinking about is me. I'm being selfish.

The third way of doing service is spiritual, really. It is the idea that by helping others, we lose ourselves. Now that I've worked the 12 steps formally with my sponsor, I practice steps 10, 11, and 12 on a daily basis. Whenever I experience fear, selfishness, and dishonesty, or if I am inconsiderate, I ask God to remove the defect from me, and then I call my sponsor and tell her. As soon as I get off the phone with her, I look to see what I can do to be of service.

In the beginning, I would tell her what I was going to do. For a few months my husband and grandmother received a series of gifts and packages. Now, whenever I find myself thinking of myself (worry, fear, envy, and so on), I ask for the defect to be removed, I call my sponsor and then immediately look to see where I can be useful. It might mean picking up litter off the street or calling a newcomer, it could be smiling and saying hello to someone. What happens here, in this form of service, is that I forget myself. I don't get an ego boost because what I am doing is small.

Every night before I go to bed I write an 11th step review which I then email to my sponsor. On it are the basic questions listed on page 86 in the Big Book. The one that helps me most in this area is, "Were we thinking of ourselves most of the time? Or were we thinking of what we could do for others, of what we could pack into the stream of life?" Every night I have to write out the words, "I was mostly thinking of myself." On good days, I then add a list of what I did for others. What this question does is remind me how far I still have to go.

Helping others is, in the end, what will save us. I spent years in therapy and an inordinate amount of money on self-help books to no avail. It turns out, the more time I spend looking at myself, the more time I spend looking at myself. In other words, I get nowhere. And, even worse, the longer I look at myself, the worse I look. Conversely, as soon as I turn away and engage in the world, the better I feel. I can't tell you who or how it works. I can only tell you that it does, in fact, work.

Here are some more reasons why service and helping others is important:

God made us to help others. The thirteenth century Persian mystic and poet, Rumi, wrote of a man walking by a beggar then asking, "God, do you not do something for these people?" God replied, "I did do something. I made you."

Helping others is what we were made for. Even AA's Big Book states this same purpose: "Our primary purpose is stay sober and help other alcoholics to achieve sobriety." Helping others or doing service isn't going to get us a better job or the ability to buy more stuff. Genuinely helping others helps us lose ourselves.

Mahatma Gandhi said, "To find yourself, lose yourself in the service of others." Alcoholics are self-centered creatures. The more I think about myself, my concerns and my worries, the more miserable I become. Try it yourself. Sit down and think about yourself. Let your self worry. Try this for one hour and see how you feel. Now, try calling someone else. Anyone, really. But don't talk about yourself. Ask the other person how she is, how her day is, how her children, husband, and job are. Then listen. You don't even have to say anything, just listen. When the other person asks how you

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are, answer, but move the conversation back to her. See how you feel after. Most probably, you'll feel better. When we get the focus off ourselves, we find true freedom. But in order to keep this freedom, we have to continue keeping the focus off ourselves. Hence, my sponsor's having me do one thing for someone else immediately after making a tenth step call. If I sit around and think about resentment or a fear, it will grow. If, instead, I turn my attention to doing something to help someone else, I will forget my resentment or worry.

Helping others helps us see ourselves. When I'm working with sponsees, I see myself. I see both where I have grown, as well as where I have not. But also, by listening and loving my sponsees, I gain empathy for myself. This helps my life, obviously. It means less self-criticism and as a result, when my critical voice is turned down, it is also turned down on others. What this means is that the more compassion I have for myself, the more compassion and less judgment I have for others. In the world of theology and philosophy, this shift is called a perspective change and this ability to see the world differently is huge.

Giving to the world and helping others helps us to feel a part of the world. The philosopher Cornell West writes, "A rich life consists fundamentally of serving others, trying to leave the world a little bit better than you found it." When I serve food to men, women and children who have no home or sit in a coffee shop and talk to a woman struggling with her addiction, I feel myself to be intrinsically bound to these people and, as a result, to this world. And in that moment any sense of loneliness or isolation is singed away. When I help others with no expectations of gaining anything back, I am, paradoxically, given back more than I could ever imagine. I am made whole, all my worries and concerns, needs and desires, removed from me. By helping others, a shift, and what can only be termed a miracle, occurs. The entire world is given to me.

BY Maddy D. • THE FIX • 2014

## **AL-ANON/ALATEEN**

### **District 39**

coverage area includes:

Antrim, Benzie,  
Grand Traverse,  
Kalkaska, Leelanau  
& Manistee counties.

### **Al-Anon/Alateen Family Groups - D39**

PO Box 5132  
Traverse City, MI 49696



### **Information Line**

(231) 938-7399  
Response within 24 Hours

### **Website**

[www.alanon-d39.org](http://www.alanon-d39.org)

## **Addiction: Letting Go Is Not The Same As Giving Up**

*One hug.*

*Once a year.*

*I hold you tight, my son. Probably too tight, but I need the strength of my love to soak into your soul, and my arms must absorb the love I know you have for me. I memorize this moment.*

*As you grew from boy to man, child to addict, I had to let go of the things I could not change and the things that weren't mine to control (after trying for so long to change and control them). I had to let go before the ugly words and behaviors slithering in on the underbelly of addiction did irreparable damage to the relationship that had once been so good. Or killed the boy I was trying to save.*

*My love is all I have left to give you.*

*(That, and one too-tight hug for each of the past seven Aprils.)*

*I hold you tight, my son. Wrapping you in my arms, I feel the power of our dusty bond. A silent exchange of hope and strength and eternalness, of a love that has been bruised but never broken. I kiss your cheek, leaving a*

*lipsticky mom mark, and now, again, I must let you go. I open my arms — empty but now full — arms which will keep you snug and close to my heart, until next time. Next year.*

*In letting go of you, Joey, I'm holding on tight to so much.*

*In letting go of you, I'm letting you know that I believe in you. I believe you will find your way back.*

*One hug.*

*Once a year.*

*I'm keeping your place warm.*

# Calendar of Events - MAY, 2014

**May 10, 17, 24, 31** Open Talk at Munson Hospital basement, 1105 Sixth Street, Traverse City, 8:00pm. Please contact Brian S. (231) 715-6866 if you would like to be a Speaker. **NOTE: MAY 3<sup>rd</sup> OPEN TALK CANCELLED.**

**May 10** District 11 Meeting, Munson Hospital at the Cafeteria Dining Room #2, 1105 Sixth Street, Traverse City at 9:30am. For More Information: Email [area34.district11@gmail.com](mailto:area34.district11@gmail.com).

**May 11** Mother's Day BBQ hosted by the Grand Traverse Band, 845 Business Park Drive, just south of Parsons Road off of Three Mile in Traverse City. For More Information: Call (231) 935-4469, or view updates on FaceBook: <http://www.facebook.com/FunInRecoveryTC>

**May 14** Central AA Office Board Meeting, 124 N. Division Street, Traverse City at 5:30pm. All AA and Al-Anon/Alateen members are welcome. For More Information: Call (231) 946-6716.

**May 17** Celebration of Sobriety! St. Lawrence Hospital, Clark Conference Center in Lansing. For More Information: Call the Lansing Central AA Office at (517) 377-1444.

**May 18** Western Michigan Area 34 Assembly. Hosted by District 12. Otsego County Sports Flex, 1250 Gornick Avenue, Gaylord at 10:30am. For More Information: view their website at <http://www.wmaa34.com/>.

**May 23, 24 & 25** Northern Michigan Inter Area Spring Roundup in Grayling. For More Information: See Flyer on last page of this newsletter.

Do you have an upcoming AA or Al-Anon/Alateen event in your area?  
Please email information to [mthotis@aol.com](mailto:mthotis@aol.com), and enter "Camel Courier" in the Subject Line.

## Michigan Al-Anon/Alateen Family Groups 42<sup>nd</sup> Annual Convention Friday, May 16 - Sunday, May 18, 2014 at the Crowne Plaza Lansing West Hotel in Lansing, MI

For More Information:  
Registration Website: <http://www.miafg.org/Convention%20Reg.pdf>  
Hotel Information Website: <http://www.miafg.org/Hotel%20Reg.pdf>

*Kent County Central Office  
2014 Spring Roundup  
Saturday, May 3  
in Grand Rapids*

For More Information:  
See Website at  
<http://www.grandrapidsaa.org/Event-Calendar>

**NORTHERN MICHIGAN INTER AREA  
ANNUAL SPRING ROUNDUP  
MAY 23, 24, 25**

Ramada Inn Conference Center in Grayling  
For More Information:  
See Last Two Pages of this Newsletter

## ★ FOUNDERS' DAY 2014 ★ 79<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Alcoholics Anonymous June 6, 7, 8

in Akron, Ohio – THE Birthplace of A.A.

For More Information:

[http://foundersdayregistration.akronaa.org/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=featured&Itemid=101](http://foundersdayregistration.akronaa.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=featured&Itemid=101)

**62<sup>nd</sup> Michigan State Convention  
August 22, 23, 34  
Radisson Hotel at the Capitol in Lansing**  
For More Information:  
[http://www.cmia32.org/fliers/2014-MI\\_State\\_Convention.pdf](http://www.cmia32.org/fliers/2014-MI_State_Convention.pdf)

**SAVE THE DATES**  
◆ ◆ ◆ ◆ ◆  
**2014 Traverse City Fall Roundup  
October 31, November 1 and 2  
Park Place Hotel ◆ Traverse City, MI**  
DETAILS COMING SOON!



## DISTRICT 11 MEETING MINUTES

April 12, 2014

The meeting opened at the Munson Hospital Cafeteria Dining Room #2 at 9:30 am with the Serenity Prayer, followed by the opening readings and roll call:

- \* District 11 Statement of Purpose – Jesse;
- \* 4th Tradition – Jodie S.;
- \* 4th Concept – Paul R.;
- \* Declaration of Unity – Phil S.;
- \* Roll Call – 14 voting members

### OFFICER REPORTS

**Secretary** – Deanna D. March 2014 minutes were read and accepted as corrected.

**Treasurer** – Jodie S. February 28, 2014 balance \$2,585.47. (**CORRECTED:** March 31, 2014 balance \$2,585.47) Contributions=\$293.00 from: District 11 March Meeting, West End Group, Women's Friday Night Interlochen, Fife Lake Friday Night Group and Sunday Night Men's Stag (closed). Expenditures=\$0. Prudent reserve=\$600.04. Treasury report for March 2014 accepted as corrected. Please send all District 11 contributions to PO Box 1231, Traverse City, MI 49685.

**Chair** – Paul R. Nothing to report.

### COMMITTEE REPORTS

**PI/CPC Committee.** Phil S. He will be doing a public information presentation on alcoholism and Alcoholics Anonymous to one of the classes at Leland High School on April 18, 2014.

**Corrections Committee.** Jerry H. is not present. NOTE: There is a drop box at Central Office for Corrections donations.

**Grapevine.** Rick T. District 11 raffled off a subscription at the March 15th open talk at Munson. Olivia P. of Traverse City had the winning ticket. Rick will be at the Fifth Tuesday Open Speaker meeting in Kalkaska on April 29th for another subscription giveaway. He will also do a giveaway at the Westside Fifth Friday Open Speaker meeting on May 30th. If anyone is interested in a subscription giveaway for your group, please contact Rick T. via District 11 contact information attachment. District 11 will offer at least four more free subscriptions this year. Also, he received the Grapevine display material, and hopes to have it finished in time for the Northern Intra Area Spring Roundup in Grayling, MI. Finally, he is trying to get an appointment with the Munson Treatment facility to donate a few copies of the Grapevine and hopefully spark some interest in purchasing a subscription.

**Treatment Facilities.** Dave L. is not present. UPDATE via email on April 12, 2014 following the District 11 meeting: Dave L. has reached a decision to resign his position as Antrim County DCM and the Treatment Facility Chairperson. His physical limitations prevent him from fulfilling his responsibilities at this time. He expressed his gratitude for the service he has been able to be a part of, and for the relationships he has benefitted from. He will maintain his role as GSR for the Bellaire groups until elections, and he will also finish out his position with NMIA.

**Special Needs.** Sharon M. is not present. Rachel B. is in attendance to report. Three separate meetings in the district have returned the Special Needs survey of suggestions. She asked if Central Office would entertain putting the survey and the survey results on the website. The Central Office webmaster, Jodie S. suggested that the information be forwarded to her. Also, thank you to the Central Office for donating a special needs book.

**Central Office Liaison Report.** Victor F. The TC Fall Roundup has been released from the Central Office committee. All Roundup funds from the Central Office will remain in place. The office is looking to relocate. They need volunteers to help transport literature to the Northern Michigan Intra Area Spring Roundup in Grayling, MI.

### DCM REPORTS

**Antrim.** Dave L. is not present. He has resigned this position as of April 12, 2014.

**Benzie.** Open position, no report.

**Grand Traverse.** Paul R. Nothing to report.

**Kalkaska.** Mel H. The Kalkaska Tuesday night group has a Fifth Tuesday potluck open meeting scheduled for April 29, 2014 at the Senior Center. Doors open at 6:30 PM, potluck at 7:30 PM and speaker at 8:00 PM. The Fife Lake groups are planning a Father's Day Picnic at the village park. It will begin at Noon with a speaker at 1:00 PM. There is a new group meeting in Alden on Sunday nights at 8:00 PM at the Methodist Church.

**Leelanau.** Ted K. Nothing to report.

**GROUP INFORMATION/ANNOUNCEMENTS/CONCERNS** None

### TC FALL ROUNDUP

Jodie S.- The next Roundup meeting is Thursday, April 24, 2014 at 6:45 PM at West End. The Roundup is no longer a part of the Central Office. We are looking for more group donations and group participation. At the March meeting, the Roundup budget and program were discussed and approved.

**OLD BUSINESS**

**June 2014 District 11 Meeting**

A discussion concerning the venue and program for the June 2014 meeting ultimately resulted in a Motion postpone the proposed District 11 meeting, potluck and service workshop. **MOTION:** Postpone the workshop and schedule instead for September 2014. Motion passed unanimously.

Ted K. suggested that a committee be formed to chair and plan the workshop. Ted and Rick both agree to help out and be a part of said committee.

**NEW BUSINESS** None

The meeting closed at 10:30 a.m. with the Lord's Prayer. Next meeting will be held on Saturday, May 10, 2014, at 9:30 a.m. at the Munson Hospital Cafeteria Dining Room #2, Traverse City, MI.

Yours in love and service, Deanna D., District 11 Secretary



**CENTRAL OFFICE BOARD MEETING MINUTES**

FROM APRIL 9, 2014

(MINUTES to be approved at the May 14, 2014 Board Meeting)

**Board Members present:** Rick (Chair), Ken (Treasurer), Victor (Literature Purchaser), Mike (Newsletter Editor) and Phil.

**Others present:** None.

The Board Meeting commenced at 5:35pm by Rick with a moment of silence followed by the *Serenity Prayer*.

**Secretary's Report:** Mike read the Minutes of the March 12, 2014 Board Meeting. Phil offered an amendment to correctly spell the last name of Brian [Saylor]. Phil moved to accept the Minutes as amended. Motion carried unanimously.

**Treasurer's Report:** Ken reviewed the report and mentioned the process of entering all account data into QuickBooks is going steady and should be completed in the next couple of months. Phil inquired about what the "Total Deposits" refer to in the report (Line 2) and Ken explained that it is taken from the monthly Bank Statements, and includes actual deposits, Sales Tax and Literature Sales for each month. Victor moved to accept Treasurer's Report. Motion carried unanimously.

**Webmaster Report:** No report available.

**IT Report:** Ken reported that Central Office has acquired a rebuilt Fax/Copy machine which will be in operation in the very near future.

**Round-Up Report:** No report available.

**Camel Courier Report:** Mike reported that he spent time comparing the past four years of the "Central Office Call Log" which is published each month. The monthly data he specifically compared was: 1.) the number of female and male visitors to Central Office; 2.) the monthly dollar amount of receipts and expenses; 3.) monthly literature sales and expenses; and 4.) monthly donations. His conclusion: "nothing made sense". There's no correlation whether it be the month, dollar amount, nor gender.

**Volunteer Coordinator Report:** No report available.

**Literature Report:** Victor is still seeking a volunteer(s) to transport merchandise and man the store for literature sales at next month's Northern Michigan Spring Roundup (May 23-25 in Grayling). For More Information: Call Victor F. at (231) 640-4392.

Victor filled all pre-orders of the 75th Anniversary Commemorative Edition of *Alcoholics Anonymous*, and there are plenty of copies available for purchase at Central Office.

**Old Business:** Rick addressed the Resolution that was approved at last month's Board Meeting. That Resolution reads as follows:

*"Be it resolved that Central Office's intent is to leave the remaining balance it donated to the autonomous Round-up Committee and to sever all ties with that committee."*

With this Resolution in mind, 1.) A motion was made by Phil to dissolve the Standing Committee formed by Central Office to create and implement the TC Round-Up. Motion carried unanimously. 2.) A motion was made by Ken, that any monies remaining in the account set-up for the now-dissolved Standing Committee are the property of TC Round-Up Committee. Motion carried unanimously. And 3.) A motion was made by Victor, that Central Office severs all ties to the TC Round-Up Committee. Motion carried unanimously.

**New Business:** Central Office is looking for a new location. It is imperative the space be ADA accessible, located in/near downtown, has a minimum of 700 square feet, as well as parking available. One space is being pursued, but Board Members welcome other leads. Our fellowship is encouraged to refer venue prospects by contacting Central Office and leave a message at (231) 946-6716, or email [district11centraloffice@yahoo.com](mailto:district11centraloffice@yahoo.com).

A motion was made by Victor to adjourn the Board Meeting. Motion carried unanimously. The April 2014 Central Office Board Meeting adjourned at 6:20pm. The next Central Office Board Meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, May 14, 2014 at 5:30pm at the Central Office.

--These Minutes were prepared by Mike H., Acting Secretary

## Central Office Announcements

### **NEEDED: VOLUNTEER(S) TO WORK LITERATURE STORE AT THE NORTHERN MICHIGAN INTER AREA ANNUAL SPRING ROUNDUP ON MAY 23, 24, 25 IN GRAYLING**

Central Office will have a store for literature sales at the upcoming Northern Michigan Spring Roundup (May 23-25 at the Ramada Inn Conference Center in Grayling). Due to the event being three days, Victor (Central's Literature Buyer) is looking for assistance in transporting the merchandise from Central Office to Grayling and back, as well as manning the store during that weekend. The volunteer must have access to a truck (with a cap) or a van for the transport.

The volunteer's expenses will be paid for the weekend (registration fee, individual cost of banquet, two-nights lodging charge, and gas). For More Information: Call Victor F. at (231) 640-4392.

### **SEEKING NEW OFFICE SPACE**

Central Office is looking for office space. We need a minimum of 700 square feet that is ADA accessible, located in/near downtown, has two or more rooms, as well as parking available. If you have a lead, please call Central Office and leave a message at (231) 946-6716, or email [district11centraloffice@yahoo.com](mailto:district11centraloffice@yahoo.com).

## AA Archives - MAY

- May 6, 1946 Long form of 12 Traditions published in AA Grapevine for first time.
- May 7, 1956 The first English AA Convention was held in Cheltenham, England.
- May 8, 1971 Bill W. buried in private ceremony, East Dorset, Vermont.
- May 10, 1939 Clarence S. announced to the Akron Okford Group that the Cleveland members were starting a new Group in Cleveland and calling it *Alcoholics Anonymous*.
- May 13, 1951 Al-Anon is founded by Lois W. and Anne B.
- May 12, 1935 Mother's Day, Bill and Dr Bob meet for the first time at the home of Henrietta Seiberling.
- May 31, 1938 Bill and other's in the Fellowship begin writing the "*Big Book*".
- May 29, 1980 "*Dr Bob and the Good Oldtimers*" is published.

### **Open Speaker Meetings at Munson Hospital Basement Saturdays (8:00pm)**

#### **Upcoming Speakers**

- May 3 ..... CANCELLED
- May 10 ..... Amanda S.
- May 17 ..... Bob L.
- May 24 ..... Sheila M.
- May 31 ..... Bobby M.
- June 7 ..... OPEN
- June 14 ..... Andrea S.
- June 21 ..... OPEN
- June 28 ..... OPEN

**\*\* Speakers Subject to Change \*\***

If you're interested in talking at this Open Speaker Meeting, please contact **Brian S.** at (231) 715-6866.

### **Corrections Correspondence** *A Special Kind of A.A. Service*

The General Service Office of Alcoholics Anonymous in New York spearheads the Corrections Correspondence Service which is an opportunity linking A.A. members on the "outside" with A.A. members in correctional facilities. It's like a "Pen Pal" campaign where men write letters to men and women with women.

If you would like to share your experience, strength and hope with A.A.s who are confined, please mail (or email) the tear-off form found at this link:

<http://www.aa.org/pdf/products/f-26correctcorrespondence.pdf>

Of course certain rules and guidelines are to be followed which will be provided to you once your application form is received and accepted.

Those who have participated in this service have found sharing with inmates a very gratifying form of Twelfth Step work. Thank you for your consideration.



# Did I Pick the Wrong Sponsor, Or Is It Me?

**M**ore than four years after stepping foot in my first Al-Anon meeting in a church chapel with red low-pile carpeting and a giant cross on the dais, I finally got a sponsor.

And now I'm not so sure I picked the right one.

Of course, considering I wavered so long before working up the guts to actually ask someone to be my sponsor, I'm the first to admit that I am anything but a perfect 12-stepper, waffling in my participation, my dedication to the program—though never my enthusiasm—undulating like a wave that rebels against the pull of the tide. I've gone to four meetings a week; I've gone to zero meetings a week. I've read *Courage to Change* every day; I've gone months without picking it up. I never once considered "dropping out" of Al-anon, and it's undoubtedly been one of the best things to ever happen to me, but I'm also one of the laziest people you've ever met when it comes to doing things that are good for me, whether it's yoga or oatmeal or working my way through the 12 steps. I'm motivated by a desire to make my life better, but I'm also ruled by fear.

And so, after four years of thinking about asking someone to sponsor me, then asking someone to sponsor me who I'd never even met (he said no), to rehashing with my therapist my inability to commit to asking someone to be my sponsor, to admitting that I was petrified to ask someone in case a) he or she said no again, or b) he or she said yes and I found myself stuck in a bad relationship filled with 12-step homework and obligatory coffee dates, I finally found myself in a situation where someone sort of, kind of, asked me to ask them.

"I can't wait until you ask me to be your sponsor," said Future Sponsor one day during a meeting break.

I was relieved, I was excited. At long last, I was finally on my way to achieving this much hyped about recovery people raved about in meetings but that had thus far eluded me. I now had someone to call, someone to walk me through the steps, and (cue Sally Field) I liked this person, I really liked this person. Everything she shared about in meetings sounded like a canned interview from Charlie Rose...but in a really good way. She'd made my short list of potential sponsors I'd ask were I ever to get around to asking. She was an old-timer in the program: confident and practical and sharp-witted. Best of all, she had this altruistic yet authoritative Al-anon-esque air about her that I longed for in a mentor. The kind of sponsor that would show up for coffee with a stack of dog-eared 12 step books and pamphlets and gently walk me through each chapter in my own way and at my own pace. She'd reach for my hand, and I'd take it.

Except that hasn't exactly happened. For starters, there's been no coffee (or iced tea or soda or beverages of any sort), and while I'm not looking for someone to divvy out orders in militaristic fashion—Hut! Step One! Hut! Step Two!—I'm starved for structure. Based on my sponsor's suggestion, I wrote a first step. She gave it a read, and her feedback was helpful and encouraging, but I felt myself thinking...wait, that's it? Now she's suggesting I write a second step, and when I asked where to begin, she sent me another email with a few more, fairly loose, suggestions. And this is all well and good, but I'm thinking I need something more.

Not that I've been a model sponsee. I don't call as much as I want to call, mostly because when I do call I feel like I've got to drum up some theatrical Broadway performance about everything going on in my life. The pressure to entertain is unbearable! Then again, the few times I have called, my sponsor accused me of being argumentative and cut me off when I wasn't even halfway through complaining about whatever it was that I was complaining about. She wanted to get right to the solution—"Stop arguing with your husband"—but how could I do that without purging myself of all the pent-up frustration and anxiety I felt about the problem? If my sponsor wouldn't let me vent, who would? What kind of sponsor doesn't let you scream at her about your shitty life?

Then one day my sponsor called me. She sounded panicky, impatient. It was night and the sky was inky black and she was lost trying to find the address of a meeting that she was leading (I told her I'd go, but between work and my kids, I was just too exhausted to do anything that might make me feel better). She was begging for directions, and I felt put on the spot. I can find my way around any city in the world just by sheer instinct but I'm the absolute worst at helping anybody else figure out where they're going because I'm from Boston and we just plain suck at it. "Head toward the mountains," I told her. "I don't know where the mountains are!" she shouted. "West!" I said. "Turn around and head west!" "But I don't know which way is west!" She was frantic, I started to sweat. She was lost, and I was lost and, well, thank God, someone beeped in on her end and she hung up on me.

And as my iPhone clicked, it occurred to me: maybe I'm not cut out to be the type of sponsee that my sponsor wants—or needs—me to be. Maybe we're just not right for each other.

