



Lifelines

The Newsletter of the RI AFG, July 2008

The Group Representative: Your Link to the District and Beyond

by Melissa S.

Service provides a connection to seasoned members outside the group, an opportunity to face fears and often see them diminish, and an opportunity to see first-hand that, by putting our common welfare first, members almost always receive more than they give.

The Group Representative (Group Rep/GR) is a key service position in each group. The GR is the voice of the group and the first link in the chain that leads to our World Service Conference (WSC). This member serves a 3-year term and provides a critical link to the District and from the District back to the group. The GR attends District meetings and Assemblies, bringing information and suggestions from the group and returning to the group with updates from the District and Area as well. Group Representatives elect a District Representative from all the groups in the District, and they elect a new Delegate to our WSC at the Area Assembly. At the group level, the GR often facilitates the group's monthly business meeting. Holding a business meeting is an opportunity to arrive at a group conscience and to experience fun and fellowship as well.

The GR:

- ▲ Attends District meetings and Area Assemblies
- ▲ Keeps the members of their group informed about information from the Area Delegate and the WSC
- ▲ Encourages members to subscribe to and submit articles for *The Forum*, Al-Anon's monthly magazine
- ▲ Suggests participation in Public Outreach and Alateen service projects
- ▲ Promotes Alateen Sponsorship
- ▲ Asks the Alternate GR to attend District meetings and Assemblies
- ▲ Keeps the Alternate GR informed, to ensure the group is represented if they are unable to attend District and Area Assembly meetings
- ▲ Explains the need for self-support at the Group, District, Area, and World Service levels
- ▲ Consults with a Service Sponsor or trusted servants for guidance

Any Al-Anon or Alateen member who is willing to represent the group at the District and Area Assembly, and who is not also a member of AA, is eligible to serve as GR.

GRs are not "in charge" of their groups and are not alone. The Second Tradition tells us, "Our leaders are but trusted servants; they do not govern." The GR doesn't have to have all the answers, but does help their group look at the Traditions, the Concepts, and the *Al-Anon/Alateen Service Manual* for guidance.

Individuals who wish to gain self-confidence, spiritual growth, and improved self-esteem are encouraged to serve. Service provides a connection to seasoned members outside the group, an opportunity to face fears and often see them diminish, and an opportunity to see first-hand that, by putting our common welfare first, members almost always receive more than they give.

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Just A Little Bit About the International Convention....

New Meeting Schedule

The new **SUMMER MEETING SCHEDULE** is on our Web site and there are changes. Groups are asked to update their schedules when passing them out to newcomers. Our Web address is www.riafg.org.

Pittsburgh was great in 2008. We used that mantra throughout our conference panel. This was Al-Anon Family Groups' Fourth International Convention. What do we do at internationals? Being I went on the 3rd, this day was a mini Regional Service Seminar (RSS) titled "A Day with World Service." We started at 9 and went until 5. These mini RSS sessions were chaired by WSO staff and WSO volunteers (our Trustees). Each workshop offered experience, strength, and hope (ESH) on issues each Area/Country experiences. I have a lot more ESH for us to think about and will share some at the next Assembly in November.

The Convention started on the 4th of July. Al-Anon had 48 hour-and-a-half workshops. I attended several (too many to chose from) on topics about creating healthy relationships (about 1000 people were in that room), then onto a workshop/meeting on humor! Also, conflict resolution and many more. I purchased the set of speaker meeting CDs and will share with whomever would like to hear. There were 3 large (I am talking 4000 strong) speaker meetings in an Area the size of our Civic Center! A Jumbo TRON played our e-CAL contest winner's sharing (I believe it was an Alateen sharing, too). I walked, hugged, and met tons of people. Thirty-seven countries were represented, and I believe the average person traveled over 1000 miles to attend. I know, for example, I saw at least 20 people from Japan in our parade of nations (Parade of Love) just to tell you a bit. I took lots of pictures, and hopefully they came out. Between the emotion of laughter, friendship, love, and, of course, empathy, pictures might be a little shaky, but, wow! I have never felt so loved in my life by so many. I didn't get to sleep until at least midnight every night! Too much to do, see, and all that fellowshiping.

There were Alathons from 9 AM until 3:30 PM on Friday and Saturday. An AA/Al-Anon/Alateen family spoke at one of our big meetings. The Alateen was an orphan from the Romanian Area. She had 8 years in program at the age of 14!

Approximately 4200 people attended, and there were over 50,000 love gifts. Yes, I have more for us! The new book on relationships, *Discovering Choices*, and *The Dilemma of the Alcoholic Marriage* were available to purchase. I think our Literature Coordinator has an order pending for our Literature Distribution Center at the office for the new book. The amount of service put into this convention was amazing! I just keep thinking, how wonderful it would be to host one of these in our state! Wouldn't that be something to think about? Anyway, the feeling one gets when we join hands (4000) strong and say the Serenity Prayer and the Lords Prayer, and witness a recovery count down with one member still standing after 57 years! Couldn't help but tear up! Well, I had to get back to reality and back to work Monday AM. Still amazed at what I experienced. Thank you RI for allowing me to serve as your Delegate. These past 3 years have allowed me to grow beyond my wildest dreams in my program. Using all 36 tools to deal with all my relationships is nothing short of a miracle.

In gratitude for our program,
Barbara M, Panel 46, RI Delegate.

PS... The next International will be in Vancouver, BC; they are held every 5 years.

RI Alateen Spoken Here

We recently talked with members of the Monday night, "There is Hope" Alateen meeting in Tiverton. We asked them about how Alateen has helped them, what they like, and what they don't like.

Jamie C (age 10) said that Alateen has improved her life and helps her let go of feelings she has been carrying around. She would like to add more business meetings. She would appreciate more time to express herself, and BOOKS—especially workbooks—would be a great help.

John C (age 14) feels that Alateen has improved his life a little and has helped him to manage his anger. He listens mostly. He would prefer all male meetings (it would be more comfortable to share—any male Al-Anon members out there willing to sponsor???) or online meetings.

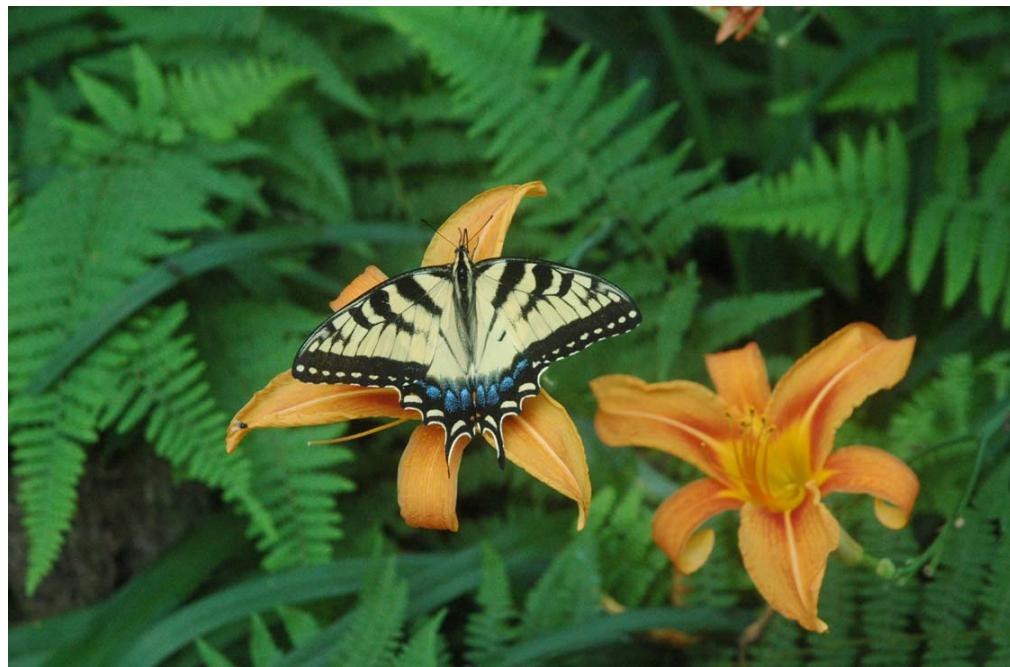
Lily Q is brand new! She knows that alcoholism is a family disease—she has come to learn how to not stress over it. She wants to learn how to make good decisions for herself.

Montana D. has been away from the meetings for a while but came back recently. She feels that Alateen helps her talk things out when alcoholism affects her life.

TJ feels that there is less fighting in his home since he has joined Alateen and he has learned how to relax.

Katie C. feels their group is too small and wants to increase attendance. She feels it is easier to share if there are more people. She would like to see more activities outside the meeting, where they can experience things together and find more ways to express and learn in a positive way.

You can be a part of these younger members' recovery experience—and meet some of the needs they've expressed—by becoming an Alateen Sponsor or an Al-Anon Member in Alateen Service. For more information, call the Area Office (see last page) and leave a message for Peaches D.



Please Read at All Alateen Meetings

Attention Alateens: This page is for you! Alateen is a vital part of RI Al-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, or drop off or mail them to the Al-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.

Al-Anon Members Needed for Alateen Service

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

Photograph submitted
by Linda, in honor of one of
our own.

Group Reps

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The Alternate GR: Dip a Toe in the Water

As stated above, the Group Rep should encourage the election of an Alternate GR from the group. This person ideally serves the same 3-year term and provides "backup" to the GR. Often, the Alternate GR will run group business meetings when the GR is not available, attend District meetings and/or Area Assemblies when the GR cannot (or, in addition to the GR when feasible!), and generally shares the responsibility of passing information (often received via e-mail in Rhode Island) back to the group as announcements. Acting as an Alternate GR is a great way to get a feel for the position of GR and dip a toe into the "service water."

The Numbers

Rhode Island presently has 52 meetings and 39 Group Representatives, including 2 meetings that meet twice a week and have the same GR (Shout out to Higher Powered Lunch Bunch in Providence and the Spanish Group in Central Falls; you know who you are!). Unfortunately, not every meeting has a Group Representative and those meetings are not as connected to the Area as they could be. District Representatives try to fill the gap when they can (of 5 Districts, we only have 2 District Reps, at the moment), but groups and group members benefit by someone stepping up to serve in this key position. Here are the numbers broken down by District:

- ▲ District 1 (Providence and East Providence): 8 meetings, 6 GRs (including 1 GR with 2 meetings, same registration number)
- ▲ District 2 (Northern RI): 12 meetings, 11 GRs (including 1 GR with 2 meetings, same registration number)
- ▲ District 3 (Bristol, Tiverton, Middletown, Jamestown, Little Compton, Portsmouth, Newport): 12 meetings, 7 GRs
- ▲ District 4 (Middle RI—Cranston to East Greenwich): 11 meetings, 10 GRs
- ▲ District 5 (Southern RI): 9 meetings, 5 GRs

Current Group Reps Speak

Current Group Reps and Alternate Group Reps shared their experience, strength, and hope about this service position. Here is what some of them had to say...

What gifts have you received serving as a Group Representative?

- ▲ *As Group Rep I have been in situations that I would not have put myself in. I had a hard time thinking I was good enough or smart enough to communicate in this type of setting. With Al-Anon I have been able to express my opinion and even listen to others' opinions without being partial or judgmental.*
- ▲ *Serving as a Group Representative has enabled me to experience "givers gain." I have learned about the traditions and concepts more in depth. I have formed relationships with people I can trust who love me. It is a mirror of both my assets and character defects I want to keep and those I want to discard.*
- ▲ *A chance to be educated about what's working or not working for other groups. Sharing ideas about growth, such as public outreach. Furthering my understanding about the different positions and responsibilities of service.*
- ▲ *Enjoyed bringing back information with regards to serving Al-Anon in unity with all groups. Self-confidence in speaking with groups and the ability to listen openly to other opinions.*

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Groups at Work Booklet Replacing Group Binders

by Melissa S.

A new booklet, called *Groups at Work* (P-24), is replacing the ever-present Group Binder at new Al-Anon meetings. The *Groups at Work* booklet matches the section by the same name in the *2006-2009 Al-Anon/Alateen Service Manual* (P-24/27). When the WSO recently revised this section of the *Service Manual* for the 2006-2009 edition, they intentionally added more key group information. The result was so successful that they decided to publish it as a separate booklet. This booklet now provides an inexpensive way for groups and members to get a lot of information in a simple, easy-to-read format. A suggested meeting format and typical group readings are the first things in the booklet. Now, as new groups register, they are sent the *Groups at Work* booklet, with a welcome letter and sample literature. Six months later, they receive the *Service Manual* and another letter. Existing groups are encouraged to check out *Groups at Work* and see if there is some information your group can use! If your group doesn't already have one, they are available for \$1.00 at the Area Office (see last page).

The Friday night "When I Got Busy, I Got Better" meeting has changed its format to a general discussion meeting. We could really use your support as we transition! We meet Friday nights at 7:30 PM at Bradley Hospital in East Providence.

Group Reps

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What gifts have you received through service?

- ▲ *Service has helped me to grow as a person. I have become more organized in keeping information to bring back to members of my group. I would recommend service to anyone. It does come back 10 fold to you.*
- ▲ *I've met great people and become more familiar with members in my home group. I've broadened my horizons by listening to others and visiting new places.*
- ▲ *Through service I have met a lot of new people and found that I am not alone. It has helped me practice my program by always having people in my life that I do not normally accept. It has taught me to put principles before personalities. And I even have these people for my friends now. People I wouldn't have patience for in the past.*
- ▲ *I have made many new friends—real friends, ones that are nonjudgmental. Service has helped my self-esteem by making me talk and reach out in front of others. It made me take chances—which before recovery was very scary.*
- ▲ *I can ask for help—not being closed-minded to see things with an open mind and a lot of self-confidence. Communication.*

Interested?

Are you interested in becoming a Group Representative, or maybe an Alternate Group Representative for your group? Groups are asked to elect a new GR for the next 3-year term in time for the November Assembly, so the opportunity might present itself this fall.

To learn more about the role of a Group Representative, information is provided in the *Service Manual* (every group should have one), and copies of the GR Guidelines are available at the Area office (see last page). You can also access a copy from the WSO Members' Web site. Just log on to: www.al-anon.alateen.org/members. The password is the name of your home group plus the letters "afg". Click Group Services, Guidelines, then select Group Representative (G-11) from the menu.

Look for more sharings from Group Representatives in future issues of Lifelines.

Treasury Report

The following is a listing of the donations to the Area Office for June.

Group #	Group	Area	Alateen
3-030119	Mon Morn Al-anon	\$75.00	
4-064957	Freedom Group	\$20.00	
2-0062815	H.U.G.S.	\$25.00	
1-012463	Friday Nite Serenity	\$50.00	
1-041580	Gift of Hope	\$50.00	
3-0026686	Friday Night Live	\$50.00	
1-020249	Hope Step Al-anon	\$10.00	
2-0040461	Keep it Simple	\$25.00	
4-025797	New Beginnings	\$50.00	\$50.00
3-012435	Our Daily Bread	\$50.00	
2-037296	Change What you Can	\$50.00	
2-040889	Let Go & Let God	\$25.00	
	June Total	\$480.00	\$50.00

I have also received \$75.00 for the Delegate to attend The International Convention: \$10 from Let It Begin with Me, \$10 from A New Beginning, \$5 from Change What You Can, \$5 from Cranston Tuesday AM, \$20 from Joy Beckons, and \$25 from H.U.G.S.

Please remember to put the group name and *entire* group number on all checks when sending in donations. Your group number is provided on the meeting list.

To speed check processing, you may mail checks directly to me at:

Valerie Bacon
68 Elmgrove Avenue
Smithfield, RI 02917

Peace in the Program,
Valerie, Area Treasurer

Upcoming Events

August

Sunday Morning Change What You Can AFG Anniversary

Sun, Aug 3rd, 10:00–11:30 AM

Memorial Hospital of RI, 111 Brewster St. (Sayles Conf. Rm. 1, Downstairs)

Please join us for wonderful guest speakers. Refreshments to follow. Help us share in another year of celebrating personal growth!

Area Meeting

Wed., Aug 13, 7:00 PM

Area Office, 106 Rolfe Street, Cranston

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

Friday Night East Greenwich Al-Anon 25th Anniversary

Fri, August 22, 7:00–9:30 PM

St. Luke's Episcopal Church, 2nd floor, 99 Pierce Street, East Greenwich

Join us for a summer evening of recovery with guest speakers

Sr. Rose R (Al-Anon) and Sr. Maurice D (AA)!

We will also have food and fellowship.

Camp AFG

Camp Mechuwana, Winthrop, ME

August 22–24, 2008

Camp AFG is the Maine area convention for Al-Anon and Alateen members to gather for fun and fellowship, to celebrate their beginnings, enhance their understanding of the program, and to find ways to attract new members. Details for registration are coming soon. In the meantime, check their web site at www.campafg.com or contact campafg2008@yahoo.com.

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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 **August 7**.

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.