Hello Central
Los Angeles A.A. Central Office Magazine

Spring Awakening!

IN THIS ISSUE

RENEWAL: Using The Tools
SERVICE getting pro-active
Committee Highlight: LACYPAA Young People's A.A.
From Suicide To SOBRIETY
+ STORIES of experience, strength and hope
AND MORE!

Exposition Park

Spring 2019
For Fun & For Free
Introduction

Welcome to our third installment of Hello Central! We’re grateful to be given the opportunity to provide this free magazine for AA Central Office of Los Angeles. Our mission is simple - to inform the fellowship about what Central Office is offering; to share recovering alcoholics’ stories of experience, strength and hope; and to offer ways that you can be part of the solution through service.

It’s our Spring issue, so we’ve chosen a theme of Renewal. For some, it may be a call to restore their faith in a spiritual solution; and to others, a reinvestment in self-esteem through love & service.

We offer this publication in the hope that you listen with your heart, and look for the similarities that unify us all on the road of happy destiny.

In service - Pete A. Co-Editor

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Spring is my favorite season of the year; once again, the natural world starts to grow around us. I try to live every day as if it is spring. But how do I keep an optimistic, ‘everything is green’ state of mind year-round? First, I try to do one thing at a time and keep things simple. Plants don’t try to grow, they just grow; birds don’t try to fly... they fly. I believe we can’t help but grow by being active in AA – by just showing up and being part of it.

Something I observe in Alcoholics Anonymous is that sober alcoholics forgive easily. I know, because I am often the one receiving the forgiveness! Who knew that letting go of resentments and forgiving were key element to having a successful and happy life?

From The Family Afterwards in the Big Book, “We grow by our willingness to face and rectify errors and convert them into assets.” With my willingness to acknowledge my mistakes and make amends I learn how to handle things better, so the next time it’ll be easier to go through the process. These are gifts for which I am the most grateful. Worry about the future and regret over the past are two of my greatest foes, but when I am grateful, I keep worry and fear at bay.

I am ever so thankful to be part of AA and for the gift of sobriety, because now I have the chance to have a full life, to embrace each day and opportunities to contribute meaningfully to others.

For service and support, email me at manager@lacoaa.org or call me at your Central Office at 323-936-4343. Thank you for letting me be of service.

- Kate M. your central office manager

“Hello, Central?”

Central office needs your help as a phone volunteer. You can make a difference by listening to fellow alcoholics and directing them to A.A. meetings.

Email your full name and phone number to volunteer@lacoaa.org.
Believe it or not, the word “renew” appears only once in the Twelve Steps & Twelve Traditions - “As the day goes on, we can pause where situations must be met and decisions made, and renew the simple request: “Thy will, not mine, be done.”

So, why do I sometimes fail to renew step 3 when real life, real-time decisions are required? Making a decision to turn my will and my life over to a higher power has worked in the past, so why do I keep forgetting to do so?

My step work has revealed a recurring defect that often rears it ugly head: a fear that I am all alone. And when it returns, I believe that I can only rely on myself, which leads to road rage, poor choices and low self-esteem. But, I am slowly learning to renew my faith in a force that I can trust. I may forget to trust my HP again, but I have faith that faith works, so I try again.

I want to trudge the road of happy destiny, but it comes at a price: that of letting go of fear.

Letting go may be the shortest path to my spiritual re-awakening.

- Pete A. Co-Editor Hello Central
“You can’t give something you haven’t got,” is an A.A. slogan that I adopted during my many years of going in and out of the rooms of Alcoholics Anonymous. When someone suggested I volunteer for a commitment I always had an excuse: that I had nothing to offer a sponsee; not enough sobriety to share from the podium; not interested in greeting; or God Forbid making coffee (I’m a TV executive, don’t you know!) Many years ago, when my friend Jonathon convinced me to be a Central Service Rep, I only saw everything wrong with the way things were run - the personalities, the lack of sticking to the AA tenants of love, tolerance and unity. I decided A.A. was rotten to the core, and promptly relapsed for the umpteenth time. But because of continued encouragement (okay, nagging) from my friend, I kept coming back to Central Service as I came back again to A.A. Then, someone told me that “if service isn’t inconvenient, it won’t help you grow.” So, I would show up even, and especially when I didn’t want to. Then, against my better judgement, I took on a sponsee, and my program blossomed in a way that was new and profound. Then I got another one. Over time what I learned is that the act of doing service and showing up and giving your best to others really is the magic ingredient that takes sobriety to the next level. That’s when the program becomes so much more than letting go of alcohol, and creates that true sense of “belonging, of being wanted and needed and loved.” The secret of service is that by taking that contrary action to give more of yourself, you receive just what you were looking for in the first place: self-esteem, connection and a feeling of safety in sobriety.

- Elizabeth F, Zone F Delegate
A Transformation in Recovery
As this alcoholic became sober, they began to live in their truth.

As the rain begets Spring, I’m reflecting on the rebirth and renewal that my sobriety has brought about. Before I got sober, I had an empty feeling - that I didn’t fit anywhere; not in the Black community or in the LGBT community. So, I tried to become perfect on paper. I regulated how I acted, how I spoke, and kept my emotions in check. I thought if I gave everyone what they wanted they would overlook who I really was. It didn’t work. I crashed and burned hard, and fell into a depression that led to homelessness, addiction, alcoholism and thoughts of suicide.

Once I got sober, things started to make more sense. With sobriety came integrity, grace and dignity as never before - a grounded sense of self that I could bask in along with my daily reprieve. Being sober helped me feel comfortable enough to finally come out as a Trans Femme Non-Binary Gender Nonconformist (Trans Femme NB/GNC). I got the gift of clarity that I needed to live the life that I have always wanted.

Want to know another revelation? Part of why I was drinking was because I feared my own Transness. I was scared of who I really am. Fearful of what others would think of me, I wasn’t able to understand my non-binary nature, let alone explain it to others. So, I created my own barriers, and used alcohol and substances to numb the pain of not living in my truth. Sobriety has brought me the tools to figure out how to make sense of who I am, and how I want to present myself as a Trans Femme GNC. I know that I am enough today because my higher power says so.

- MJ B.

Co-Editor, Hello Central
(pronouns: they/them/their)
Page 55 of the Big Book states that “Our stories disclose in a general way what we used to be like, what happened, and what we are like now.” What I used to be like was afraid. I grew up with a lot of advantages, but in a family that was pretty unstable. Add to this the feeling that many alcoholics have of not fitting in, and I learned to be on guard, not create problems, and to do what was expected. So I got good grades, went to good schools, and got a good corporate job.

I didn’t “cross the invisible line” with drinking until I had been working for several years. What had originally been a drink or two after work ultimately became going home every night and drinking until I passed out – then up at 5AM the next morning to do it all over again.

My moment of clarity happened when my father called me to tell me that a cousin I had never met was in the hospital for a liver transplant because of his drinking. He also mentioned that my cousin’s sister had died the previous year from alcoholism. My cousin was one year younger than me; his sister was one year older.

“My cousin’s sister had died the previous year from alcoholism.”

I had not been close with my father, but I always made sure that he never saw me drunk. I don’t know if he was trying sending a message or if it was my Higher Power opening a window for me. I ended up going to my first AA meeting about a week after that call. Once people began to share, any reservations I had about my being an alcoholic dissolved and I have been sober since that day.

Today, my life from the outside looks a lot like when I came in sixteen years ago. The real changes are inside. While I may still have good days and bad days, I’m no longer afraid.

- Matthew C.
Life was Not Going as Planned!

My sponsor recently pointed out that although I was having epiphanies about my character defects, I didn’t always take action to remove them. Or rather, I was unwilling to have them removed. A.A. has taught me when we’re ready, truly ready to let go of shortcomings, we’re provided with opportunities to let them go. For me, this usually meant bumping up against people, and choosing, either consciously or intuitively, different ways of handling things. As a result of working the 12 steps, I learned to act with integrity most of the time. However, as I had just been fired from a job and full of self-pity, I felt justified to behave the way I used to: by lashing out and acting insolent, though appearing to be indifferent. Didn’t they understand? Life wasn’t going as planned! It was as though I had been carrying my worst character defects in my back pocket all along.

But, this behavior was no longer working for me. The painful emotional hangover and the lousy feeling it left me with was not worth indulging in my bratty behavior. It was a turning point. I simply did not want to carry on in this manner. My defects would not dictate how I treated others. I was truly ready to let go of old behaviors. Thus, the image of Boston Logan airport came to mind. Logan is a small airport, with limited runways, and incoming planes would often have to circle the airport until a runway cleared. I can remember how frequently I would sit in the window seat thinking of the absurdity of the long delays. The destination was within view, but we had to keep revolving around it, close but not close enough. Eight years in, I see that I’d been circling these character defects—somewhat ready, but not entirely willing to give them up. It is finally time to land the plane.

- Stacey C.
For years I purposefully (and wrongly) perceived the 11th step as saying, “prayer or meditation” instead of, “prayer and meditation”. If given the choice, I’ll take prayer all day. Fitting in a lengthy conversation with my HP, while hurriedly rushing around, is considered ‘quite spiritual’ in my book. I’m a girl on the ‘go’, a quality that is continually praised by the world we live in. Keep busy, keep moving and keep receiving kudos.

I was married, raising a child and working full-time? A fellow AA suggested I spend twenty minutes in meditation regarding a difficulty. A shot of fear jolted through my chest and it dawned on me, I’m scared to be alone with my thoughts. I would rather talk, than listen. If I get still and quiet, I might gain new insight. If I calmly look within, I might be required to make changes in my life that garner new results. What a concept! I’m willing. I’ve signed up to grow in sobriety, not stay stagnant. Meditation and thoughtful insight are ‘fast-tracks’ to emotional sobriety. By only choosing to practice ‘prayer’ in the 11th step, I’ve been driving a car without stopping for gasoline. I can smell the fumes. It’s time to get quiet.

- Misty M.
From Suicide To Sobriety

I came into the rooms of A.A. in an attempt to save a relationship. I was convinced I was smarter than my disease, but I wasn’t, and the relationship ended anyway. But my first contact with A.A. ruined my drinking and using. No matter how strenuously I attempted to avoid the truth, I remained an alcoholic. In my final year of “research” I burned my life to the ground. The progressive nature of my condition became an inescapable fact. So, I resigned to my self-diagnosis, and decided that the solution was to kill myself, so I prepared for my suicide with a maniacal focus. After collecting a fistful of pills and downing a half-bottle of Scotch, I called my former sponsor to thank him for his valiant attempt to help me get sober. But, when he found out about my plan, he reminded me there was another way open to me: A.A. He collected me and took me to a meeting, thus saving my life. That was three years ago.

“There was another way open to me: A.A.”

I have stayed sober by the grace of god one day at a time by not drinking or taking drugs, doing the twelve steps, going to meetings, and by praying every day upon awakening. I keep meditating, staying in contact with my sponsor and others in the program, taking commitments at meetings, sponsoring guys, doing H&I panels, eating better, and exercising. My sobriety has allowed me to deal with the wreckage of my past, and in some cases amending my relationships with people and institutions I had harmed. Moreover, it has permitted me to think more clearly and experience my emotions - both good and bad; and in so doing I have a program for recovery that works elegantly and simply. I have an immense gratitude for being given a chance to make my present and future into something other than death, destitution, or institutionalization. I attempt to live a life of useful service to fellow alcoholics and maintain my sobriety one day at a time.

- Christopher W.
The primary purpose of the Los Angeles County Young People in Alcoholics Anonymous committee (LACYPAA), an Intergroup formed September 1997, is to carry the AA message to alcoholics who still suffer, regardless of age.

An Intergroup works to fulfill the Fourth Tradition: to allow groups to take actions that affect other groups. In the upside-down triangle, this means that LACYPAA commits to work for, and be accountable to, all of the groups in the Los Angeles area that have young people in their membership. We do this by uniting young people in the Los Angeles area through service, and providing a forum for young people to get more involved in AA as whole, while creating precious bonds and memories along the way.

LACYPAA provides opportunities for young AA’s (defined in General Service Literature “as anyone who has room to grow”) to share their experience, strength, and hope as members of Alcoholics Anonymous. We have fun in sobriety and recover together! One of our most popular events takes place annually at Six Flags Magic Mountain where we bring an AA meeting into the park and enjoy a day of fellowship and recovery with more than three hundred AAs! LACYPAA is a bid committee as well as a service committee. This means each year LACYPAA submits a bid in hopes to bring the Western Area Conference of Young People in AA (WAYPAA) to Los Angeles. After years of heartbreakingly close calls, LACYPAA is thrilled to have been finally awarded the conference for the first time in its twenty-one-year history. Look for it in late 2019/early 2020! While we look forward to hosting WACYPAA XXIII, it is important for us not to forget our primary purpose, reaching that newcomer, and inspiring the young members of Alcoholics Anonymous to get involved in service.

- Andie, LACYPAA
When anyone, anywhere, reaches out for help, I want the hand of A.A. Always to be there. And for that: I am responsible.

- Al S. 1965
Getting Involved

Volunteering with L.A. Central Office is a great way to make a positive difference in our community. Join us for any of LACOAA's committee meetings, board meetings and events in the spirit of unity, service & recovery.

CSR Awareness Day!
“Step Into The Service Zone”
March 16, 2019 3pm-6pm
525 N Market St
Inglewood, CA 90302

Intergroup Meeting
Attention CSR’s!
Bring Your Group’s Voice on Thursday, May 9th, 2019
Check lacoaa.org for location

Central Service Committee
Meet the Board & Delegates
2nd Thursday of each month
7pm - 10pm.
4311 Wilshire Bl. #104 LA, 90005

Directory Committee
Meetings held on 3rd Sunday of each month at 12pm-2pm.
4311 Wilshire Bl. #104 LA, 90005

Literature Committee
Meetings on 1st Tuesday of the month from 7pm - 8:30pm.
4311 Wilshire Bl. #104 LA, 90005
Graphic Artists & Writers Needed

Policies & Procedures Committee
The Traditions at Work
Meetings held on 1st Thursday of each month at 7pm-9pm.
4311 Wilshire Bl. #104 LA, 90005

Public Information Committee
Reach Out To the Community
Meetings held on 3rd Monday of each month from 7pm - 9:00pm.
4311 Wilshire Bl. #104 LA, 90005

Become the C.S.R. for Your Group!
Bring Central Office To Your Home Group!
Attend your local CSR meeting.
Check ‘service’ tab at lacoaa.org

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