



# Lifelines

The Newsletter of the RI AFG, March 2008

## Encouraging Healthy Sponsorship

Areas all over the world have experienced challenges with unhealthy sponsorship. To address these challenges, our Delegates discussed groups' concerns about, visions for, and ideas on sponsorship at the last World Service Conference (our worldwide group conscience). The Delegates heard from a committee that reviewed feedback from World Service correspondence on abuses of sponsorship, and Delegates were challenged to educate their Areas on the material provided by World Service. Some of this information was introduced at the last RI Assembly in November, and Tuesday night "Paths to Recovery" in Middletown hosted a workshop on sponsorship that was open to all of RI on February 19<sup>th</sup>. At the workshop, our Delegate, Barbara M, introduced material received from World Service, presented a few skits to show what sponsorship is not, and encouraged open discussion on the topic.

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*To learn more about Sponsorship, check out: Sponsorship, What It's All About (P-31), Service Sponsorship—Working Smarter, Not Harder (P-88), Alateen Sponsorship, Is It for You? (S-27), and the new bookmark, Sponsorship—Working Together to Recover (M-78).*

*The Conference discussion of Sponsorship is summarized in the 2007 Conference Summary, starting on page 33. All of these materials are available at the office (see last page).*

*If you have questions about the Conference discussion or the Sponsorship Workshop—or for information on how to host your own group's Sponsorship Workshop—call the office (see last page) and leave a message for Barbara M.*

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### *What is healthy sponsorship?*

Information about healthy sponsorship abounds in our Conference Approved Literature (CAL). The World Service Office (WSO) just published a new bookmark, called *Sponsorship—Working Together to Recover* (M-78). You can also find information in *Sponsorship, What It's All About* (P-31), *Service Sponsorship—Working Smarter, Not Harder* (P-88), and *Alateen Sponsorship, Is It for You?* (S-27). All of this literature is available at our Area office (see last page).

At the recent Sponsorship Workshop in Middletown, members identified qualities they'd expect of a sponsor:

- ▲ Shares life experience, rather than giving advice
- ▲ Provides a listening ear
- ▲ Is available within reason
- ▲ Negotiates good boundaries for both sides
- ▲ Respects anonymity
- ▲ Keeps the focus on the Program, not outside issues
- ▲ Is nonjudgmental
- ▲ Is compassionate, but discerning
- ▲ Is a seasoned Program member steeped in knowing and working The Steps
- ▲ Inspires trust
- ▲ Understands "tough love"
- ▲ Maintains a sense of humor with themselves and with the Sponsee
- ▲ Makes suggestions, is not demanding
- ▲ Lives the Program
- ▲ Respects each other
- ▲ Allows a Sponsee to release the Sponsor with love
- ▲ Is able to decline sponsorship
- ▲ Has a good understanding of the Serenity Prayer
- ▲ Is patient
- ▲ Is able to release a Sponsee with love
- ▲ Knows their limits and when to refer the Sponsee to a professional
- ▲ Is approachable and willing
- ▲ Has good Karma with Sponsee
- ▲ Encourages

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## Sponsorship

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Members also identified qualities they'd expect of a Sponsee:

- ▲ Communicates with Sponsor regularly
- ▲ Respects confidentiality
- ▲ Listens
- ▲ Is committed to working the Steps
- ▲ Is willing to experience different meetings
- ▲ Is honest
- ▲ Sets boundaries and then abides by them
- ▲ Is considerate of the Sponsor's time
- ▲ Respects anonymity
- ▲ Attends meetings regularly (more than one a week)
- ▲ Gets involved in service
- ▲ Is careful about kinds of messages they leave on answering machines (both ways)
- ▲ Takes what they like and leaves the rest
- ▲ Does not expect advice
- ▲ Reads CAL on a regular basis
- ▲ Has a commonality with Sponsor
- ▲ Asks questions when they arise or when they need help
- ▲ Is willing to change
- ▲ Is able to end or change a Sponsor relationship
- ▲ Is willing to keep the focus on themselves
- ▲ Allows an open dialogue
- ▲ Shares the positives and negatives in their life
- ▲ Is trusting

### *What is unhealthy sponsorship?*

However, groups all over the world are witnessing and experiencing unhealthy sponsorship. During an open Board of Trustees meeting at the last Conference, Trustees reported on a phenomenon called "pyramid sponsorship," named for violating one of Al-Anon's core values: equality. *News from the World Service Conference* states that: "By establishing a hierarchy of sponsors and giving directive and controlling advice to sponsees, pyramid sponsorship in the guise of Al-Anon preys on the vulnerability of newcomers and falsely presents itself as the voice of the program." Background information on sponsorship was handed out at the meeting, including copies of historical presentations from AA cofounder Bill W., as well as from Al-Anon cofounder Lois W. and a discussion from the 1967 World Service Conference.

Delegates at Conference identified the following signs of unhealthy sponsorship:

- ▲ Group cliques and use of peer pressure
- ▲ Sharing sponsees' information with other members
- ▲ Pyramid sponsorship
- ▲ Using literature other than CAL (eg, the AA *Big Book*)
- ▲ Giving advice

As a result of this discussion, the WSO requested that each Conference committee brainstorm ideas on what they could do to help. The Group Service Committee developed and released our new sponsorship bookmark, and the *Forum* has run several articles on this discussion.

*continued on page 4*

## Assembly Reports

### *Part 3 of a Monthly Series on the November 2007 Assembly*

#### **New Guideline for Al-Anon and AA Cooperation**

The *Cooperation between Al-Anon and AA Guideline* (G-3) is now available on the Members' Web site: [www.alanon.alateen.org/members](http://www.alanon.alateen.org/members). (The password is the name of your home group plus the letters "afg".) The newly revised guideline includes reference to Alateen participation in AA events and clarified language regarding Al-Anon participation in open AA meetings.

The revisions to this guideline were made after a meeting between WSO and AA General Service Office staff. Various points of the guidelines were discussed to make sure that the language in our respective cooperation guidelines is consistent.

#### **Lifelines Report**

The purpose of an Area newsletter is to provide a vital link among individual members, groups, and the Area; encourage attendance at service events; communicate local, Area, and Al-Anon Information Service news; and attract Al-Anon members into service. As *Lifelines* Coordinator, it's my job to determine the type of submissions that will be accepted and establish a due date for submissions; copy edit submissions for spelling, grammar, and punctuation and make sure we use consistent terminology; and encourage members to make it *their* newsletter by submitting information, reports, and service sharings—it's important that this be the Area's newsletter, not Deb's newsletter.

Did you know you can receive *Lifelines* via e-mail? To subscribe, simply e-mail [destre99@yahoo.com](mailto:destre99@yahoo.com) and type "Mailing List" in the Subject line. You'll be added to our anonymous announcements list, through which you'll receive *Lifelines* and other Area announcements. Since production and distribution are costly, we are unable to send a print copy to each group at this time. Please consider making copies of each issue and sharing them with your group.

*We need Alateen submissions!* This is the newsletter of the Al-Anon/Alateen Family Groups. Alateen is a part of that family and, as such, should be represented! Any submissions are welcome, from articles to brief sharings, puzzles, and artwork. Submissions may be anonymous.

Of course, any member may submit a calendar item, bit of news, or a sharing. Submissions may be sent to [destre99@yahoo.com](mailto:destre99@yahoo.com) or mailed to the office (see last page).

*Deb E., Lifelines Coordinator*

#### **2007 Workshop Report**

The workshop was a big success. The weather was pretty bad that day, but we still had over 70 people in attendance. We experienced a few minor glitches, but every workshop gives us the opportunity to learn where we need to improve. It turned out to be a very inspiring day!

We had 8 different Al-Anon workshops throughout the day, plus AA and Alateen meetings. We had wonderful speakers from Al-Anon, Alateen, and AA, and, for the first time, we were fortunate enough to have our speakers recorded this year. There is now available a beautiful 2-CD set featuring the speakers from the 2007 Workshop (available at [www.rexark.com](http://www.rexark.com) or by calling 401-369-9369).

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#### ***The Next Area Assembly Is June 14th***

What issues is your group facing? What would you like to hear more about/discuss at the next Assembly? Tell your GR or DR, or contact the office and let us know. Your voice is important! Make sure your group is represented!

## Sponsorship

*continued from page 2*

### *How can we encourage healthy sponsorship?*

As our first Tradition states, "Our common welfare should come first; personal progress for the greatest number depends upon unity." We always need to remember to act in the spirit of the Al-Anon Family. If you see unhealthy sponsorship occurring in your groups:

- ▲ Communicate using the links of service (contact your Group Representative, District Representative, Area members)
- ▲ Consider chairing a meeting on sponsorship
- ▲ Consider hosting a workshop with your group; our Delegate, Barbara M., is available to lead a workshop or offer experience, strength, and hope on this topic with groups.

### *Meetings Need Support*

Thursday morning "Step Up to Serenity" could use support. We meet every Thursday at 10:00 AM at St. Paul Ev. Lutheran Church, 389 Greenwich Ave (Church Office Bldg.) in Warwick.

### *Meeting Time Has Changed*

"Friday Night Serenity" now meets from 7:30-8:30 PM (used to be 8:00-9:00) at Butler Hospital, Ray Hall, in Providence.

## 2008 World Service Conference

The 48th Annual World Service Conference is April 13-17, 2008. Delegates enjoy receiving mail from members and groups in their Areas while at Conference. Additionally, it is a common practice for each state/Area to exchange "love gifts" with other Areas. Groups and individuals send small, handcrafted tokens (eg, bookmarks, something unique to RI) for their Delegate to put out at their Area display and exchange with other Areas. Delegates collect these love gifts and bring them back to their Area.

If any group or individual would like to send cards, notes, or love gifts to be exchanged, please send them to:  
Barbara Murray (hold for WSC April 13-17, 2008)  
c/o Two Stamford Forum  
Stamford, CT 06901

Return address:  
B. Murray  
106 Rolfe Street  
Cranston, RI 02910

Please mail items so that they arrive after April 11th. Remember to write the return address above in case mail delivery is delayed, and, if possible, include a note saying which Group the items are sent "with love" from.

This is my last year to serve the Area, and I look forward to bringing you back the love gifts I collect from other Conference Delegates. We can put them out on the tables at our Assembly coming up in June!

In Service,  
*Barbara M., Panel 46, Area 49 (RI) Delegate*

## Alateen Spoken Here

### James

He stares with those eyes full of pain  
The ones he tries to hide with alcohol

He talks with such power, it scares me  
When he comes and picks on someone

He sits and sleeps fading everything away  
Like his life means nothing but drinking

He acts like we're nothing to him  
I know deep inside somewhere, my dad is there.

### Anonymous

Many times I do not want to make the effort to attend the Alateen meeting, but after the meeting gets started, I'm always glad I'm there. Each time I attend a meeting, I learn something about myself. I discover how I am working or not working my program. Hearing others share how they are living with the disease of alcoholism and applying the principles of the program in their lives reminds me that I have choices and that I don't know everything. There will always be more to learn about life, recovery, loving myself, and my Higher Power. Alateen helps me open my ears, my heart, and my mind.

*Used with permission from Alateen Talk, Vol. 41, No. 4.*

## Assembly Reports

*continued from page 3*

AI-Anon groups and members from all over the state donated baskets and items to be raffled. We also had crafts and literature for sale. The Alateens set up a "white elephant" table to help raise money, and AA set up an information table. There was a lot going on!

It was a lot of fun to be a part of the Workshop Committee. I co-chaired with Marie G. I don't think either of us really knew what to expect. Keeping Concept 4 in mind, we created 8 subcommittees and then sent out word that volunteers were needed. We were not disappointed! The committee meetings were a lot of fun, and we managed to accomplish a lot! I never once felt like I had to do this all by myself. It was a great experience!

The service opportunities weren't limited to the committee. The AI-Anon members who led the workshop meetings were absolutely essential and they all did an amazing job. We had so many great workshop topics that it was really difficult to choose which ones to go to! The event was a potluck, so members brought food, and we had a lot of people show up early to help set up and people who stayed late to help clean up.

I would really like to thank everyone on the committee for their support and encouragement, our speakers, our workshop leaders, and everyone who attended. Together, we made this workshop a success! I would also like to thank everyone who donated items for the raffle...The generosity of our members is overwhelming!

*Jenny N., 2007 Workshop Co-Chair*

## *Please Read at All Alateen Meetings*

**Attention Alateens:** This page is for you! Alateen is a vital part of RI AI-Anon/Alateen Family Groups and, as such, should be represented in its newsletter.

If you are an Alateen who likes to write or express yourself artistically, please consider submitting something for the next issue, either on your own or as a group. Please e-mail your submissions to Deb E. at [destre99@yahoo.com](mailto:destre99@yahoo.com), or drop off or mail them to the AI-Anon office (see last page).

Please provide your first name and/or the town or group to which you belong, unless you wish to remain anonymous.

## *AI-Anon Members Needed for Alateen Service*

Alateen needs AI-Anon members to become certified and volunteer to support existing groups as alternates to help fill in at meetings.

## *AI-Anon Workshop Chair Needed*

The next RI Workshop is scheduled for October 4<sup>th</sup> and plans are already under way! If you are interested in chairing this important and fun event, please call the office or attend the next Area meeting (see last page).

## Upcoming Events

### March

#### Rhode Island AA Convention (w/Al-Anon participation)

March 28–30, 2008

Hyatt Regency Hotel, Newport

This event has sold out! If you were lucky enough to get tickets and are interested in leading an Al-Anon meeting, please e-mail Jenny at HuenemeJen@juno.com or call and leave a message at the office (see below).

#### Monday Night Greenville AFG Anniversary

Mon., March 31, 7:30 PM

Thomas Church, Route 1 Smith Ave. Rte. 44 & Route 116, Greenville

Please join us for speakers, food, and fellowship!

### April

#### Area Meeting

Wed., April 23, 7:00 PM

Area Office, 106 Rolfe Street, Cranston

If you are interested in participating in service, please attend!

### May

#### Connecticut Alateen Workshop Weekend (CAWW)

May 16–18, 2008

**Alateen members and sponsors must have their applications in and notarized by April 11<sup>th</sup>!**

#### New Beginnings 24th Anniversary

Tues., May 20, 7:30–9:00 PM

St. Luke's Episcopal Church, Pierce and Church Streets, E. Greenwich

We will have Al-Anon, AA, Alateen, and ACOA speakers.

Refreshments will be served. Hope you can join us to share experience, strength, and hope!

| MARCH 2008 |    |    |    |    |    |    |
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#### RI Al-Anon Family Groups Area Office/Literature Distribution Center (LDC)

106 Rolfe Street, Cranston, RI 02910

Hours: Please call the office

Phone/Fax: 401-781-0044

E-mail: RI\_Al-Anon@hotmail.com

Web: www.RIAFG.org

An area newsletter is a vital link in keeping groups and members informed. The purposes of *Lifelines* are to: encourage attendance at service events; communicate local, area, and Al-Anon Information Service news; and attract Al-Anon members into service.

*Lifelines* submissions may be sent to destre99@yahoo.com or mailed to the office at the address above. The deadline for the next issue is **April 17**.

If you wish to receive *Lifelines* and other Area news via e-mail, please e-mail destre99@yahoo.com and type "Mailing List" in the Subject line.