



Al-A-Gram

Area 48 Area World Service Conference

October, 2015
Inaugural Issue



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Inside this issue:

Report	1-2
A Bit of History.	1,5
Robin's Service Story.	2
Scott's Service Story.	4
Submission Info.	6

A Bit of History

Al-Anon is almost as old as Alcoholics Anonymous (AA). Al-Anon was started by Lois W., wife of AA co-founder Bill W., and Anne B., a close friend of Lois! In the formative years of AA, the wives and relatives of AA's realized that they too could improve their lives by applying the spiritual principles of AA.

Cont. Page 5

Al-a-gram Coordinators' Report

Welcome to the new and (we hope) improved Al-A-Gram! Since you're new to us, and we're new to you, we felt that some introductions were in order. Our service stories are also in this issue, so we won't re-tell them here, but we would like to tell you how we got from a workshop at the convention to what you're looking at right now.

We met at a workshop that Robin led. Afterwards, we started talking and somehow, the conversation turned to the Al-A-Gram, and specifically, that we both were thinking about becoming the coordinator. Robin's background is in communication and journalism and Scott's is in web design and development, so it seemed natural that we work together. We also have a committee of district representatives who we will be working with, as well.

This is a learning experience for both of us. We know there are expectations that have to be met, and we will do our best to meet them. But at the end of the day, Al-Anon is a we program that relies on service. And we want to hear about it. Have a funny story about service work? We want to hear it. Did you learn something that you found yourself doing outside of Al-Anon? Tell us. Do you use the Traditions and Concepts in your program? Share that with us. (Information on how to submit is elsewhere in this issue.) Think of the Al-A-Gram as a meeting where the lights are

always on, and the topic is always service.

And, of course, creative endeavors are always welcome! If you're an artist, photographer, poet, jokester, show us your work! If we can use it, we will.

We're really excited about doing this, and we're really excited to hear from you.

Yours In service,

Robin C. and Scott G.

Al-A-Gram Co-Coordinator



Robin C's Service Story (Al-A-Gram Co-Coordinator)

When I got to Al-Anon, I was broken. My alcoholic loved one was going through rehab at a hospital about an hour away, and I had had enough of the stress that comes from feeling that I had to do everything by myself. My aunt, who is active in Al-Anon in California, and my son's school counselor told me about Al-Anon, but I wasn't ready to accept that I needed help. My character defects were many. I couldn't say no, I couldn't trust people, and I couldn't ask for help.

I went to the PA Al-Anon website and found a meeting in my town that met that night. I dropped my son off at his grandparents' and went to the meeting. The room was full of people who were laughing. I wasn't; I

spent the first six weeks or so crying at every meeting. But I kept coming back.

It turns out that the group - which became my home group - is very service-minded. I was encouraged to get involved in service from the start, and since I wanted what these people had, I was willing to do whatever needed to be done. I got involved in public outreach through Sandy K., the Panel 53 Public Outreach Coordinator. This taught me about the Traditions, especially the ones having to do with anonymity and the concept of "attraction rather than promotion". I stuffed envelopes with Ruth W., the Al-A-Gram Coordinator. Envelope-stuffing taught me a lot of things. that mass mailings are a

pain; that even a tedious task like envelope stuffing can be fun with the right people; and that it's okay to open up and talk to people.

Envelope stuffing and public outreach turned into becoming the group rep and my first Assembly. I learned that Al-Anon is a big program, and I made friends from all over the state. I also learned that the group is capable of making its own decisions; that I only represent the group, not manage or control it. Unfortunately, I had to step down because I took a second-shift job that wouldn't allow me to attend my regular home group, let alone district meetings. But once I was able to return to the day shift, I resumed service at the group level, becoming the alternate group rep for another meeting I attended regularly.

I take my program very seriously and look forward to opportunities to meet new people and learn new things. I have attended every convention since I came into the rooms, and I usually make the moving meditation sessions. One year, I ended up on the yoga mat next to Maureen S., the convention co-chair. I told her that I would love to be involved in the next year's convention, and I gave her my email and phone number. She took me up on that offer, and she asked me to be the registration chair. I said yes. It was a crazy few months, but once again, I learned a lot of things. I'm doing it again next year, but this time, I've got a co-chair and a committee.

I did a workshop at the Convention on service. Scott G., the other Al-A-Gram coordinator, was in that workshop. We started talking about the Al-A-Gram and the rest, as they say, is history.

So why do I do all of this? The reason is simple. Service is the rent I pay for the life I have today, and it's a good life thanks to Al-Anon. Through service, I have learned to say no, to have healthy boundaries, to disagree without being disagreeable, and to ask for help. I've given up the need to control. I've gotten a ton of self-confidence and some new tech skills. And I've gotten to meet a lot of awesome people and become close friends with some. I wouldn't trade any of this for love or money. △



Scott G's Service Story (Al-A-Gram Co-Coordinator)

I was at the bottom; my life felt like it had been completely destroyed. I was willing to try anything. When I landed in my first Al-Anon meeting, I didn't know what to expect. I showed up to a room of lovely older women who seemed to have a plan for dealing with the ups and downs of living with an alcoholic. Confused and suffering from a near complete emotional breakdown, I sat there and listened. To this day about the only thing I remember hearing was "you're in the right place, keep coming back."

So I did. I tried a few other meetings and eventually found one that felt right for me. I attended regularly and came to look forward to the clarity and serenity I felt during the meeting. Regular members of the group asked me to help with some basic things, make some coffee, put out the literature, put the coffee away. I was a bit shocked when one of the long time members dropped the "book" in front of me one night and said "why don't you chair tonight's meeting?"

I chaired that meeting, and I realized that we aren't just members of the meeting, we ARE the meetings. Without people to unlock the door, chair the meeting, make the coffee, attend to the group's finances and to be the group rep, there wouldn't be a meeting. The thought of no Al-Anon was scary to me as I felt by then that it was literally saving my life. A few weeks later I had the key and spent

the next few years as the key for that meeting.

As time went by, my feeling of gratitude to Al-Anon led me to say YES to service. I said yes, whenever I could. No is a complete sentence, but it's not always the right one. I said yes because I wanted to, I said yes even when I was afraid to, and yes, I even said yes sometimes when perhaps I should have said no. All of these were opportunities for me to learn and grow in my program. It wasn't long before I was a GR, and then I found a whole new level of service opportunities at the District level. I found I loved being a part of the broader Al-Anon program. Soon I was the web coordinator for the district website, volunteering for panels at our workshop, and was even selected as an alternate DR. I've done public outreach at a local rehab center, and cooked hot dogs at the district picnic. This year, my HP wanted me to serve at the area level, and now I'm co-editing the Al-A-Gram and a member of the website committee. If you ever want to find your way into service just sit next to the Area Delegate at lunch; it works every time.

Some of the most amazing gifts Al-Anon has given me were delivered on a silver platter of service. I learned that I could ask for help; that failure and mistakes are part of being human; that I can make a difference. I made new friends and found myself in new and interesting places with people who had

decades of experience strength and hope to share with me. I learned just how much this program means to me, and feel great satisfaction knowing I am doing what I can to ensure that it survives to support me and

the others like me who will need it tomorrow. I encourage everyone to open your hearts to the opportunities to serve in Al-Anon, I believe your efforts will be rewarded ten fold, as mine have been. △

A Brief History of Al-Anon

Continued from Page One

While the AA's were attending their meetings, their loved ones often waited in their cars. Soon they started to come in from the cold and hold their own meetings to discuss their own common problems, while the AA's were at their meeting.

By 1948 a number of these family groups applied to the A.A. General Service Office to be listed in the A.A. Meeting Directory. Because of AA's singleness of purpose, these groups could not be included in the directory.

In 1951, Lois and Anne, created a Clearing House Committee to service 87 inquirers and to coordinate and serve them. Through this effort, 56 groups responded. They chose the name of their groups from the first syllables of "Alcoholics Anonymous" and they adopted the name Al-Anon Family Groups. They adopted the Twelve Steps of AA and later the Twelve Traditions, in the slightly modified form we know today. △

Source: 2006-2009 Al-Anon/Alateen Service Manual



Sign Up for the Al-A-Gram
 Keep up with PA Area 48 events and service . get the Al-A-Gram in your inbox!

Email Address *

 First Name

Sign Up to Receive the Al-A-Gram

The Al-A-Gram is available to all members by signing up on our website.

It's easy just:

- Visit **pa-alagram.com**
- Enter your Email and First Name in the sign up form.

How to Submit Material to the Al-A-Gram

The Al-A-Gram welcomes your submissions!

We especially want:

- Stories about personal recovery through service.
- News about upcoming events in your district.
- Original photography. In keeping with the spiritual principle of anonymity, please do not identify individuals by name or whether they are members of 12 -Step fellowships.
- Because we are a service arm of Al-Anon Family Groups, we adhere to the Steps, Traditions and Concepts. Service stories should be written in first person

("I" and "me," not "you") and focus on the Al-Anon member, not on the alcoholic or other people. The Al-A-Gram coordinators reserve the right to edit stories for language, but we will leave the essential message intact. ▲

Submissions may sent to:

E-mail:

area48alagram@gmail.com

or by mail to:

**Robin C.
 PO Box 1028
 Carlisle, PA 17013**



Please share this information with your group.