

SERVICE SPONSORSHIP WORKSHOP – ASSEMBLY – October 2, 2010

Thank you to everyone who participated on Saturday, October 2! The enthusiasm was just wonderful. Thanks to Vicky for providing the paper, Rachelle for the markers, Scott for sound assistance, and Districts 19-22 for the clever way to divide us into groups of 10. The questions and responses are provided below:

I think of service as a privilege which allows me to grow while I do something that's worth doing, something that will help others as well as myself. *How Al-Anon Works*, p. 354 (1st printing; 370 10th printing 2008)

In helping others, we drop any pretense that *I alone* am in charge of *my* separate recovery. We acknowledge the common bond that unites us in the program, and we take steps (however halting and uneven) to align ourselves with the guidance of a Higher Power. By passing on the guidance we have received, we learn a new humility. *When I Got Busy, I Got Better*, p. 1

- **What is service sponsorship?**
 - a. Someone who helps you work on service issues; someone who has service experience
 - b. Guiding someone new to service; sharing experience; someone who has done your new job; encouraging newcomers to service; progress not perfection; leading by example; boundaries
 - c. Sharing of service experience, strength and hope
 - d. Answering questions and encouraging others to service; participation is the key to harmony; helps us learn the program, sponsor guide us, provides solutions; many of us don't know what a service sponsor is
 - e. Helping and encouraging new members in service work; passing on wisdom learned; letting people know that you can "screw up"
 - f. Helps find Higher Power
 - g. Encouraging participation through service at all levels
 - h. Whatever you need it to be; doing the little things, others see it and do it too
 - i. Opportunity; passing the torch
 - j. Support; passing it forward; helping newcomers; keep program growing; opportunity; Twelfth Step work, epitome of what makes this program work

One of the greatest sources of help during this time was Al-Anon service. My sponsor advocated doing something for others whenever I felt the urge to feel sorry for myself, Service kept me busy and productive. It allowed me to do something worthwhile at a time when I felt worthless. *How Al-Anon Works*, p. 173 (1st printing; 191, 10th printing 2008)

- **How is service sponsorship different from recovery sponsorship?**

- a. Focus on tasks rather than people; focus on others rather than self; sponsor helps me understand Al-Anon service work; service focused and makes recovery possible
- b. Still one-on-one; more focused on service issues
- c. Concentrates on service versus when personal; booklet "When I Got Busy, I Got Better"; working outside yourself; service can enhance personal recovery and moving into a community; recovery helps you understand yourself and service helps you understand the program (structure)
- d. Personal versus organizational; service sponsorship is about practicing principles in all our affairs, in our groups and at District and Area levels; use of Traditions and Concepts
- e. Focus on service versus recovery, the focus is my relationships with others rather than myself; working in a group brings out different tendencies to address
- f. Service sponsorship for group and recovery is for self; I keep my program by giving it away which is service; recovery keeps person healthy and service sponsorship keeps Al-Anon healthy; service keeps your program healthy (diagram of a circle with arrows going in the same direction)
- g. Guide through service positions by using the Concepts; teaches me to play well with others; keeps us connected; practices trust
- h. Service sponsor can help you find someone else who can answer questions about your service position
- i. Recovery sponsorship is about me while service sponsorship is about AlAnon as a whole; a regular sponsor helps you to use these principles in all your affairs; service sponsorship helps you to use these principles in your Al-Anon affairs
- j. Is it?? Recovery sponsorship focuses on Twelve Steps; service sponsorship focuses on service

Nothing is required of any member except what he or she freely wishes to give. *How Al-Anon Works*, p. 101 (1st printing; 99, 10th printing 2008)

Years ago, Al-Anon gave me back my life. I continue to receive lifesustaining, lifeenriching gifts by practicing the principles of this program. If someone saved my life, I would feel indebted. . . . I know intrinsically that I owe something to Al-Anon for all the experience, strength, and hope I've been given so freely and so joyously. A short conference with my Higher Power confirms my intuition, and I respond not in words but in actions. . . . Service is mine to do, when I can, where I can, what I can, all I can. . . *When I Got Busy, I Got Better*, pp 21-22.

- **How do I get a service sponsor? How do I become a service sponsor?**
 - a. Ask someone who inspires you; ask someone who has done the service before you; even if you don't feel like it say yes; invite someone to replace you
 - b. Ask - look around the room; find someone who is practicing what you want; pass it one! Offer service opportunities to the next person; listen to the call!
 - c. Ask someone; if asked, say yes; attend sponsorship seminar; participate in service; learn about Concepts; READ
 - d. Identify someone who is doing service; ask; at District and Area meetings ask if someone is willing to be service sponsor and distribute a list at these meetings; saying "yes" when someone asks you; be available to answer questions, outgoing position to incoming position
 - e. Look for someone who has what you want to be you go-to person; be willing to become a service sponsor, be mindful that you don't have to do it perfectly
 - f. Ask or be asked (or volunteer); be willing
 - g. Ask! Tell stories, invite and encourage; make self available; trust Higher Power to lead me
 - h. Ask. Attend District meetings; talk to previous service members, or "Let It Begin with Me"; go to the Area World Service Committee and ask for a mentor; look in the literature
 - i. Ask. Go to Area/District meetings, volunteer for committees, let people know you are available and you have the *Service Manual*
 - j. Just keep showing up; get in the car & go! To become a sponsor, work your recovery program; learn what your gifts and talents are and use them

Our Higher Power expresses Himself through each one of us in service if we are humble enough to ask His guidance through other trusted servants who went before us.

There was a service problem in my Area and I tried to intellectualize my way to a solution through my own intense concentration (all I got for my efforts was a headache). In desperation I turned to my predecessor (who later became my service Sponsor). We began to talk to each other and reason things out.” I then knew what it *meant* to work smarter, not harder. *Service Sponsorship: Working Smarter, Not Harder*, p. 7

- **Why is it important to talk about service sponsorship?**
 - a. If we don't know where we've been, how do we know where we're going?; When I came in I didn't know about it, where to find answers and who to ask; makes service work less scary
 - b. Keeps rotation going; make sure we have service givers to perpetuate the fellowship; presents opportunity for our own Twelfth Step; to raise awareness for the need for volunteers
 - c. Awareness; reduce burnout; humble in learning; not that hard increase fun; new ideas; education; sustainability; reduce fear; demystifies it
 - d. Newcomers do not know what it is (the service responsibility); learn from past experiences, good and bad, and build on the good!! Learn from understandings of others, do not try to reinvent the wheel
 - e. So newcomers know what it's about; we're trusted servants and not experts; to pass the service along and encourage it, to newcomers and others not currently involved; to keep groups healthy
 - f. Otherwise, people might not know it exists; it's about the "we" part of the program; demystify service, keep continuity, making it more comfortable and inviting
 - g. Might not be aware of the benefits, or that service sponsorship exists; makes service easier and more accessible; eases the pain of the disease, and of recovery
 - h. Gets me out of my head; to know it's there, so you don't have to do it alone; if you don't talk about it, it will not get done, the wisdom and experience will not pass on; nobody feels they have to be the trusted servant FOREVER
 - i. Two heads are better than one; to keep it focused; it makes service more comfortable; to learn, from a predecessor; keep principles above personalities
 - j. So we can "pass it on" to others, both being a sponsor and sponsee; so we don't keep "reinventing the wheel"

Before I acquired a service Sponsor I was "floating" on my own, thus putting responsibilities and requirements on myself that were not necessary. Being insecure and a perfectionist (an explosive mixture), I lived in fear of making mistakes and became very rigid.

With the support of my service Sponsor I overcame the fears of speaking into a microphone and to large gatherings of people

My service Sponsor responded to all of my questions about service with “Did you look it up in the *Service Manual*?” I learned that most my questions were already answered. *Service Sponsorship: Working Smarter, Not Harder*, p. 7

- **Who needs a service sponsor?**
 - a. We all do!
 - b. Anyone and everyone in service - we are not alone!
 - c. The group laggard, not flourishing in program; anyone who wants to grow spiritually; to feel welcome
 - d. Everyone! Newcomers, individuals that are feeling stagnant; groups that are failing and groups that are thriving so can learn from each other; want a challenge or to push themselves up a level
 - e. People who want to further their service work and program; those who want clarification about responsibilities, do's and don'ts
 - f. Everyone! People who desire growth in their recovery; anyone who wants to show their gratitude for Al-Anon; people who want to know more about available positions or the positions themselves
 - g. Anyone too lazy to use the *Service Manual*; anyone wishing to integrate the Traditions and Concepts into their lives
 - h. Only if you want to grow; or anyone who wants one; anyone who wants support, ideas, information; anyone who is ready; learn to trust through asking and accepting help
 - i. Everyone who wants to grow in the program; anyone who volunteers to do something other than attend meetings
 - j. Everyone, Al-Anon Members Involved in Alateen Service (AMIAS); to get new ideas, people who have been in Al-Anon a while

Much to my shock and relief, Al-Anon told me that it was my right and responsibility to take care of myself first, and to attend to my needs before the needs of others. *How Al-Anon Works*, p. 177 (1st printing; 195, 10th printing 2008)

- **What are my responsibilities as a service sponsor?**
 - a. Guide sponsees to interact in a healthy way with other volunteers
 - b. Have a good understanding of what's in the Al-Anon *Service Manual*; guide sponsees to this resource
 - c. Be supporting; share experience, strength and hope; say we can do this and you don't have to be perfect! Taking time for yourself; read; nice to have a historical context and minutes to review
 - d. Pass on knowledge, experience and hope; do it the best you can and forget perfectionism; check in with sponsee to see how things are going; it's an invite situation

- e. Be humble; to be an example; show up; availability; honesty; reliable; willingness, to do the best I can; provide encouragement; be a link to the District/WSO
- f. Be active in service and attend District and Area service events; willing to answer questions, or help find answers; use *Service Manual* and Concepts as tools
- g. To do service work myself; to be knowledgeable regarding the *Service Manual*; be willing to share your experience; be available to my sponsees; listen to sponsees; to take care of myself and not get too involved; to allow my sponsees to make mistakes; remember there are no "rules" and that we are all autonomous
- h. Be available; be willing; be willing to ask my service sponsor for help; to use the *Service Manual*; be willing to share my experience, strength and hope in service
- i. Take care of yourself; trust and listen to yourself (needs, desires); same as responsibilities you have as a recovery sponsor; don't be afraid to make mistakes (especially in front of large groups!); seek balance
- j. Work my program first, then do service work; first things first; don't take on responsibility of sponsee

To my surprise, I found (serving as a GR) a wonderful way to learn about distinguishing between my responsibilities and the responsibilities of others. *How AIAnon Works*, p. 280 (1st printing; 297, 10th printing 2008)

• **What are my responsibilities as the sponsored person?**

- a. To ask questions; regular attendance at meetings; work the Steps, Concepts and Traditions; ask for help; use the phone; reach out
- b. Keep in touch with my sponsor; work my program; completing assignments given; applying the Traditions in service meetings
- c. Read the *Service Manual*; be willing to say "YES!"; remember that you don't need to be perfect in any service position
- d. Listen and learn! Two-way street (sponsor and sponsee)
- e. Keep an open mind, willing spirit; practice saying yes; make sure communication is open with sponsor; give it away so you can keep it, personal growth
- f. Ask; support sponsor; seek help; be willing; reliability, show up; model from my sponsor; communicate with sponsor
- g. Willing to use new tools such as the *Service Manual*, Concepts, Concept Four; keep active in service and willing to learn; take suggestions of the sponsor

- h. To ask questions; to be open and willing; to keep working my own program; not expect perfection from or of sponsor; stay in touch; accept my sponsor's boundaries; ask what my sponsor's expectations are; take what we like and leave the rest!
- i. Be willing to listen be willing to ask, be willing to read the *Service Manual*; commit to trying sponsor's suggestions; have realistic expectations of your service sponsor
- j. Keep open mind, willing to learn; make mistakes; contact your sponsor; willing to say yes and learn that you can say no; balance with taking care of yourself; accept that you can say no; research what opportunities are available

But the real key to my recovery has been service. *How Al-Anon Works*, p. 176 (1st printing; 194, 10th printing 2008)

[S]ervice proved to be an essential part of the process of rebuilding my sense of selfworth. . . . [R]ecovery is a process not an event. . . . I can openly admit that I don't have all the answers. I want to remain teachable for the rest of my life, daily applying new ideas and letting life be a real adventure. *How Al-Anon Works*, p. 374 (1st printing; 390, 10th printing 2008)

• **What are the benefits of service sponsorship –**

1. **To me**
2. **To my group**
 - a. To me - makes service work easier, more accessible; to group, pass information along
 - b. To me: help me with boundaries, not to over commit or drop the ball, helps myself-confidence and esteem; to group: helps get more people in service
 - c. Helps to keep the program fresh; "listen and learn"; "When I got busy I got better", "Think, Thoughtful, Honest, Intelligent, Necessary and Kind"
 - d. To me: It's an opportunity for personal growth; to group: Keeps the group connected to other levels of Al-Anon; educate the group about service opportunities
 - e. Breaking isolation, individual and group; knowing what's going on beyond our group, connection to the outside world of Al-Anon; keeps the group and individual growing-Active Group
 - f. Carrying the message; friendship; learning to have fun again; learning to trust the sponsor and by extension others in my life
 - g. Communication, link to knowledge, tools, perspective; peace of mind; makes me part of, opens us up; sense of well-being; a sense of purpose;

helps me work the Steps, especially Step Twelve; educates us in Traditions and Concepts

- h. To me: got e more involved, combining districts; you can do it; raises self-esteem; not having to have all the answers; practice asking for help; progress not perfection; remembers past experience
- i. To keep me focused and involved; active groups = healthy groups; encourages us to get out of our isolation; fostering new ideas; growth and recovery; service feeds my soul; spiritual awakening; shows us how far we've come and where we've been
- j. Healthier meetings; group trusted servants will not feel so overwhelmed/isolated; build up self-esteem; "service awakening"; sense of dignity; feel appreciated (sometimes)

Service work heals the emptiness within me by replacing my dark obsession for another with my own loving light. *How Al-Anon Works, p. 291 (1st printing; 308, 10th printing 2008)*

• **What are the benefits of service sponsorship –**

1. **To my district**
2. **To Minnesota South?**
 - a. Helps to keep the message accurate and continuous; keeps District and Area vibrant
 - b. Makes those who are doing service more competent, capable and confident; can provide examples, direction, mentorship; creates a stronger District/Area; develop relationships with others I did not previously have
 - c. Better representation at the District level; creates active Districts, which creates a voice at WSO level and fresh, new ideas
 - d. Brings unity; makes me feel more a part of something bigger
 - e. At the group/district level, we get experience and gain confidence to accept service positions at district/area level
 - f. Friends, fun, food, fellowship; when we/I got busy, we/I got better
 - g. Makes organization stronger and pass on group history; more ideas/diversity
 - h. Connection; enhances the details; promotes the survival of Al-Anon; minority voice is passed on to others; expands resources; increases awareness
 - i. Gets district more involved and relevant; builds leaders; brings new people into District and Area service
 - j. Keeps the fellowship growing/going; leadership promotion-attraction not promotion; so we can have vote at WSO level; we carry the message up from groups; meet more people, community, fellowship,

Al-Anon; have input from lots of people versus select few; helps to remind me that my input is valuable

Right away I got involved in service, although I didn't know it at the time. When I first started attending meetings, there were some "old timers" who handed me the coffeepot on a regular basis and told me to wash it. I did. I got to be real good at it. I washed that pot week in, week out, month after month. After a while I started noticing that some people in the group weren't pitching in, and I began to feel rather resentful. I shared these feelings with an Al-Anon friend, and he asked if I thought I was getting better. "Sure," I replied, "a lot better." He asked if I was any happier. You bet I was, "Well, then," he said, "why don't you just keep on washing that pot?" After that, I approached every opportunity for service with a sense of gratitude. *How Al-Anon Works*, p. 149 (1st printing; 167, 10th printing 2008)

• **What can we do to make better use of service sponsorship in Minnesota South?**

- a. Don't be afraid to ask for help; is there a list of service sponsors about? How do you find one? Talk about it in our groups; make pamphlet available to groups; make a list of service opportunities in groups; identify people who would be service sponsors in meetings
- b. Be a sponsor! Or maybe even get a sponsor! Or **USE YOUR SPONSOR**
- c. Get a sponsor! Make myself available as a sponsor to my group. At the Area level, speakers sharing experience, strength and hope
- d. Communicate that service sponsorship is available; tap into the wisdom of our senior members
- e. Rotate service position; ask someone to become your service sponsor
- f. Talk about service sponsorship in our groups, possibly ask someone who is a service sponsor to speak at a meeting
- g. Stay in the middle of the triangle: Recovery, Unity, Service
- h. Present Concept Four to home group; public service sponsorship
- i. Talk about it over and over; encourage it to others -do it; promote website; write for *The Forum*; discuss at Folderol
- j. Keep talking about it; past trusted servants could/should make themselves available, many already do! Work on transitioning roles, how to pass on commitments so people know their responsibilities

RESOURCES: (Resources you will want to have in your personal CAL library)
P-79 When I Got Busy, I Got Better

P-31 Sponsorship, What It's All About

P-88 Service Sponsorship: Working Smarter, Not Harder

M-78 Sponsorship-Working Together to Recover bookmark

B-22 How Al-Anon Works for Families and Friends of Alcoholics

B-24 Paths to Recovery