

RECOVERY TIMES

Vol. 38, No. 5, May 2013

The Alcoholics Anonymous San Fernando Valley Central Office Newsletter

Woman to Woman Weekend

One week-end. What could it have to do with recovery? For me, one week-end has become part of the fulfillment of The Promises in my sobriety. Once a year, the Woman to Woman Workshop weekend has taken place for thirty four years. I started attending it over twenty years ago. The first time I went I was two years sober. I had recently moved to LA from Chicago and didn't know very many people in the program. I was scared to go by myself because I didn't know anyone else who was going. What I remember from that first weekend is sitting in the hospitality room talking to a woman and sharing our stories with each other. I still have a vivid picture in my mind of those moments.



I attended Woman To Woman the year my father died from liver cancer. He was one of us. It was the first time I had experienced the death of a parent - and I was new to walking through the grieving process. Again, on the last day of the workshop, I met another woman in the hospitality room and we sat down and shared where we were in our recovery. She gave me the name and phone number of a sober woman therapist who had helped her go through her divorce. I called that therapist and we met for over three years. She helped me grieve the loss of my father, examine the impact of being raised in an alcoholic home and assess how to move on from the past and discover who I was meant to be. I loved that woman. She saved my sanity and when she died, I attended her funeral. I would never have met her if I had not been given her name at the weekend.

I attended Woman to Woman when I knew my marriage was in trouble and spent time taking an inventory on it with a friend. I attended Woman to Woman when my son started using drugs and alcohol and I was scared to death that he was going to leave the house and not return. I have had to miss Woman to Woman because my mother had been hospitalized for heart failure and I gave my registration to a friend who said she had an amazing experience. I had to miss Woman to Woman because I was called the day before the weekend to pick up my son from a men's recovery home as they felt he needed a higher level of care and he could no longer be part of the their program.

I have taken women I sponsor to the weekend and have been given the gift of seeing their faces and hearts brighten with the experience of being there.

Recently I went to see a vocational counselor to discuss changing careers. I made a "cold call" to an organization that offered that service. When I met the woman in the reception area who was going to meet with me she said, "You look familiar." It turned out we knew each other from the Woman to Woman Weekend.

Every year is different. I have learned not to have expectations that it is going to be like last year. Each weekend offers its own spiritual lessons and opportunities. And now, because I keep coming back, there are so many wonderful women I know, even if I only see them once a year, who have touched my heart and changed my life. My higher power has provided me many profound and amazing messengers in just one week-end. **Suzanne D., Burbank, CA Woman To Woman Workshop Weekend takes place May 31- June 2, 2013 at Mount Saint Mary's College in Brentwood, CA. with topic/discussion workshops, speaker meetings & fellowship. Registration is required: www.WomantoWomanLA.org.**

CALENDAR OF A.A. EVENTS

29th Annual Tri-State Round up, May 16-19, 2013, Riverside Resort Hotel & Casino, Laughlin, NV, <http://tristate-roundup.com>

San Fernando Group Alcathon: Friday, 8 p.m. on May 24 – Monday, 27, 2013.

A.A. Desert Pow Wow, June 6-9, 2013, Renaissance Esmeralda Resort, Indian Wells, CA, <http://www.desertpowwow.com>

Bike-N-4-Books, Saturday, June 1, at Woodley Park, Van Nuys, CA

Stepping Stones Alcathon, June 21 – 23, 2013, 26111 Bouquet Cyn Rd., H1 & H2 Santa Clarita, CA 91350, www.steppingstonesalanoclub.com

29th Annual South Bay Roundup, July 4-7, 2013, Torrance, CA, <http://www.southbayroundup.org>

21st Foothill Roundup, July 26-28, 2013, Flintridge Prep. La Canada, CA, www.foothillroundup.org

39th Annual MAAD Dog Daze Convention, August 2 – 4, 2013, Doral Desert Princess, Palm Springs, <http://www.maaddogdaze.org/location>

35th Annual Ventura County A.A. Convention, August 23-25, 2013, Westlake Village, CA

The 4th Annual "Take Your Sponsor to Breakfast" Breakfast, September 28th, DAV, Woodland Hills



SERVICE COMMITTEES SCHEDULE:

- **SFV Central Office Board Mtg: June 5, 2013**, 6:30 p.m., Valley Central Office
- **SFV Intergroup: Mon., June 10, 2013**, New IGRs: 6:30/7 p.m., St. Innocent Church., 5657 Lindley Ave., Tarzana
- **Gen Service, District 1: (1st Wed.) June 5, 2013**, 6:30 p.m., 7552 Remmet, Canoga Park
- **Gen. Service, District 2: (1st Tues.) June 4, 2013**, 6:30 p.m., 4011 Dunsmore, La Crescenta
- **Gen. Service District 7: (2nd Sat.) June 8, 2013**, 9 a.m., Women's Club:33201 Agua Dulce Canyon Road, Agua Dulce, CA
- **Gen Service, District 11: (1st Mon.) June 3 2013**, 6 p.m. New GSR 6:30 p.m., 315 W. Vine Street, Glendale,
- **Gen Service, District 16: (1st Mon.) June 3, 2013**, 6:15 p.m. meeting, 15950 Chatsworth, Granada Hills.
- **Gen. Svc., District 17 :(1st Mon.) June 3, 2013**, 6 p.m. New GSRs/6:30 p.m. Bus. Mtg, 5000 Colfax, Noho.
- **SFV H & I: (3rd Monday) May 20, 2013**: 7 p.m. Orientation/8 p.m. Bus. Meeting, 5657 Lindley Ave., Tarzana

SERVICE OPPORTUNITIES IN THE SAN FERNANDO VALLEY:

Central Office needs telephone volunteers for all shifts (esp. midnight – 9 a.m.). If you have a year or more of continuous sobriety, you can sign up at the office or online: www.sfvaa.org/involve.html or call Central Office: 818 988-3001.

Public Information Committee: Provides information to the general public about what A.A. does & doesn't do. Need volunteers, especially young people and Spanish-speaking AAs, for health fairs and to speak at schools & businesses.

SF Valley Hospitals and Institutions Committee: Carry the message of A.A. into hospitals, prisons and treatment facilities to those who are unable to get out to meetings. See information above (SFV H & I).

San Fernando Valley Convention Committee: Volunteers are welcome to participate in the planning of the 2014 Convention. The committee meets on the 3rd Tuesday of every month starting in April.

San Fernando Valley Young People in AA: Committee Meeting is held the 1st Sunday of each month at Unit A., 10641 Burbank Blvd., NoHo.

San Fernando Valley Intergroup: The SFV Central Office coordinates a monthly meeting for all Intergroup reps on the 2nd Monday of each month at St. Innocent Church, 5657 Lindley Ave., Tarzana. If your meeting/group does not currently have an Intergroup Rep, please consider appointing someone to represent your meeting. Intergroup reps provide an important service to the group by sharing information on upcoming AA events in the Valley. **To serve as an Intergroup Rep, call Central Office: 818 988-3001.**



A.A.CENTRAL
OFFICE: 818
988-3001

MAINTAINS LIVE 24/7 PHONE SERVICE for A.A.s. Visit our website, www.sfvaa.org to find meeting info, upcoming events, service meeting info,

or download a copy of Recovery Times. Want to be of service? Why not answer phone calls to help others? Or call to speak with a sober AA member.

Quotes from Our Founders

"It is out of our discussions, our differences of opinion, our daily experiences, and our general consent that the true answers must finally come." *AA Co-Founder, Bill W., September 1945*

"In the life of each AA member, there still lurks a tyrant. His name is alcohol." AA Co-Founder, Bill W., July 1946

"In the years ahead we shall, of course, make mistakes. Experience has taught us that we need have no fear of doing this, providing that we always remain willing to confess our faults and to correct them promptly."
AA Co-Founder, Bill W., April 1963

Heard Around A.A.

"My sponsor ... gave me some good advice. 'Take the words success and failure out of your vocabulary. Replace them with honesty and effort.'" *Escondido, Calif., Aug. 2001*

"Sponsorship is a bridge to trusting the human race, the very race we once resigned from. In learning to trust, we are strengthening our sobriety." *Grand Island, Neb., February 1984*

"It seems to me that I achieve growth by leaving things out - when I don't say the cross word, when I don't answer sarcastically. If I can delay only one second, maybe two, I have time to ask myself, 'Do I really want to say that?'" *Houston, Texas*

"When the shadows of my past were placed in the light, I was thankful for the 'design for living' that the Twelve Steps provide. It helps me to handle the shock of who I was, who I am today, and who I want to be."
Blythe, Calif

(Intergroup Board Meeting April 2013)

Chairperson Andre W. opened the meeting at 7:00 p.m. with *The Serenity Prayer*. Barbara read "*The Twelve Traditions*," and Dawn H., Recording Secretary, accepted a motion for approval of Minutes from March's Intergroup Meeting. The minutes were approved as submitted.

Treasurer Brian H. reported: Central Office is in the black \$1,938.26 MTD, and in the black \$10,001 YTD. This includes approx. \$2,100 in group donations toward the computer fundraiser (\$3500 fundraising goal). Any monies over that will go toward the pending relocation of Central Office.

Executive Secretary Bob F. reported:

- Everything is going well at Central Office; however, given recent challenges with building management (decreased parking, medicinal marijuana store on the premises, etc.), we are looking to relocate the office. We are exploring options in the industrial area near the Van Nuys airport in an effort to remain centrally located in the San Fernando Valley.
- Our volunteer staff is currently running well, but Central Office can always use new volunteers. Interested parties should contact Larry at Central Office.
- Everything is running smoothly with the www.sfvaa.org website.
- *Recovery Times*: Everything is phenomenal with the newsletter.

Vice Chair Bill S. welcomed four new IGRs this month. IGRs were reminded to encourage recruitment of IGRs from meetings that are not currently represented. There are currently 300+ groups in the SFV with only 50-60 meetings represented monthly at IGR. Orientation for new IGRs begins at 6:30 p.m. prior to monthly IGR Meeting.

SERVICE REPRESENTATIVES

Santa Clarita Valley AA Convention: *Bernard B.* said the 10th Annual Santa Clarita Valley Convention is coming up October 18-20, and online registration will open next month. All are invited to participate and support our sister convention.

San Fernando Valley AA Convention: *Joe!* The 39th Annual San Fernando Valley Convention Planning Committee will hold his first meeting of the season on April 16th, at St Innocent Church in Tarzana. All are welcome to come be part of planning this event, to be held January 31-February 2.

ANNOUNCEMENTS FROM AA GROUPS & SEVENTH TRADITION:

Amy: H&I's annual fundraiser, Bike-N-4-Books, will be held Saturday, June 1, at Woodley Park. Sponsorship flyers are available on the back table, and all are encouraged to support this literature fundraiser.

Mike: The Sunrise-Sunset Group is hosting a series of talks on "The Joy of Living", featuring speakers Dick & Barbara A. from Atlanta. Supported onsite by our 7th tradition, lunch will be provided.

Michele: A "cover to cover" BB study is held every Thursday from 7:30-8:30 p.m. at Spirit Works Church in Burbank.

Bob F. The 4th Annual "Take Your Sponsor to Breakfast" Breakfast will take place. More details to come as the date gets closer.

(Continued on Page 5)

Acceptance of Others' Viewpoints: Critical to A.A.'s Survival

A few days ago, while carrying on a casual conversation with a fellow A.A. in a meeting hall, my friend made an off-hand religious slur, which I'm sure she meant as a light 'joke.' However, as it was aimed at my own heritage, the comment stabbed me in my gut. While I'm not one to share my views about my Higher Power in detail when I share, I do take offense when my belief system is criticized or challenged by those who come from other faiths. I immediately went into the 'defensive mode,' which didn't accomplish anything.



Later, as I privately fumed and the resentment festered, I picked up the phone and called my sponsor to have her weight in on how to proceed. I knew that holding a resentment wouldn't serve me, but I wasn't able to turn it over either.

My sponsor listened to my story then suggested I take action. She reminded me that in A.A. we all get to have our own understanding of a Higher Power and that the Big Book tells us that while we don't have to agree with others, we do have to learn tolerance of other views. She confirmed that it was not appropriate for this other person to use language that is offensive or hateful when describing people of other faiths, cultures or religions, both in and out of the rooms of A.A. After all, intolerance breeds hatred and harms the person who makes those statements as much as those who hear them.

She said that I needed to express how I felt about that statement to the person who made it. In other words, I had to confront the situation myself and do it in a way that did not cause harm.

One of the reasons I love having a sponsor is that I can ask her how to handle a situation that intuitively baffles me. I can even ask her what to say and when to say it when I'm blinded by my emotions. My sponsor suggested an appropriate response then asked me to get back to her after I pursued this. This helped me have the nerve to act on this as I knew I was not alone.

That evening, I wrote to that person and shared how that statement affected me. I also shared that I dislike prejudice and that it bothered me to hear that kind of language, especially from someone in the rooms of A.A. Then I waited.

Two days later I got a response with a full apology. The person thanked me for letting her know how I felt and said she realized that it was inappropriate to use that language, even in 'joking.' The bottom line was that she didn't mean to hurt me and promised never to use words like that again – not just to me but in all of her communications.

As I read her email I realized that this was a growth opportunity for both of us. I got to stand up for my beliefs and learned to do so in a way that did not harm the other person, while she learned how her behavior affected another.

In A.A. we are free to believe whatever we choose to believe. Here, we meet people who are different from us in many ways and we learn to accept them for who they are. A.A. has taught me to accept others from ALL walks of life.

In "We Agnostics" it reads, "Much to our relief, we discovered we did not need to consider another's conception of God. Our own conception, however inadequate, was sufficient to make the approach and to effect a contact with Him As soon as we admitted the possible existence of a Creative Intelligence, a Spirit of the Universe underlying the totality of things, we began to be possessed of a new sense of power and direction, provided we took other simple steps."

Practicing the principles of A.A. means I have to be able to forgive others who have wronged me if I want to be free of resentments, fear, and anger and carry the A.A. message in all of my affairs.

As a result of that conversation that day, two people got to take the program of A.A. to a higher level. **Editor**

Intergroup Rep Meeting Minutes, continued from Page 3

OLD BUSINESS: NONE NEW BUSINESS: NONE

IGR BIRTHDAYS FOR THE MONTH OF APRIL – (86 YEARS OF SOBRIETY!)

- John – 3 years on 4/15
- Bernard – 19 years on 4/29
- Bob F. – 32 years on 4/30
- Eileen – 6 years on 4/11
- Diane – 26 on 4/8

CLOSING: Motion to adjourn was recognized and seconded. Meeting adjourned with *The Lord's Prayer* at 7:17 p.m.

HAS YOUR MEETING CHANGED? If your meeting info changes (location, time, meeting name or type of meeting), let Central Office know. Please provide meeting updates in writing by mail or delivered in person during office hours.

CELEBRATING AN A.A. ANNIVERSARY? By making a \$1.00 donation for every year of your sobriety, you can support Central Office in reaching out to alcoholics all over the county. Please send your donation in during the month of your birthday so we can acknowledge you in the correct issue of Recovery Times. For April we thank the following for their contributions:

**David – 2 Years, Belinda T. – 8 Years, Cindy – 12 Years, Sandra B. – 24 Years,
David W. – 25 Years, Donna – 28 Years, Steve M. – 31 Years, Jack L. – 32 Years,
Mike E. – 32 Years, Bob F. – 32 Years, Arnold S. – 35 Years.**



DEATHS: *THINGS WE CANNOT CHANGE: DENNIS C. – 2 YEARS, KEN S. – 13 YEARS, SAUL S. – 30 YEARS, SUSAN T. – 30 YEARS, MARIE C. – 37 YEARS, ARMANDO M., 37 YEARS, FATHER FRANK – 30+*

"Father" Frank W. passed away in Palm Springs, CA. He was remembered for helping people as a counselor at the Holy Cross Hospital Rehab Center in the late '80s – early '90s. He will be sorely missed by the A.A. community. If you are aware of the passing of a member of our Fellowship, please call us at (818) 988-3001 or email an obituary to:

sfvaanews@sbcglobal.net



Please Support Your Central Office by sending a representative from your group to the Intergroup monthly meetings. We meet the 2nd Monday of every month at St. Innocent Church at 5657 Lindley in Tarzana. Please Come! We would love to see you!

Newsletter

Subscriptions: If you would like a copy of

Recovery Times mailed to you, please mail your name and address where you want us to send your issue with a \$7.00 check (for cost & delivery) to: **SFV Central Office, 7417-E. Van Nuys Blvd., Van Nuys, CA 91405**

**(Please circle): New Renewal
Additional Contribution**

Moving? Please give us your former address:

_____.

Got a story, poem or artwork that is recovery-related that you want to share? Stories should be 250-500 words. Please submit to "Editor" of Recovery Times at:

xnowisthetime@aol.com or mail/deliver to Central

Office (address to the left).

Submission does not 'guarantee' publication.

Paul: Words and love from a tattooed biker changed this woman's life forever

When the Big Book says we are people who normally would not mix, it's telling the truth. I am reminded of this when I'm in the grocery store with my three small children and a large, bearded, tattooed biker stops to chat for a few moments. The looks we receive from passersby never fail to make me chuckle. However, within those relationships are the truly special bonds that develop the unexplainable ties that we find to another human being for no other reason than the common solution we have found from a seemingly hopeless state of mind and body.

I remember the first time Paul spoke to me. I was a newcomer, struggling with the whole idea of sobriety. I had seen him smoking outside the meetings and witnessed the respect that the other members of the group treated him with. As best as I could tell he was someone "important"—with a hundred years of sobriety. That day I shared about an experience I had with my 3-year-old son and the angels he told me he saw. After the meeting Paul came up to me and said, "Hey kid, you don't know you got it, but you've got it. Keep coming back." I was so excited that the King of AA (as I decided he must be) had spoken to me. I did not see at the time that what I had shared was the beginning of a psychic change and the recognition of a belief in a power greater than myself.

From that day forward we greeted each other with, "Hey kid," and I became one of the folks who chatted with him outside of the meeting. During those chats he introduced me to other women in AA and asked me if I had a sponsor, and whether I was working the Steps, and all the things that start to build the foundation of sobriety. In the meetings I listened when he shared, and often the words he spoke made vibrations on my soul. Prior to leaving rehab we had to make a list of situations where we would be tempted to drink. I wrote down that the loss of my husband or my son would tempt me to drink. Paul shared openly in meetings about losing his son and surviving the grief of that situation, only to lose his wife shortly thereafter. I listened carefully—amazed that he had stayed sober.

When I was trying to find a God of my understanding, I heard Paul speak about his beloved dog. He shared how at every major turning point in his life, when he felt terribly alone and at his bottom, his dog was there to comfort him. When he felt no one was there for him, Paul felt the love of God in the presence of his dog. I was able to take his experience and see my God in the way that my dog sees me. My dog does not care if I am away for hours, days, or simply to take the garbage out. She is happy when I come back, just because I came back. My God is the same way—he does not care how long I was gone or what I did while I was away, all that matters is that I came back to him. That was an important moment for me in understanding that God has an unconditional love for his children.

Paul also shared about a time in his life when he thought he was done, that it was all over, and he was going to drink. He reached out to fellow AAs, only to have no one answer the phone. There was no meeting close by that he could attend right away. It came down to a point where the only thing that stood between him and a drink was his Higher Power. He started to pray the only prayer he could remember at that moment, the Serenity Prayer, and reached out to God for help. He fell asleep praying, and when he woke up God had removed the obsession and desire to drink. From his story I saw the real deal and that I needed to develop a true relationship with God, not just a "talk-about-God-say-the-right-thing-deal."

Paul wintered in Florida, so for a long time our friendship was limited to regular "check-in" calls. He made infrequent trips back, often surprising those of us who kept in contact with him. He bucked the rules at a meeting to present me on my anniversary with my three-year coin, only to jump in the car and head back to Florida immediately after the meeting was over. Anniversaries were important to him; he kept a list, and would call folks near or far on their anniversaries to offer his congratulations on another year sober. His phone calls became as much a part of many AAs anniversaries as their coins.

Paul took sick late last summer and is now suffering from dementia in a nursing home. However, God gave me one last anniversary call. I knew in my heart that Paul would be unable to call me on my day and while it

saddened me, I understood and accepted it. Much to my surprise, at about 9:30 that night my phone rang and Paul's name and number came up on the caller ID. I stared at it for a few moments before answering. It was Paul's daughter calling in response to a note I had sent asking for updates on his condition. She had no idea that it was my anniversary; she said she just had felt a powerful urge to call me at that moment. We both agreed that someone greater than both of us was working behind the scenes on it.



Just as alcoholism has a ripple effect, so does sobriety. From that call, I have developed a friendship with Paul's daughter. Through me she has learned more about the father who she never really knew, as a result of his alcoholism, and the program that meant so much to him. Through her I have learned about forgiveness, grace, and dignity. The gifts of sobriety continue to keep on giving.

God gave me a wonderful friendship with the man who helped me find my relationship with him. It seems like I have known Paul always, when in reality it has only been a few short years. We are people who normally would not mix; so it is amazing when we do. —*Richelle L., Export, Pa.*

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Illustration by Leslie Z.

The 12 Steps through Word Search. Each month, Recovery Times features the Tradition of the Month. In May we are featuring Tradition Five: **"Each group has but one primary purpose – to carry its message to the alcoholic who still suffers."** Can you find all the words? Look closely and read across as well as up and down.

C	M	E	S	S	A	G	E	E	M	O	B	U	T	K
C	I	A	A	I	T	S	T	S	T	I	L	L	L	J
C	M	C	F	C	S	X	O	O	T	B	F	T	W	A
G	W	H	O	P	H	C	H	P	T	A	A	H	D	C
H	T	F	R	E	A	E	A	R	E	H	Y	E	O	I
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O	A	L	C	A	H	O	L	I	C	A	E	T	I	E

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ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

