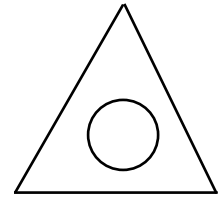


SCV AFG Intergroup Newsletter



<http://www.ncwsa.org/scvafg>

Santa Clara Valley Al-Anon Family Groups Intergroup Newsletter ~ December 2009

“Courage to be Me” Intergroup Special Event October 10, 2009

By Monica W.

What an event it was. I was moved by all of the speakers. Each speaker held an inner truth for me. Some things I thought about but dared not speak aloud. Larcine, the event speaker, blew my socks off. It was a feast not only for the stomach, but also for the mind and spirit.

Hearing Isaac's story, son of an addict/alcoholic, put into perspective how the disease of alcoholism affects our loved ones. He first compared and contrasted himself with his qualifier, his father. His father was a lively man--everyone wanted to be around him. However, Isaac had an introverted, soft-spoken and unassuming personality. But the person before me had a dry, but light sense of humor. He could also give a voice to feelings that before prevented him from connecting with loved ones. Life with his family of origin was chaotic at best. He would later distance himself from his family and his childhood, yet he experienced little peace. Dismal thoughts of writing his father's eulogy, in order to be prepared for his father's imminent death, plagued his mind. He was jealous of the happiness his sisters and mother experienced due to their participation in Al-Anon. It wasn't until after college and after his sisters and mother finally stopped bugging him, that he inquired further. It was only when he had tried everything to quiet the desperate and negative thoughts that he turned to his one final hope. Later on he would connect with his father to find out that his father had found recovery instead of death. Isaac also mentioned that he was raised agnostic. Yet he spoke of miracles. A bright and interesting young man unfolded before our eyes. What a treasure.

The disease of alcoholism: I hear about it in meetings. But I can barely see it in its entirety as it has affected me. The guest speaker from AA explained the agony of her alcoholism and its origins for her. As she told her story she spoke of the need for inner peace or some kind of relief from her pain. I think it was good to

have the alcoholic's perspective. I think as a non-alcoholic, I turn conversations to us and them. But this disease is an equal opportunity annihilator. It takes on all comers and destroys lives in its wake. She put this disease into perspective and spoke of the blessings of recovery. The humility and self-love tapped into my steely armor of indifference to the alcoholic.

Larcine, a petite, blond woman of 55 years, won our hearts. She has been in Al-Anon for years. She is the daughter of an alcoholic army sergeant, a role she admits to being born to. She spoke of her rules and lots of index cards for them. First rule: Never date a man who drinks. Second rule: Never lose a game. So when her future husband asked her to join a drinking game, she had to adapt her rules to the scenario. This was something she would skillfully do to a point beyond rationalization. When asked why she never divorced her husband, she would reply, “Never! That would mean he won!” Larcine also admits her husband's recovery, 30 years and counting, was hard for her at first. She had not let go of the responsible, angry army sergeant's daughter role. It was only when she had totally alienated her family that she had a moment of clarity. Larcine emphasized that the program only works if you are willing to make the effort to change--just a little bit. Hearing her story told me that I can make those changes, bit by bit. So, maybe the lists and index cards will still litter my desk, but soon they will contain messages of hope and gratitude.

There is Hope

By Arturo B.

Parts of my story are no different than anybody else's. I married an alcoholic. I thought I could make her stop drinking. When nothing I did worked, it drove me crazy. I was worse than her. I was angry, resentful, and full of self-pity. I blamed her for everything wrong in my life. I found Al-Anon when a marriage counselor told me I needed to go. I thought she was going to point the finger of blame at my wife and congratulate me for being Mr. Wonderful. Imagine the shock when she said I had to do

things differently. Me? I was the sober one, right? Wrong. I was addicted to control, to thinking that my way was the right way, to judging my wife and putting myself on a pedestal when I compared myself endlessly to her.

I did go to meetings (maybe not enough for a long time) and learned much about myself--how my low self-esteem caused me to make poor decisions about relationships, how I anchored my emotional and spiritual well-being to my wife's. But I also learned how to let go. I learned that it was OK to turn my life over to a Higher Power. Imagine that! Somebody else was going to guide my life and all I had to do was live it. What it boils down to is this profoundly simple concept: I can have a good life--one day at a time--even if my wife is still drinking. My life isn't perfect. I've got bills to pay. My wife's absence is affecting our six-year-old son, and he lets me know it. And some days I've got to work hard to keep myself focused on my own well being. But now I know how to focus on the positive things in my life. And there are times when I am happy, and it's got nothing to do with how my wife is doing. I'm a work in progress and will always be. I go to as many meetings as I can squeeze into a week, I work with my sponsor, and I am of service to others. There is hope.

What's Inside!

Update:
Assembly Highlights

Events
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What's New
Story, page 4 - The Forum in Prisons

Assembly Highlights- October 16 – 18, 2009

Assembly this year was really great. I believe there were over 300 people in attendance by Saturday, with 171 of them being Group Reps (the voting body). Friday night there were 115 GR's present for the orientation (as well as others)! There are a total of 734 Groups in NCWSA, so there is a big need to get more group reps for groups without reps, as well as to increase the attendance.

I really loved hearing all the different things other Districts do and learned of new possibilities for things we could also do here in the Santa Clara Valley area!

SCV was the largest Intergroup, and many were impressed with the services we provide for the 3 Districts (Districts 20, 21, and 22) of Santa Clara Valley.

Summary of the Workshops at Assembly this year: What are we doing here? Panel: Art, Sandy, Open Sharing

This workshop was about what NCWSA is all about. Some of the things I really got from it were that we are here, and that hearing the District Reports was really an opportunity to hear whole districts experience, strength, and hope. (Sandy) Another thing was that "participation is the most important thing, and no amount of money could replace participation." (Art) Some other funny and/or favorite quotes (from the open sharing) were: "If you really want to find out your character defects, then do service." and "I did not use to be the dinosaur you see up here." and "We are not part of a group, we are part of a world-wide family."

Institutions Workshop – Louise/Yvonne and panel Institutions is looking for more contributions for prison as well as volunteers/sponsors to go into the prisons: Solano/Vacaville; Tracy; and also Monterey/Soledad. They study How Al-Anon Works and Paths to Recovery. They are also looking for copies of Hope for Today because they are trying to give it as a gift to the regularly attending members. From the panel, one of the things that really struck me was when Doug said "doing work in institutions can change your life and help you learn how to deal with feelings and emotions – and carry that message to people in prisons." And someone said (also might have been Doug) that going into prisons allows us to be instruments of love, and that we offer people a purpose-filled life when we are that instrument of love – we offer them this same opportunity. I also liked what Yvonne said "God doesn't call the qualified, he qualifies the called." Anyone can make a difference!

Some significant votes during 3-Day Assembly:

- 1) NCWSA voted to keep their by-laws dual membership wording the same as WSO's
- 2) Voted to have the Winter (Dec/Jan) 12-Stepper Edition to be sent in email instead of by mail to save money
- 3) Two new Executive Committee people got voted in – Portia and a guy who's name I missed

The NCWSA prudent reserve had been dangerously low - we were able to add \$5000 of the depleted funds, however it is still half of what it should be (now \$7500) to be prudent.

Announcements:

2010 Convention – the convention next year is April 16-18th in Sonoma County. It is at the Rohnert Park Doubletree Hotel
Diversity – Diversity still needs 5" x 5" pieces for the diversity quilt by January 2010
Holiday Event – Saturday, December 19, 2009 – 7pm to 11pm; Opportunity for families to come together – Alanon, AA and Alateen – "The Present is the Gift" – there is a flyer – it is at the Santa Clara Marriott Hotel - \$20/adults, \$5/teens&kids; cost to stay over night \$59 – only ten rooms at this rate (gift from the hotel – they will see if they can get more if there is a big enough need). Holiday Dress or Dress Down – Fabulous Speakers, refreshments/dessert/chocolate fondue bar, dancing, music (DJ) – we need a minimum attendance of 200. Pre-Register if possible – checks made payable to NCWSA. (this event is to offset deficit.)

Some Alateen stuff I took away:

Napa and Sonoma counties do a "back to school" outreach where they ask schools if they can come in on parent teach nights – though no schools have taken them up on this, they have been invited back for health fairs. There are 58 registered Alateen Meetings in Northern California. The Sponsors R&R weekend is scheduled for next year - Sept 10 – 12, 2010. Fifty-four people came to the 2009 Sponsors weekend.

I really walked away from Assembly feeling like I was more connected with Northern California Al-Anon, and I have such a deep respect and appreciation for all the recovery we offer friends and families of the alcoholic!

In Service with Love,

Anita R., *Alternate Chair and Liaison to NCWSA*

Dual Membership & Intergroup

A dual member is an Al-Anon member who is also a member of Alcoholics Anonymous. Intergroup recently took a commendable step by approving a change in the Intergroup By-Laws to permit a dual member to serve as an Intergroup coordinator or co-coordinator.

Currently the By-Laws specify that a dual member may not serve as an Intergroup Representative. This could be changed without conflicting with the World Service Conference (WSC) policy regarding dual membership. To clarify this, I called Al-Anon Family Group Headquarters to ask for information. I spoke with Sharon, who indicated that Intergroup may permit dual members to serve as Intergroup Representatives as long as the Intergroup By-Laws do not require Intergroup Representatives to also serve as Alternate Group Representatives. A dual member cannot serve as an Alternate Group Representative, since this position could lead to membership in the WSC. Sharon also mentioned that some other Intergroups around

the country do permit dual members to serve as Intergroup Representatives. If the Intergroup By-Laws were changed to permit dual members to serve as Intergroup Representatives and an Al-Anon group selected a dual member to serve as Intergroup Representative, then that Al-Anon group would need to select another person (who is not a dual member) to serve as Alternate Group Representative.

In the spirit of inclusiveness and to support broader participation in Intergroup, I recommend that Intergroup consider changing the Intergroup By-Laws to permit dual members to serve as Intergroup Representatives.

In Service, Michael D.

Recovery from the Past

By Anonymous

I think it's amazing to wake up in your forties, realizing you have Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, a disease often associated with war veterans, and digesting that it happened in your own living room. You don't even remember the declaration of war happening. Assaults and bombs are going off in your consciousness like suspended animation. Denial sets in so that we have the presence of mind to deal with current realities. We live a life that didn't exist in our home software programs. Cleaning out all the stinkin' thinkin' that we've been fed and beginning to filter out the lies can be a painful process. It requires courage and honesty to deal with feelings that pop up at oddly inconvenient times with people and places that we so often feel a stranger to. We experience the anguish of the child that was left behind as our minds fractured so that we could exist. Now we are catching up to the play that we have been acting in. Admitting that life is not easy, the game goes on whether we participate or not. We are aware of the scene that goes on behind the scene and the feelings that are left to continue to scar until recognized as the lies that they are and released.

I want to encourage everyone to be good to yourself. While this transition takes place, we recognize that "this too shall pass." We all deserve happiness and the universe provides miracles in abundance if we have the mind to ask for them and to accept them. We are spiritual warriors provided with the power to co-create with God. He gave us free will, a heart, and the greatest gift to ourselves and others, the power to forgive. We have choices and we choose. Like it or not, decisions must be made. Deciding for happiness is a road less traveled, and sometimes the path must first be forged in darkness and in faith. Recovery requires focus and diligence. Sometimes this must be done in the awareness of the judgment of others. We have to think, so let's think good thoughts. Paint your picture with love, with hope, and with joy in the moment. Try not to harbor resentments or to be resentful of others. We are all in process, and each of us is a precious work of art.

Hello there Al-Anon Friends,

It's me your grateful Chairperson of Intergroup sending a few reflections on my first year of service in this seat.

It was nice coming into 2009 after serving for three years as an alternate chair and liaison to the Northern California World Service Area (NCWSA). This has made my transition much easier. I am very proud that we started our new year with a full set of people in all service positions. Then of course as our lives change and flow, challenges happen. A few service positions became open and we had to find Al-Anon members willing to serve in these positions. I want to thank our treasurer, Tom K., for being so patient when our financial coordinator could not continue serving in that position. He hung in there and was of great assistance. Thank you, Tom.

In fact no matter what the situation, I have found everyone at Intergroup to be of maximum service, gracious and eager to help solve the issues, from writing checks to getting signors on our accounts and recruiting volunteers to serve. Terre C., our directories coordinator did very well with getting out the directories and she was gracious with the input she received from the membership.

I am also very grateful for Terry M., our archivist who made a request to get new binders so our information could be organized and presented in a neat format. She presented interesting information to Intergroup about things done in the past. At one meeting not too long ago she showed us a vinyl record (some may remember these) that contained an Al-Anon public service announcement that was to be presented to radio stations.

We tackled a heavy issue this year with the discussion on dual membership and service beyond the group level. Anita, our alternate chairperson, provided up-to-date communication with the WSO on this issue and how this might affect our relationship with them. The By-Laws committee gave a good power point presentation on how this is worded in the By-Laws. Finally after much deliberation and patience from the Intergroup members, we have decided change the By-Laws to permit dual members (Al-Anon members who are also members of AA) to serve as Intergroup coordinators and co-coordinators. Currently, according to the By-Laws, dual members may not serve as Intergroup Representatives. A dual member may serve as a "group contact" in that he/she may attend Intergroup meetings on behalf of his/her group but does not have a vote in Intergroup. In addition, an Intergroup Rep may also serve as a coordinator or as a co-coordinator. If you are attending a meeting that

does not have an Intergroup Rep, please make a request to have an Intergroup Rep or consider volunteering to serve as the Intergroup Rep for that meeting. I am always free to attend any Al-Anon meeting and share information about Intergroup.

As usual, the members of Intergroup pulled together and we held some pretty awesome events this year. Unity Day was a success thanks to Kimberley S., the 2009 public information coordinator who worked on the committee with AA. We had participation from Al-Anon in English, Spanish and Alateen this year. Lisa M. and Moriah, our Special Event Coordinators for 2009, put together a great committee for our special event. It was a wonderful success and having Larcine as our main speaker made it extra special. Thanks Lisa and Moriah.

The greatest challenge of 2009 was getting coverage for the bookstore. This year a few bookstore volunteers decided not to continue serving in the bookstore, and some volunteers would sign up and not show up. Please note that everyone benefits from buying literature from our bookstore. The group benefits by participating in the fellowship as a part the Santa Clara Valley community. Intergroup benefits since the literature sales enable us to be self-supporting. If you have not come by to see our bookstore, please do so soon and see how Intergroup supports its groups. If you would like to volunteer to serve in the bookstore, please contact our new facilities coordinator, Jonnie (jlgault50@gmail.com). We'd love to have you.

I have much to look forward to for 2010. At the start of my service as Intergroup chair, I asked three members to form a By-Laws committee to review and update our By-Laws. Since the By-Laws were last updated, we have made many changes and additions. The process is not complete and we hope this will be done early in the new year. Mark B., Cecelia and Rhonda D. have given quality time to this endeavor and I appreciate their efforts.

We also have newer members taking on service as coordinators and I am very excited about this as well. I see this as an opportunity for growth as we learn from one another.

I've not had any experience in this role ever in my life. You all have made this transition easy for me and I feel quite blessed to have you to support me, correct me and strengthen me as we work together to carry the message of hope for families and friends of alcoholics.

*With much Gratitude and Love in Service,
Chris A. C., Intergroup Chairperson*

Intergroup Special Event

October 10, 2009

"Courage to be Me"

Featured Speaker: Larcine G.

by Jackie

Larcine was raised in a drill sergeant's home. She was moved from military post to post, state to state and probably didn't form friendships easily. She finally moved to California. Her need to focus, focus, focus, caused her to have a rolodex in her mind, to organize her task cards so she didn't have time for feelings, let alone ask for help. She walked on egg shells, stood at attention and said "No, Sir," and "Yes, Sir." Her need to know what was waiting for her when she awakened added to her anxiety and agitation. She was married to her husband at a young age. Her husband resembled her father, who interestingly, approved of her choice. Her husband showed early signs of alcoholism.

Larcine frantically attempted to find out what her name meant. What if it was Latrine, concocted in her father's drunken stupor? Larcine is really a unique name and she can thank him for it!

When she went to an Al-Anon meeting, she wanted to fix her father. She didn't see the "Giant" in her living room. The vagueness of the purpose of the meeting left her clueless. Soon she was adopted by a great sponsor and was led to take care of herself, to live in the here and now and to let go and let God. She realized that the only one that she could change was herself. She tried to remember to have a good attitude—this was aided by having good body language.

Larcine had played the mother role and treated her husband like her third child. She was the only woman in a family with three "boys." Her attitude deprived her husband of freedom of choice, dignity, and his manhood. She had unwisely tried to assume responsibility for her husband's excessive use of alcohol—this responsibility actually was his! Who knows, he may have found sobriety sooner, if she had not tried to control his drinking. She was able to see her part in his illness through her children's eyes. She had acted just like her father!

Through the program and her insight she was able to take recovery seriously. Working on her attitude and taking care of her body, mind, and spirit aided her in "letting go and letting God." She learned to change the things that she could change and to accept the things that she could not change. Her sense of humor was an asset both to her recovery and to her husband's recovery.

Upcoming Events

District 13 Holiday Party—Potluck, Speaker Meeting and Raffle

Saturday, December 12, 2009, Congregational Church of Belmont, 751 Alameda de las Pulgas, Belmont. Ham, turkey and beverages provided—you bring the trimmings. 5 – 6 p.m. Registration; 6 – 7:30 p.m. Dinner and Music; 7:30 – 8 p.m. Raffle; 8 – 9:30 p.m. Speaker Meeting. For more information, contact Carrol at (650) 530-2076 or Marva at (650) 245-9965.

“The Present IS the Gift” Holiday Social Sponsored by the NCWSA

Saturday, December 19, 2009, 7:00 p.m. to 11:00 p.m., Santa Clara Marriott, 2700 Mission College Boulevard, Santa Clara, CA. Cost: \$20 (Al-Anon or AA member); \$5 (Alateen member), Holiday dress or dress down—an evening of holiday fun with a dessert bar, dancing, speakers, and raffle prizes.

District 12 Speaker Meeting

(2nd Sunday of every month), 7:00 p.m. Shepherd of the Hills Church
395 Addison Street, San Francisco
For more information click: <http://www.al-anonsf.org/d12.html#speaker>

District 16 Speaker Meeting

(2nd Saturday every month), 8:00 p.m.
St. Clares Episcopal Church
3350 Hopyard Rd., Pleasanton
Contact: Linda, linda-plummer@sbcglobal.net
Karen H.A. 925-628-5629
kbhaleyallen@yahoo.com

District 17 Birthday Speaker Meeting

(3rd Saturday of every month), 5:30 p.m.
Cedar Blvd Neighborhood Church
38325 Cedar Blvd, Newark (fellowship hall downstairs)
Contact: Regina F., ironwomyn42@sbcglobal.net

District 14 Speaker Meeting

(4th Saturday of every month), 6:30 p.m. to 9:00 p.m.
Al-Anon, Alateen and AA Speakers
Refreshments, Birthday Chips & Literature Sales
Walnut Creek Kaiser
1515 Newell Ave.,
Walnut Creek (3rd Fl. Oak Rm. #1)
(Medical Office Bldg. parking @ Newell)
(from 680 exit S. Main St. or Olympic Blvd.)
Contact: Kristine (925)872-3440
or kap4calif@yahoo.com

District 15 Fellowship Event

(Last Saturday of every month)
Pot Luck and Speaker Meeting 6:00 to 8:30 p.m.
AA, Alateen and Al-Anon Speaker
Broadmoor Community Church
301 Dowling Blvd., San Leandro
Contact: James H., MFE Coordinator;
(510) 333-2722

NCWSA Committee Meeting

February 5 & 6, 2010, Friday 8:00 PM - 11:00 PM & Saturday

Hyatt Summerfield Suites
2611 Contra Costa Blvd, Pleasant Hill
Phone 800-517-3957 or local 925-934-3343;
Mention NCWSA Committee Meeting to get room rates; Cost: \$89 for one bedroom suite, \$99 for two bedroom suite
Cutoff is Jan 5, 2010 for accepting reservations in our room block; Contact : Yvonne D, 925.705.1905 tanteje12@yahoo.com

“Forgiveness & Healing in Action” District

14 Day in Al-Anon; A Day of Caring & Sharing with Alateen and AA Participation
Saturday, February 13, 2010, 8:00
Registration, 9:00-12:15 Workshops, 2:00-4:30 Speakers, San Ramon Valley United Methodist Church, 902 Danville Boulevard, Alamo, CA. Speakers: Al-Anon – Jean K. from L.A.; AA – Michelle M. from Danville; Alateen – TBA. Contact: Scott L at (510) 812-1699 or Dina B. at (925) 914-0541

District 20 Open Speakers Meeting, 7:30

p.m. to 9:30 p.m., Friday, February 26, 2010, Immanuel Lutheran Church, 14103 Saratoga Avenue, Saratoga, CA 95070. Speakers: To be announced.

NCWSA Annual Convention

Serenity Again in 2010
Serenidad de nuevo en el 2010
Al-Anon and Alateen with AA and Spanish Participation
April 16-18, 2010
Doubletree Hotel Sonoma Wine Country
1 Doubletree Dr, Rohnert Park
Contact: conventionmail@yahoo.com

39th Annual Hospital and Institution Conference with Al-Anon Participation:

“Recovery in Action” June 4-6, 2010, San Ramon Marriott, 2600 Bishop Drive, San Ramon, CA. For information and/or to volunteer for service, contact Louise M., NCWSA Institutions Coordinator, at (408) 266-4200.

Please note that all events involving Alateens abide by the NCWSA requirement for Alateen member safety.

March Newsletter Items

This newsletter is published four times per year — in March, June, September and December. Please send items for the SCV AFG Intergroup March Newsletter to Terre C. at terrec@comcast.net. Our goal is to have items for the March newsletter submitted by March 1, 2010. Al-Anon news and information and the sharing of experience, strength and hope by Al-Anon members are welcome. – Terre C., Newsletter Coordinator for 2010

The Forum in Prisons

by Louise M.,

NCWSA Institutions Coordinator

I am the Northern California Institutions Coordinator. Starting in August of this year, Al-Anon has been going into Solano State Prison, which is in Vacaville, CA. We started with two groups on Sundays and one group on Tuesdays. We now have two groups on Sundays with a waiting list and two groups on Tuesdays with a waiting list. We are excited as this is the first time that Al-Anon has been in the state correctional system for a long time. We asked for donated literature and also monetary donations. We received several copies of old Forums. I cannot tell you how much the inmates enjoy the Forums. We explained how the Forums provide “A Meeting in My Pocket.” At the very first meeting, one of the inmates shared about an article he had glanced over before the meeting even began. Another inmate has been carrying around the very first Forum he had received saying it was the best thing he had ever read. Since that time he has come to meetings, taken a few more Forums, and from time to time shared in meetings what he had read.

This last Sunday he wanted to share about his experience with his readings. He shared about Hope for Today, which we have given to each inmate in our meetings, and how at the bottom of each day there is a footnote indicating the source of the “Thought for Today.” He pointed out how we volunteers bring in to the meetings the various pamphlets such as “Alcoholism, the Family Disease,” “This is Al-Anon,” etc., and Forums, and that there are footnotes in almost all of the literature we bring in. He began looking for the January 1999 Forum, as that particular issue was mentioned, and it made an impact on him. He told us how grateful he is for us to come to bring them the program, literature, and our hope, strength, and experience. He refers to the group as his family and says that by sharing we can begin to recover and grow as human beings. I have been blessed in this service to institutions. I am most thankful for the Forums everyone has donated. I hope to find a January 1999 Forum for this young man. I am also asking for donations of the Forum Favorites.