Hello Central
A.A. Central Office of Los Angeles Magazine

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Orderly
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of Experience,
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Sun

For Fun & For Free
Introduction

As a kid, summertime meant that I got to take a break, reflect on the things I did during the year and look forward to more. I guess I still do that today. Now, it’s a time to reflect and recuperate in order to bring forth the changes that sobriety offers me. We are so pleased with the feedback we have gotten from the previous issues and honored to have been a part of the new evolution of Hello Central! This issue is so full of stories from people that AA Los Angeles has to offer. We hope that you take their experience strength and hope to your hearts and use this time to reflect on your own sober path. Enjoy and know that you have support wherever you go!

Peace and blessings to you and yours!

- MJ B, Co-Editor, Hello Central

pronouns: they/them/theirs
Office Manager’s Corner

Dear AA Fellowship,

From 12 Steps and 12 Traditions page 187, “We are sure that humility, expressed by anonymity, is the greatest safeguard that Alcoholics Anonymous can ever have.” I marvel at the simplicity of Alcoholics Anonymous. Anonymous volunteers answer the phones at Central Office, some have done so for decades every other week. Anonymous members serve on committees, work on the website, produce this e-magazine, attend monthly meetings, and sign checks. Workers among workers, showing up to help others.

Maintaining balance and perspective are two important aspects of humility. “We should be sensible, tactful, considerate and humble without being servile or scraping. As God’s people we stand on our feet; we don’t crawl before anyone”, Alcoholics Anonymous, page 83. I can help safeguard AA through humility by contributing my time, but also by giving way as others do work I would prefer to do. By asking for help, even though I don’t want or need it. And, sometimes, even though I could get someone else to do it, by doing the job myself. The easiest path may not be the best one for me. More importantly, taking the easy path might not be best for everyone else.

Showing up at an AA meeting has to be one the most important ways to anonymously serve - keeping AA going just by being a part of it. But there is work to be done. Maybe we contribute by sponsoring, by greeting at the door at our home group, making coffee, or teaching someone else how to make the coffee as good as we do! :)

Central Office is confident in its good work, but we can do even better. Let us know how Central Office can support you and your meetings, let us know how we can be better at helping you carry the message. Email me at manager@lacoaa.org. Thank you.

Have you ever considered being a Central Service Representative? Does your meeting have a voice when it comes to how Central Office serves AA in Los Angeles? Click on Service on www.lacoaa.org to learn more about why every meeting should have a CSR.

- Kate M.

PS 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 us at Volunteer@lacoaa.org and include your full name and number.
Summer is a time of growth and prosperity. I’m a gardener and when I think of plants growing and harvesting fruits and vegetables I look forward to the summer. The sun shines down to nurture and give life in the summer. There’s so much opportunity for possibility in the summer. Imagine how much taller a tree can grow, how much fuller a garden can be or how much greener a hillside will become. All of these things are possible because the elements that life needs happens to the fullest extent in the summer. The ample amount of sunshine the rain and artificial watering sources. Everything comes together in harmony to create the ideal circumstances and continues the chain of life. We all benefit from the sunshine’s gifts of a bountiful crop. I can relate this to my own life as to what nutrients I’m putting into my own body. The more healthy I work towards a filling diet for myself the more able I am to provide back to the earth. If I focus my life on unhealthy elements and unhealthy thoughts I perpetuate and negate the beauty that the universe works to provide. One of the gifts I can give myself is that of a nurturing and loving diet. That diet does not include just food but also vitamins and positive thinking. I have no possible way of benefiting from any of these things if I put toxins or poisons in my body. Fortunately, each day is a new and beautiful chance to start over. The sun comes up in the plants respond and so do I. If they didn’t get enough water or I didn’t get enough vitamins I have that new day to refresh and revitalize myself. Fortunately each day is a new and beautiful chance to start over. The sun comes up and the plants respond and so do I. If they didn’t get enough water or I didn’t get enough vitamins I have that new day to refresh and revitalize them and myself.

- Tom C
When I introduce myself in an AA meeting I say, “I’m grateful to be an alcoholic.” I say that because as I entered adulthood over 60 years ago, I was a fearful young man who didn’t seem to have received the instruction book for living. I started drinking alcoholicly when I was 20, which calmed my fears and gave me the courage to go on. So, I was grateful to have found alcohol - at first.

But within a decade I was a drunken suicidal mess who was dragged to his first AA meeting after a nearly successful suicide attempt. But, I was not yet ready to stop drinking and it was another dozen miserable years before I finally managed to clean up the past through AA steps 4 through 9, and find a program of action.

Some AA members may go for years without being tempted to drink, but most of us have only a daily reprieve. If we stray from the daily spiritual and practical support the program gives us we may eventually be tempted to stray.

This happened to me after 19 years of sobriety. Why? Well, I was going to very few meetings, and not doing any service. It took a terrible seven years in and out of AA to re-find what I had so easily given up.

I now have 21 years, but this is only because I have come back to the program and take daily steps to renew my faith, monitor my daily behavior through frequent “spot-check inventories,” and try to be of service.

Yes, I am truly grateful to be an alcoholic.

- George S.
Although it was a beautiful spring day, on March 9, 1989, I was too confused and afraid to understand my problem. However, after listening to my sister tell me how terrible I looked, and ask me what happened to all of my jewelry and to look myself in the mirror. I realize something was definitely wrong with me, I just didn’t know what. I felt empty inside, and I was lost. A fear came over me and I began to accept, I needed help and soon.

Not realizing at the time, I had surrendered, I walked into an A.A. meeting where I met the most caring people I have ever met in my life. I say this because my perception had changed. I sponged up all the hugs and smiles. These people had a look in their eyes I had never noticed. Their eyes were clear, and they stood with dignity and, yet the heartfelt tone from their voices is what captured my desire to “Keep Coming Back”.

As years have passed, I learned to become a good listener. I celebrated my 30 years in sobriety, and through this journey, I have experienced much of what the non-alcoholic experiences, the loss of loved ones and togetherness in marriage, on March 11, my husband and I celebrated 13 years. I could never pass 13 months with anyone, however thus we grow. I stand now with others who love this way of life and I have learned to keep it simple, and “Easy Does It”.

- Carolyn E
It seems that many elements are needed to lay the foundation for a sound and enduring recovery from alcoholism and addiction.

Although I don’t assign them Scriptural weight, the literature of the Fellowship has had a major influence on my sobriety, particularly the stories, which acutely reflected my own dilemmas and my own anguish, and which gave me genuine reason to hope.

Sponsorship, likewise, was critical to my recovery. I did not seek a personal dictator who would relieve me of the need to make decisions, simply a friend who had crossed the desert before me and returned with wisdom and knowledge of the terrain.

And, of course, the Steps. As an atheist and humanist, I had to re-write them, and make no apologies for that. I also make no pretense that my life as a recovering alcoholic would have been at all possible without self-examination, the letting-go of secrets, a determined effort to mend what needed mending, and a deep desire to see a generous spirit replace self-centered fear as the driving force of my life.

All these things matter, but in the course of 31 years of sobriety, it is meetings that have mattered most to me. Meetings ended my terrible isolation. They allowed me to stand up and say “I am an alcoholic” to people who understood what that meant. At meetings, I made friends – fellow alcoholics who spoke from the heart. With great courage, they shared with me their stories of devastation, shame and estrangement. They also spoke to me of recovery, reconciliation and hope. They have revealed to me the power of human compassion.

Meetings have shown me that I am not alone after all, and that has made the greatest difference to my recovery and to my life.

- Tim M.
I have been in AA for a number of years now, and I have been lucky. It would take hours and hours and thousands of words to tell you all the details, but I think that what has made the difference for me is the good luck, and good sense, to listen to the rest of you, to use the fellowship as my higher power, this “Group Of Drunks” dispensing “Good Orderly Direction.”

I am not a religious guy, but simply doing as you suggested, a task at a time, without thinking much about it or making a big deal of it, has led to thirty years of sobriety and an amazing sense of peace; the kind of peace that I drank to achieve but failed to attain.

I was at a meeting the other day, and we were reading from As Bill Sees It. The passage we were reading began with the following: “Moments of perception can build into a lifetime of spiritual serenity….” It occurred to me that the phrase summarizes my sober life as well as any other.

Mostly, my life has been about the tasks of daily life. I get up, I go to work, I have good days and bad days, and I do the things you, the fellowship, have taught me to do on a daily basis. To be completely honest, I am not sure that any single inventory, or meeting, or gratitude list has made me feel that much better at the time I did it. The effect for me has been cumulative, and the pace glacial. But once in a while, and without warning, I have a moment of clarity, of perception, during which everything that you have been telling me makes sense somehow in a whole new way. It is as if the 12 Steps have, over time, taken me.

- Rob A.
I used to think that sobriety meant a boring life where you just stay home all day, and that’s what I did. “No, I’m not gonna go out dancing, gotta stay home.” “Cool party you say?” “Nah, I’m sober now, gotta stay home.” I figured by staying inside in my new sobriety I’ll be safe from alcohol. This is what sober people do…stay home.

At two months sober, I was home cleaning my house for what felt like the millionth time and I had an epiphany. “Is this how I am going to live for the rest of my life?” “No. No, I’m going to live.” Thinking of new activities to do was surprisingly hard at first. I got numbers in meetings and did fellowship with members. Coffee and late night restaurants turned into sober karaoke and board game nights. It was great to finally be out and about in the city.

I then started thinking about all the activities I said I did on my online dating profile that I said I did – but didn’t really. Those were my interests that I gave up with alcohol, and now that I am not drinking I can get back into them. I picked up a camera and began rediscovery my passion for photography. With a clear head, I was able to walk around my neighborhood and look at life in different ways through my photo lens.

As I was getting more into photography, I started thinking of other neighborhoods and cities to explore. I began booking trips – sober trips – to other parts of the state and country. I was beginning to see why I became sober, to live and to live with passion and excitement. At the same time I was rediscovering photography I made bold new hobbies: snowboarding, hip hop dancing, tennis, and learning how to have great conversations with other human beings. If I can say anything it would be get out and do something, cuz’ life is ready for you! Follow your passions and do them!

- Joel L.
Before I quit drinking, I tried everything to “help myself”: therapy, church, silent retreats, diets, exercise, psychics, healers, changing jobs, changing states, changing boyfriends. You name it, I had tried it, but none of it worked long term. I was changing my outsides to fix my insides. I told myself I wasn’t an alcoholic, and that I’d prove it by quitting on my own. In the following months of not drinking, strong cravings continued and I had a series of vivid, disturbing drinking dreams. I kept waiting to feel better, but I only felt worse. I was suffering from alcoholism and didn’t know it. At 11 months without a drink, life only got darker and more depressing. Why didn’t I feel better? I wondered. I’d hit an emotional bottom.

Then, an Al-Anon friend offered to take me to an AA meeting. I was desperate and I went, but nothing much happened. The next night, I found myself going to another meeting - and alone this time. During the group share I raised my hand and asked for help and burst into tears. Let me tell you, if you ask for help an AA meeting, you’ll get it! My life changed from that point on. I got a sponsor, took direction, worked the steps, went to several meetings a week, took commitments, and started being of service. And it worked! I felt immediate relief. I started to learn all about alcoholism, and how to treat it from day to day and I get a daily reprieve from emotional bottoms. Today, I have a loving God, and the program of AA to carry me through! I have been sober for a little over 3 years now, and I am so grateful to know what it means to live, Happy, Joyous, and Free!

- Julie M.
Randy’s Story

I was born and raised in Austin, Texas, to a loving family, the youngest of three boys. Austin, besides its great music and the LBJ Library, is also the home to drive through liquor stores, Lone Star Beer and open container laws. I’m pretty sure I was born feeling awkward and afraid of people. So, by the time I was 15 drinking alcohol became my go-to social lubricant. Beer-busts in the woods and Friday night six-packs escalated to black-out drinking, wrecking cars and jail time for public intoxication. And all accompanied by massive hangovers, shame and confusion. A move to New York after college allowed me to ‘come out,’ obsess about men and drink even more. After all, the best thing about NYC for an alcoholic is its subway system and not having to drive.

But then a move to LA brought that dreaded and inevitable DUI and more jail time. My DUI class instructor told me that he believed I was a ‘full blown alcoholic,’ and for the first time in my life I actually heard it. That was June 11, 1995 and I haven’t had to have a drink since.

I was 40 when I got to AA and kept thinking, “I’m too old for this.” Court mandated meetings evolved into more meetings where I found my first sponsor and the many AA commitments he imposed on his sponsees. Thank God. Setting up meetings, greeting, cleaning up afterwards and answering phones at Central Office allowed me to feel less afraid and more a-part-of. Eventually great AA friendships were forged. Step work was completed and started over. Life changes happened and kept happening. “Maybe I’m not too old for this after all!”

Thanks to AA, I am thriving in a new career. I have a new sponsor who is showing me how to deepen my spiritual experience. I have sponsees who keep me young and working the steps. I still have commitments and facilitate an AA Retreat every Thanksgiving. As they say, “I came for the drink and stayed for the think.” AA has been the answer for me and I will always be grateful for that.

- Randy S.
Cindy’s Story

My name is Cindy and I am an Alcoholic. My sobriety date is September 23, 2010. As a child, I always wanted to fit in. I didn’t fit in with my family, church, or at school. As a child I just wanted to be liked. Being teased and bullied at school was painful. I qualified for a drink way before I took my first one.

Also being a Transgender on the inside, didn’t make it any easier. My first drink was around the age of 16, and the taste was horrible. It burned going down, but when it hit my stomach I didn’t care if I fit in or was liked. I would enhance my drinking with other substances that would make it ok for me to prostitute myself, go through countless incarcerations, and other dangerous situations.

My last 24 hours of drinking I felt that loneliness that only another alcoholic can feel. I felt empty, miserable, dirty, tired and completely hopeless and I remember saying that prayer that most of us say before we come into the rooms, “God take control of my life.”

God answered my prayer, but not the way I expected. I went to jail again. When I got out I went to a nearby Alano club and got on the waiting list for a treatment facility. Getting sober I realized my addiction had beaten me into willingness. Willingness meant that I needed to do whatever was needed to stay sober. I got a home group, a sponsor, and started working the steps, and my life is completely different. I am able to live in my own brand of dignity with my head held high in society. Recovery taught me how to love myself again. I learned how to suit up and show up, even when I didn’t want to. Today I have found the true meaning of serenity and for that I am truly grateful.

My name is Cindy, and I am an Alcoholic.
“A.A. must and will continue to change with the passing years. We cannot, nor should we, turn back the clock. However, I deeply believe that the principle of anonymity must remain our primary and enduring safeguard.”

- Bill W. 1970
AUGUST 30–SEPTEMBER 2, 2019

35TH SOUTHBAY FAMILY ROUNDPUP

TORRANCE MARRIOTT SOUTH BAY
3635 Fashion Way
Torrance, CA 90503

Questions?
Would you like to be of service?
Call our Roundup Hotline:
(310) 354-7660
Or visit our Roundup Website:
SouthBayRoundup.org

SCHEDULE AT A GLANCE

Friday, August 30
Opening Ceremonies
AA Speaker Meeting
Marathon Meetings Begin
Funtastic Friday Comedy Show

Saturday, August 31
Al-Anon Luncheon
Women’s Speaker Meeting
Interview with a Drunk
Banquet, Show & Meeting
Young People Dance

Sunday, September 1
Poker Run
Family Breakfast & Speaker Meeting
AA Longtimers Meeting
Al-Anon Longtimers Tea
AA Biker Speaker Meeting
AA Musicians Speaker Meeting
Vegas Night

Monday, September 2
Birthday Meeting
Closing Ceremonies
AA Speaker Meeting

PLUS! AA Archives & Memorabilia | Alateen | AA & Al-Anon Marathon Meetings | Live Music | Other Entertainment All Weekend | Special Workshops | Veteran’s Meeting
Getting Involved

Volunteering at 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.

Become the C.S.R. for Your Group!

- Bring Central Office News To Your Home Group
- Attend your local CSR meeting
- Check 'service tab' at lacoaa.org

Central Service Committee

- 2nd Thursday of the month (other than Intergroup months)
- 7pm - 10pm
- 4311 Wilshire Bl. #104 LA, 90005

Directory Committee

- Direct AAs to meetings
- Check the events' page on our website: lacoaa.org

Literature Committee

- Reading Matters
- Check the 'events' page on our website: lacoaa.org

Policies & Procedures Committee

- The Traditions at Work
- Check the 'events' page on our website: lacoaa.org

Public Information Committee

- Reach Out To the Community
- Check the 'events' page on our website: lacoaa.org

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