



Chair's Chatter November 2011

As I have been reflecting on the past year for Region 8 and myself I see a lot of growth and emergence

As a region we have extended the hand & heart of OA in Baton Rouge and Memphis. (These cities are in the 5th and 3rd fattest states in the US) and into Colombia, Ecuador and Venezuela as well. We are preparing for an historic SOAR 8 Assembly and Recovery Convention outside the US in Medellin Colombia.

Region 8 is thriving as we are using face to face contact as well as emerging technologies to help carry the message to areas which are underserved or struggling with abstinence. We've had a teleconference Traditions Workshop and used the internet to lead meetings in Ecuador. Our Trustee, Board members and Committee Chairs have done many workshops focusing on abstinence, strong meetings, service, traditions & concepts throughout our region. (If you would like our support we are here to serve you! Contact the Trustee or Chair at r8trustee@aol.com or chair@oaregion8.org)

You are an important part of this work. I am proud to see Region 8 going the extra mile. We contribute a little more, travel and share our recovery a little more often, prepare extra reports to share what we've learned, use technology more often to reach further with the message that re-

covery is possible for anyone, and most importantly we stay abstinent at a healthy body weight to demonstrate that the 12 Steps of Overeaters Anonymous work.

On a personal level this last year (or two) has been phenomenal. I feel a sense of sane and happy usefulness. You have allowed me to chair 5 Assemblies, represent you at 2 WSBCs and have input on the Strategic Plan for OA. You have even asked me to carry the message outside the US in Bogota, Caracas & San Cristobal and now to Medellin. Being a trusted servant of Region 8 has been my pleasure and my honor. When I gave my presentation before

the election in November 2009 I recall thinking "I wonder what God's will is". I shared with you my vision for Re-

gion 8 which was to continue promote Abstinence, have at least one Assembly in a struggling or underserved area of Region 8 and have an

Assembly outside the continental United States within 5 years. You agreed. Thank you for this wonderful opportunity to be a part of Region 8.

Your blessed and highly favored Chair,
stephanie...action is the magic word...d



Throw LIFELINE a lifeline!

Do you get Lifeline Magazine? Well, it is in a real money-loss situation. It has never been profitable. We continue it's production because it is such a great way to carry the message. Many of us have both a regular and an electronic subscription.



I like the paper copy, because I can donate my read-copies to my doctor's office. I stick them in his magazine rack, after I write "Free - take one" on the front cover.

I also love the electronic copy because it comes to me, no matter where I am. Presently we are traveling in our motor home. Yesterday I read my hot-off-the-press Sept/Oct issue online! My paper copy will be at home waiting for me.

I want to make two challenges to our region ...

If you do not get Lifeline, please order your subscription today. <http://www.oa.org/lifeline-magazine/subscribe.php>. A year's subscription is only \$23, and there are discounts for multiple years.

If you feel like you cannot afford that, try the online version, a real bargain at \$13 - two years is \$26!

<http://www.oa.org/lifeline-magazine/subscribe-e-lifeline.php>

And if you get the online subscription, you'll get the lifeline weekly's every week too, delivered right to your email address.

Now, my second challenge is this - do service by becoming a Lifeline rep at your home meeting. It's really easy.

Throw a lifeline to your group: become a Lifeline Rep!

Lifeline reps fill a vital service position by sharing with their group their enthusiasm for Lifeline and the stories of how Lifeline has contributed to the recovery of so many OA members. A Lifeline rep takes subscription orders, collects the subscription funds, and sends the orders and funds to the World Service Office.

Reps receive bonuses for the number of subscriptions they generate, which could range from a free copy of Voices of Recovery to a subscription to Lifeline magazine to a OA-bookstore gift certificate. Lifeline reps not only support the recovery of members who subscribe, they also support OA as a whole by helping Lifeline magazine become self-supporting.

To become a Lifeline Rep, send your request to info@oa.org and put "Lifeline Rep" in the subject line. You can also call 505-891-2664, or write to Lifeline, PO Box 44020, Rio Rancho, NM 87174 USA. You can also download a flyer to promote the Lifeline Rep program within your group

And if your meeting doesn't have one, You can order a FREE Lifeline table display for your meeting.

Support Lifeline with a Tabletop Display

This Lifeline Tabletop Display includes complete instructions and two sheets to insert in a display of your choosing to place on a table at OA meetings and events.

Region 8 always rallies. We are the very best region of them all - I have no doubt about that. Let's prove to the other regions that we can step up to the plate and insure that Lifeline continues and even flourishes.

If you decide to become a Lifeline Rep, please let me know. I'd like to track our progress.

Go TEAM SOAR 8! We are better than GREAT!

Thank you for reading all the way to the bottom.

Blessings,
Gerri .

Gerri Helms
Humbly serving as Region 8 & Virtual Services Trustee
Abstinent since 05/15/93 maintaining a 100 lb weight loss

"Free, Take it Home with You"

I love getting my Lifeline Magazine. It's not too expensive (\$23 for a paper subscription) - cost much less for a year of ESH than one of my cheaper binges! When I have a doctor's appointment, I drop off any old issues I have on hand. I write "Free, Take it Home with You" on the cover and contact info for our local meetings on the back. It's a great way to do 12th step work.

I like the electronic (I have both subscriptions) too, because I can look things up, and quote from it pretty quickly. It gives me great references to share with sponsees, tell them where to look up things that may pertain to a particular step or tool that they're struggling with.

Please go to the OA website, www.oa.org/lifeline and sign up for your very own subscriptions. It will be the best money you can spend on yourself. You are worth it, as are all the people that you share your magazines with. 'Tis 12th step work at it's finest.

Does your group have a lifeline rep? Lifeline reps fill a vital service position by sharing with their group their enthusiasm for Lifeline and the stories of how Lifeline has contributed to the recovery of so many OA members. A Lifeline rep takes subscription orders, collects the subscrip-

tion funds, and sends the orders and funds to the World Service Office. Reps receive bonuses for the number of subscriptions they generate, which could range from a free copy of Voices of Recovery to a subscription to Lifeline magazine to a OA-bookstore gift certificate. Lifeline reps not only support the recovery of members who subscribe, they also support OA as a whole by helping Lifeline magazine become self-supporting.

Thank you for supporting OA in this wonderful, 12th step way! Our goal this year is for Lifeline to become self supporting. We at Region 8 can collectively make a difference by purchasing our own subscriptions. They make great gifts too! I frequently get subscriptions for sponsees and OA friends!

If you would like to be a lifeline rep, please get in touch with me. Your group can earn free literature! And if you sign up for a subscription, please list me as your lifeline rep, if your group does not have a lifeline rep!

Blessings,
Gerri .

Gerri Helms
Humbly serving as Region 8 & Virtual Services Trustee
Abstinent since 05/15/93 maintaining a 100 lb weight loss

The Tool of Service

When I first became a rep from my Inter-group for the Region 8 assemblies I thought it meant I got to go to recovery meetings and report back what I learned. I was half right. I was kept too busy to attend a recovery meeting but I did get to learn about Region 8, service and the 12 traditions. I also received a great gift for my recovery journey: a reason to stay abstinent even when the squirrels were rattling around in my head and the first bite seemed imminent.

Service in Region 8 has given the tool of service a different perspective.

We can all give service at any time: keep the key to open the door, set up chairs, sell literature, greet newcomers. . . . Service does not require abstinence and service can help you get abstinent. Then there are service positions at the region and world service levels which require a continuous term of abstinence. As described by OA, *"Abstinence in Overeaters Anonymous is the action of refraining from compulsive eating and compulsive food behaviors while working towards or maintaining a healthy body weight. Spiritual, emotional and physical recovery is the result of living the Overeaters Anonymous*

Twelve-Step program."

My outsides and insides have to match the definition of abstinence. I loved giving service as a rep and did not want to give that up for a binge. I could not give service as a Rep to Region 8 if I was still stuffing my face with food. I could not be Secretary of Region 8 and still gain weight or stay at an unhealthy body size.

There are days when my brain is clear and abnormal food thoughts are as far away from me as Medellin is from Maine. Then there are days when sneaky food thoughts try to invade my serenity. A commitment to service and giving service in a position that requires a commitment to abstinence has gotten me past some of those food thoughts with my serenity and abstinence intact. Even when I am no longer in a service position that requires I maintain my abstinence I will always want to give service by leading a meeting, speaking with newcomers and doing whatever needs to be done because service gives me sanity.

Jane C.
Region 8 Secretary

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Message from the Trustee – Reading Aloud from Literature during OA Meetings

OA's group conscience has decided that we should only read from OA approved literature at our meetings. That includes both OA Conference- and Board-approved and AA conference-approved literature. Although OA has not reviewed and approved AA literature, we deem that their group conscience approved of the content of that literature. When we read AA literature and change the words, no one has approved that literature – neither OA nor AA.

When OA was founded, we asked permission from AA to modify their Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions for our use in OA, and they graciously granted that permission. However, that is the only thing that we have the authority to change. When OA first began, we had no literature of our own, and we used AA's Big Book and Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions. We commonly changed the words when reading aloud from the literature during meetings to better understand how the concepts of the AA program could apply to compulsive eating.

AA World Service asks that we respect their literature and their group conscience by reading their literature, such as the Big Book, as written, without changing the words. AA also asks that we read excerpts from their literature in context, which means to read it from the actual literature as printed, and not from a typed sheet of paper. Of course, when we share in meetings about the passages we read, we are free to share our experience, strength and hope in our own terms related to compulsive eating. If we want to read only literature that uses terms related to food and compulsive eating, we have a wealth of OA literature to choose from which doesn't require changing the words.

It is also a common practice to change the words of OA's Twelve Steps when reading them aloud at meetings. People replace "God" with "Higher Power", replace "him" with gender-neutral terms, and add "we" at the beginning of all the steps. When we make those changes, we are amending the Steps. Our OA, Inc. Bylaws, Subpart B, Article XIV, Section 1 very clearly spell out the amendment process. Amendments to the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions must be adopted by 2/3 of the delegates at the World Service Business Conference, and that vote must be ratified by three-fourths of the registered Overeaters Anonymous groups responding within six months of notification, provided at least fifty-five percent of the registered groups have responded. It is clear that no individual member, group or OA service body can amend the Twelve Steps or Twelve Traditions themselves because they "belong" to all of us.

One could argue that Tradition Four allows each group to do what it wants, as long as it doesn't affect other groups or OA as a whole. True, but we also have Tradition One: "Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends on OA unity". We have Tradition Two: "For our group purpose there is but one ultimate authority – a loving God as He may express Himself in our group conscience. Our leaders are but trusted servants; they do not govern". Concept Two states, in part, "World Service Business Conference is the voice, authority and effective conscience of OA as a whole".

When I insist upon changing the wording of OA or AA literature to suit myself, I am displaying the same selfishness and self-will that landed me in OA in the first place! As one trustee wrote: "From my vantage point and experiences, there is a tendency to mold the OA Program of Recovery to the molds of individual members & their ways of doing things. I am reminded, if my way worked, I would not be in OA or need to be. Obviously, my way did not work. So I am quite willing to work on changing me, which is a challenge, and not try to revamp OA or AA suitable to me. When a physician gives me a prescription for treatment of an illness, I am well advised not to make any attempts to rewrite it." If I believe OA's literature needs to be amended, I am encouraged to participate in our collective group conscience by serving as a delegate to the World Service Business Conference. Failing that, I am committed to respecting the group conscience of both OA and AA by reading the literature as it is written, from the original source, without any creative editing on my part.

Blessings,

Gerri Helms

Humbly serving as Region 8 & Virtual Services Trustee

Abstinent since 05/15/93 maintaining a 100 lb weight loss

Crystal Clear Boundaries

Someone suggested to me recently if an addict still had occasional food cravings, that it reflected a spiritual problem. As if having a craving was a sign that there was something wrong with them.

I've been in program for over twenty years now, abstinent for fifteen, and I still experience twinges, impulses, notions, enticements or even an occasional dream telling me that it's OK to eat compulsively.

I choose to believe that my urges and desires were given to me by God specifically to tempt me – so that I could choose to do the right thing – in order to be closer to Him. The way I see it, they're kind of like a perpetual personal trainer designed to keep me spiritually fit.

At this point, I think HP wired me this way because, in order for me to preserve this beautiful life that I have today, I was going to need a lot of motivation to seek His help. Every time I experience a temptation, it is really a personalized invitation from Him to choose the right thing again...and reinforce that my abstinence is a gift, never to be taken for granted.

I've read that angels are said to have no free will. They simply do the right thing BECAUSE it's the right thing. Man was given an ability to choose right or wrong so that he could transcend his physicality – to become like an angel, and enjoy the ultimate human experience – to be closer to his creator and the source of his grace.

It is the ability to seek help to overcome adversity that makes an addict a special creature.

To resist and overcome (with help) the well-grooved habit of relief-seeking is a hard-earned capability.

I still occasionally watch the clock in anticipation of my next meal. Often, I'll just make a cup of tea and busy myself so as not to be distracted by my hunger. Or if I'm at a restaurant where they serve me a larger portion than I

usually have, I'll cut off what is not mine and let it sit there. Sometimes it calls me a bit, and I marvel that knowing what I know, my mind is still selling the same old song – “Go ahead, eat it – what's the harm?” My mind still feeds me misinformation, even now.

I must understand and accept that in order to live a spiritually centered life, I must be vigilant, and mindful that the life I have is fragile and must be guarded by remembering what I was like before.

So I continue to work an, honest, structured OA program, with crystal clear boundaries around what too much food is, what is too little, and what just enough is to maintain my goal

weight, the physical standard by which I can chart my measurable progress, as it says in our Action Plan.

So being abstinent isn't a promise that you'll never experience an urge or desire to do something harmful to yourself. It's the RESULT of learning about how and why we ate destructively, what the consequences were, and aligning our attitudes and actions so that we don't have to do it anymore.

I used to think that pain was inevitable but suffering was optional. But many of us hurt ourselves so often that suffering was the only avenue left for our Higher Power to get our undivided attention.

If we can remember that pain – we'll have something valuable to help steer us in the right direction.

Neil R. (Baltimore, MD)

CROSSING THE LINE



DOES THIS COUNT..?

Amends and Forgiveness

In one of my meetings in September, we were asked to write and then share our responses to one or more questions from the *Twelve Step Workbook* regarding step nine (p. 63 –72). I chose question five (p. 65), “What is the purpose of step nine?” I had originally completed my first step nine amends in the year I joined OA in 2005, but I had not fully answered all of the questions in the Workbook. So this time, I began to look carefully at what the completion of step nine has meant for me, and continues to mean to me as I try to practice the Twelve-Step Principles in all my affairs.

Step nine meant to me that I could now take action to finally make amends, apologies, changes in my behavior to those that I had harmed or wronged in the past. In steps four and five, I had looked very carefully at the wrongs I had done to others and had admitted those wrongs to myself, to God, and to my sponsor. But in the religious traditions of my youth, I had learned that God only forgives those wrongs (or sins) committed against Him. “Sins” I committed against my fellow man could only be forgiven by the person I had wronged.

However, step nine (12 & 12, p. 77) tells me that, “(Others) don’t owe us forgiveness, and we don’t need it to complete step nine and recover from compulsive eating.” It only matters that I have made an honest effort to apologize for my wrongs and to “amend” or change my behavior toward that person. Only then can my conscience be cleared of old guilt.

When I walked into the rooms at 313 lbs in May of 2006, I had no idea why I ate like I did. However, I learned in the rooms that I ate to hide from fears, guilt, and resentments. By truly apologizing and making amends to those I harmed, I found I no longer needed to hide from that shame and guilt by using food.

I believe now that if I make honest and thorough amends, God will forgive me for my wrongs. I will be washed clean and be ready to face life, without old guilts haunting me and without the need to eat compulsively.

Did it work for me? Well, here I am, nearly 5 and ½ years later, maintaining a 145– 150 lb weight loss for more than three years. My life has completely changed, not only with respect to food, but with all areas of my life. The promises in the Big Book (p. 83 – 85) have come true for me. But I know they will continue to do so only if I continue working the steps on a daily basis, one day at a time.

Sander B.
Marietta, GA, USA

What Is the Prudent Reserve?

If you’ve ever attended a Region 8 Assembly or read an assembly packet, then you’re probably familiar with the words “Prudent Reserve”, and perhaps like me you’ve wondered exactly what it meant and why it was so important.

Now that I’ve been doing the treasurer’s job for about four months, I’ve become well acquainted with the term and its importance to the operation of the financial business of Region 8. I would like to take this opportunity to share what I’ve learned with you.

In preparation for the November assembly, the Ways & Means committee chair and I, with input from the board, are working together to prepare a proposed budget for the new fiscal year. The budget is voted on by the assembly in November.

We always plan a balanced budget, which means we project enough income to pay all of our projected expenses for the coming year. Or if we don’t anticipate enough income to cover all of our expenses, then we reduce the projected expenses until the numbers balance.

According to our bylaws (article IX, section 2) we are required to keep between 40% and 60% of our annual budget in reserve. Last year the annual budget was \$36,550; 40% of that would be \$14,600, and 60% would be \$21,900. A balance in our bank account somewhere between those two numbers would constitute a healthy reserve.

At the time of this writing, our bank balance is \$17,725.46, making our *prudent reserve* 49%.

In the coming year the Ways & Means committee is planning some fundraisers. In addition, a Special Appeal will go out to the membership after each assembly to help defer the costs associated with funding all of our board members and committee chairs to three assemblies. Reducing the number of assemblies each year from 3 to 2 is a motion being considered by the board and may be presented to the assembly next year.

Please think about that, and other ways in which Region 8 may be able to reduce expenses and increase contributions. Contact me at treasurer@oaregion8.org or 813-855-3239 if you have recommendations or questions about anything in this report.

Your trusted servant,
Patti Schumacher
Region 8 Treasurer

YOU ARE INVITED TO JOIN US AT REGION8 IN MEDELLIN



Via video conferencing (OOVVOO) at regional Viewing Sites.

The Board of Directors of Region 8 invites Intergroups or Meetings to setup an Area Viewing of the proceedings of the Business Conference and some Recovery Convention Speakers in Medellin Colombia September 4-6 2011. (a schedule will follow when available) We would love to have you join us Via the Internet.

Our goal is to set up a viewing location in each state in the region. The Techweb committee will assist you with the technical issues by providing a complete set of instructions and how to's

We need to start this process as soon as possible. See the attached instructions and ideas for set up attached.

Spoonful of recovery!

A Region 8 fund-raiser

Cucharada de recuperación!

Un recaudador de fondos de la Región 8



Adjustable measuring spoon
1 teaspoon to 1 tablespoon
1/2 tsp increments

Cuchara dosificadora ajustable
1 cucharadita a 1 cucharada
1/2 cucharadita de incrementos

Four colors: red, green, blue, purple
Cuatro colores: rojo, verde, azul, púrpura

Everyone needs 2 1 for wet and 1 for dry
Todo el mundo necesita un 2 por vía húmeda y seca de una

\$3.00 each, 2/\$5.00 USD

\$ 3.00 cada uno, 2/\$ 5.00 USD

See our display at the Medellin business assembly
Vea nuestra exhibicion en la Asamblea de Medellin

The Only Requirement For Membership

Many a member has said that if the requirements for membership to OA were more stringent than a “desire to stop eating”, they probably wouldn’t have felt qualified to be at a meeting.

Unfortunately, that unique requirement - the only requirement in our entire fellowship - is often used to avoid being “made” to do anything else in the program that makes them uncomfortable; like having a food plan, being accountable to a sponsor, working the steps, or reconciling that abstinence comes from continuous action, not just desire.

What is a desire?? A wish to obtain, like a child who wishes that she had a pony?

I desire to pay my bills, but if I’m not willing to earn enough money and then to make time to sit down and pay them, my desire is largely theoretical.

I desired a long-term stable relationship, but until I saw that my selfish behavior made it a virtual impossibility, I was destined for frustration and failure.

Desire is the beginning of a process, but desire alone will not accomplish very much in OA.

Desire assures that anyone who wants to can attend an OA meeting. I don’t believe it was intended to be the standard to which one aspires to attain abstinence, or to effectively fulfill our primary purpose, or to insure the continuing wellness of our beloved fellowship.

For six years, I slipped and slid. I’d get some abstinence, then become complacent and backslide. I’d “tighten my food up”, only to eventually renege on my new commitments over some temptation or another. I was alternately attracted to people with solid abstinence, or repelled by them as rigid perfectionists, singing the same old shrill song “I don’t eat no matter what”. They must have been cheating or lying, since NOBODY could possibly get and STAY abstinent. Such was the state of my willingness to act upon my feeble “desire”

Until I understood at a very deep personal level that I was different from people who ate what they wanted without hating themselves, my problem continued unabated.

When I accepted the spiritual consequences of my eating, and the totality of my absorption in it, I found the willingness to convert desire into action, and began to make progress. Today, after 10+ years of continuous abstinence, I sing the praises of physical recovery and service as a formula for keeping a willing OA member moving forward in recovery.

Desire stopped being the answer to my problem once I realized that recovery was about taking suggestions, commitment, principles, bottom lines, and personal integrity.

OA became an international entity because people sublimated their egos, undertook tasks that forced them outside of their comfort zones, and endured extremely powerful emotional challenges to emerge as beautiful butterflies from the cocoon of compulsive eating.

So the next time someone debates the relative merits of undertaking a difficult action to attain or maintain abstinence, ask them whether they desire to just be a member of OA, or if they desire to be a living example of the best that this program has to offer.

Without a diligent, daily effort, our recovery, and OA’s credibility, will suffer for it.

Neil R., Baltimore

