

The Voice

Volume 26, Number 7

July 2009



One member's voice

Practicing in our own way

A story of experience, strength, and hope

"Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings."

In our marvelous big book, *Alcoholics Anonymous*, Step Seven is reduced to just one short paragraph on page 76. Oddly, it's presented in the form of a very simple prayer.

The short form of the step, the one we read at meetings and that's printed above, encourages us to humbly and politely ask our Higher Power to remove all of our defects.

In the seventh-step prayer in *The Big Book*, the focus is on asking for the removal of whatever defects might stand in the way of our usefulness to God and our fellows, and for receiving enough inspiration to get out of His way and let Him do it!

When I first made a sincere attempt at this step, I was very unsure about what might be left once God was all done with the task. Please be assured that He does a wonderful job, and although I'm only a work-in-progress, I like what He's done so far.

My sponsor urged me to make this seventh-step request a part of my morning prayers simply by combining it with asking Him to help me stay sober each day. Both *The Big Book* and *The Twelve and Twelve* clearly suggest that if this simple request can work so well on our desire not to drink, why might it not work equally well on life's other challenges?

Moreover I found it very comforting just to know that I was only being

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**So many kinds of
independence.
So much to celebrate!**

A quote for July

*We grow by our
willingness to
face and rectify
errors and convert
them into assets.*

Alcoholics Anonymous, page 124

Two inspiring speakers. One enduring message.

If any AA who happened to be in Ocala on Saturday, June 20, didn't get the "message" about "carrying the message," it's not for lack of opportunity.

At noon, Chet P., our Area Delegate to the General Services Conference, met with members of the local fellowship at a lunch meeting sponsored by District 17 to deliver his report on AA World Services activities.

He presented a clear picture of the AA organization, and emphasized that the entire structure serves primarily to support local groups in their efforts to carry AA's message

to those who still suffer.

Later that evening, at a dinner meeting sponsored by the Young People's Group and Unity Place, Sandy Beach, nationally known AA speaker addressed a standing-room-only crowd at St. Mark's. In his opening remarks, he said, "The miracle of AA is one alcoholic carrying the message to another."

Mr. Beach, whose sobriety dates from 1976, encouraged his listeners to take off their "life sucks" glasses and look at the world through the spiritual lens of AA's steps and principles.

At one of the most powerful moments, he described the AA's choice between two doors: one leading to a spiritual life, the other to an alcoholic death. He drew knowing nods and some uncomfortable chuckles when he reminded the crowd that at some point in many of our lives, the obvious choice was not always easy to make.

In telling the story of his recovery, however, he left no doubt that the choice he had made was the right one.

Our fellowship was blessed by the service of both speakers. Thanks to all who made these events possible.

Congratulations July Birthdays!

This issue we celebrate anniversaries of our local AA family members that add up to a collective 429 years. That's more than 156, 585 days of sobriety. One day at a time!

Mary H	48 years	Bruce P	8 years	Marcus L	2 years
John T	36 years	Bob L	5 years	Cali C	1 year
Jim Z	32 years	Craig P	4 years	Cicc F	1 year
Mary Jo H	31 years	Mike P	4 years	Rita Z	1 year
Bob C	30 years	Peggy B	4 years		
Bosch R	28 years	Darren B	3 years	June 2009	
Bob T	21 years	Etta S	3 years	Roseanna S	16 years
Pat C	21 years	Greg M	3 years		
Wendy	20 years	Juan V	3 years		
Dennis	18 years	Willie B	3 years		
Michelle	17 years	Kelly W	2 years		
Marlene G	14 years	Bob B	2 years		
Paul B	12 years	Boots H	2 years		
Bruce H	11 years	Cecilia B	2 years		
Charles	9 years	Jason B	2 years		

Please share your AA birthday with all.
Deadline for August birthdays is July 20.
E-mail to ocalaintergroup@msn.com or
telephone: 867-0660.

Humility. Looking behind Step Seven.

Humility. That little word packs a powerful punch. It conjures images of solemn, saintly people—not alcoholics! Yet it's meaning and practice must be important to sobriety as it pops up throughout our literature.

Humility is also sometimes linked with another difficult word: humiliation. Sounds like opposite ends of the pole, so how do I capture the essence of this oft-suggested practice? Yikes!

Adopting humility kindles visions described by our literature as "becoming the hole in the donut" or losing the edge and becoming a wimp! For me, "humbling myself" after taking the beating alcohol gave me didn't feel great. Gladly, and by example, my sponsor opened a door for me to see this word in a more refreshing light.

I learned that alcoholics on the whole are often overly sensitive and fearful. Perhaps what I called my "assertive independent attitude" was simply a defense to protect myself. Letting down my barriers to see all points of view—to exercise humility—was difficult and

new to me.

In the past, my alcohol enabled me to retreat into my bleary well-worn blames, self-justifications for poor choices, and self-sabotaging behavior. These well-learned behaviors, all far from humble, were not useful to establish a sober new way of life.

Shockingly, even after I put the bottle down, this old thinking remained! Lovingly I was reminded that working the steps would help alleviate the stinking thinking and would require a measure of humility and willingness in practice. While I had been busy seeing only my points of view, needs, hurts, and judgment of wrongs, working the program of recovery required my commitment to practice humility, however falteringly.

In Step One, I was able to see that my choices and my behavior with alcohol had wrecked havoc on my life. I looked directly and truthfully at the humiliation I had invited. This "gift of despair" or "sufficient bottom" that our literature describes became my springboard to emotional maturity and

lasting sobriety. Indeed my humiliation began to blossom into humility.

With the practice of the succeeding steps, I began to see myself and my erroneous ways of thinking more clearly. In a Step Four, I saw more about my propensity to withdraw, blame, intellectualize, and cover hurt with arrogance or hidden defense. I learned where my own instinct gone wild had caused much of my misery—with or without a drink. I learned that drinking was only a symptom, and that my own choices brought me the results from which I now suffered.

I had achieved the practice of enough humility to gain perspective. With this new light, I was also able to see others more clearly. Later with more effort practicing humility, I found the flowers of acceptance, friendship, and belonging—all becoming fruits harvested from this nourishing practice: Humility.

Marianne M
Ocala, Florida July 2009

Service Opportunities!

Show your gratitude

Volunteers needed for the 2009 District 17 Gratitude Dinner

If you're looking for service work, and don't mind having a lot of fun doing it, serving on the Gratitude Dinner Committee could be your cup of tea. Interested? Plan now to attend the kick-off planning meeting: Thursday, July 23, 6:30 pm, Starbucks on the Square, Ocala. More info or questions? Call Francine: 352-390-7415

Take the message to local correctional institutions.

Women's Meetings

There is a critical need to carry the message to women in prison (women only). You could play a vital role. For more information, Sherry R. at 352-622-4711.

Men's Meetings

Monday and Wednesday evenings. More info, please contact Paul N. at 352-622-6967; John J. at 352-598-4319.

Hotline and 12-Step calls.

Intergroup has a critical need for volunteers to help staff our 24-Hour Hotline "after business hours" from their own homes and to help respond to 12-Step calls. One year of sobriety required. Call Intergroup 17 to volunteer: 352-867-0660.

Take Meetings at the hospital.

Eddie F. is organizing meetings for hospital-bound members of our fellowship and asks for your help in carrying the message. Cell phone: 352-207-5144. Office: 352-237-8800. E-mail: eddie@ferrentinoandson.com

Through The Grapevine!

Many of our brothers and sisters in area corrections facilities enjoy reading *The AA Grapevine*. Drop off your old copies at the Intergroup Office, or coordinate a group effort through your GSR. Just think: recycling not only saves trees, it might help save a drunk.

Publicize your service opportunity.

Send details to:
ocalaintergroup@msn.com
Or call 352-867-0660

July by the Books

STEP SEVEN

"Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings."

"When ready, we say something like this 'My Creator, I am now willing that you should have all of me, good and bad. I pray that you now remove from me every single defect of character which stands in the way of my usefulness to you and to my fellows. Grant me strength, as I go out from here, to do your bidding, Amen.' We have now completed Step Seven."

Alcoholics Anonymous, page 76

TRADITION SEVEN

"Every A.A. group should be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions."

"He has struck something better than gold. ... He may not see at once that he has barely scratched a limitless lode which will pay dividends only if he mines it for the rest of his life and insists on giving away the entire product."

Alcoholics Anonymous, page 129

"My part in the Seventh Tradition means so much more than just giving money to pay for the coffee. It means being accepted for myself by belonging to a group. For the first time I can be responsible because I have a choice. I can learn the principles of working out problems in my daily life by getting involved in the 'business' of A.A. By being self-supporting, I can give back to A.A. what A.A. gave to me! Giving back to A.A. not only ensures my own sobriety, but allows me to buy insurance that A.A. will be here for my grandchildren."

Daily Reflections, page 220

CONCEPT SEVEN

The Conference recognizes that the Charter and the Bylaws of the General Service Board are legal instruments: that the Trustees are thereby fully empowered to manage and conduct all of the World Service affairs of Alcoholics Anonymous. It is further understood that the Conference Charter itself is not a legal document: that it relies instead upon the force of tradition and the power of the A.A. purse for its final effectiveness.

Twelve Concepts for World Service A.A., page 29

District 17 Corner

Talented? Interested? Simply willing?

Any or all qualifies you for a service job with District 17. Opportunities galore. Accessibilities. Archives. Cooperation with the Professional Community. Public Information. Corrections. Grapevine. Literature. Treatment. Gratitude Dinner. Intergroup. Workshops.

Want to learn more? Attend the next District 17 meeting. All welcome.

**Thursday, July 30, 6:00pm
St. Marks United Methodist Church
1839 NE 8th Avenue, Ocala, FL**

North Florida Conference of AA Area Assembly

July 17-19, 2009.

Paramount Resort

and Conference Center

2900 SW 13th Street, Gainesville, FL

District 17 officers, group service representatives, and committee chairs, make plans now to attend. All AA members invited to attend.

Find complete meeting information and full agenda at www.aanorthflorida.org

~First Contact~

**Can YOU?
Will YOU?
Yes YOU can!**

**Just say "Yes" to answering
12th Step calls.
We'll show you the rest.**

**Learn more at the next
Intergroup 17 Meeting
Sunday, July 12 @ 5:15 pm
St. Mark's United Methodist
1839 NE 8th Avenue, Ocala, FL**

Practicing in Our Own Way

Continued from page 1

asked to give up these "favorite" defects of mine for just one short day at a time. That fact somehow reduced my resistance to letting them go, knowing that God would be willing to let me have them back anytime I insisted!

But where to start? Our co-founder Bill Wilson set out for our consideration in *The Twelve and Twelve* (page 48) a simple list of seven primary defects—or seven deadly sins. Some of us found that this list makes a great starting point for organizing our seventh-step task. Then we can start relinquishing whatever part of our defects that we're really ready to let go of right now, still continuing to ask for the willingness to soon let go of any stubborn remainders as well.

It certainly helps to know that apparently no one has ever done this step even close to perfectly or completely on the first try. Again, *The Twelve and Twelve* (page 68) reminds me that this will be a lifelong process, one part of a slow but steady spiritual remodeling job.

I can still hear my sponsor's voice saying, "Just keep doing the best you can each day and this step

will become easier and easier to do!"

In one of the most powerful seventh-step observations, *The Twelve and Twelve* (page 79) points out, "The chief activator of our defects has been self-centered fear, primarily fear that we would lose something we already possessed or would fail to get something we demanded."

If we agree with that statement, and would like to also rid ourselves of this defect activator, then what harm could there be in asking the God of our own understanding if he would be kind enough to haul these useless self-centered fears away at the same time as He takes away our character defects? That's the best two-for-one I've ever seen!

From all I've learned, there seems to be little else required of us for success in our Step Seven adventure except the need to renew our daily commitment to co-operate and participate with the generosity of our Higher Power. Again, *The Twelve and Twelve* (page 76) mentions, "It might be well if we AA's inquire once more just what our objectives are?"

You might be asking yourself, "Why should I put that much daily effort into the practice of this one step?" I once posed that exact ques-

tion to one of our revered old-timers. He answered, "Because the rewards could easily prove to be beyond your wildest dreams, and at the very least you'll be able to enjoy a reasonably happy, satisfied, content, and productive life!"

Then I asked, "If all of that comes true for me, how will I be able to keep it?" He replied with a knowing smile "Just keep polishing the rock!"

Ocala, Florida, July 2009

The writer wishes to be known as "just another member of our fellowship whose feet are made of clay."



The thoughts, expressions, and opinions expressed here are those of the author and not necessarily those of Alcoholics Anonymous or Intergroup 17, Ocala-Marion County, Florida.

*Excerpts from *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions* are used by permission of Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, Inc.

How Groups and Individuals Support the Work of AA

Group contributions are the major funding source for the work of Intergroup 17 and other areas of AA. Many groups follow the 50-30-10-10 plan of support after they meet their own financial needs:

- 50 percent to Intergroup 17
- 30 percent to AA Worldwide General Services Office
- 10 percent to North Florida Area Assembly
- 10 percent to District 17

Send group contributions to:

Intergroup 17
P.O. Box 1192
Ocala, FL 34478

District 17
P.O. Box 3081
Ocala, FL 34478

NFACAA
P.O. Box 567
Melbourne, FL 32902

The General Service Office
P.O. Box 459
6035 E. Tudor St.
New York, NY 10164

Some individual members choose to provide financial support to Intergroup 17 in various ways.

- *Faithful Fivers*: \$5 each month
- *Double Nickel*: \$10 each month
- *Birthday Club Members*: \$1 or more per year of sobriety, on their AA "birthday"

All contributions large and small make a difference. Send to:

Intergroup 17
P.O. Box 1192
Ocala, FL 34478

THANKS!



I am responsible. Whenever anyone anywhere reaches out for help, I want the hand of AA to be there. For that I am responsible.

Ocala-Marion Country Group Contributions to Intergroup 17—since June 2008

Group	Fiscal YTD	Group	Fiscal YTD	Group	Fiscal YTD
2nd Step Group	\$ 50.00	Grace Group	\$.22	Primary Purpose	\$ 84.00
11th Step Group		Grateful Gals	\$ 84.00	Shores of Sobriety	\$ 230.00
17th Street Group		Happy Highlanders - Dunnellon		Sisters of Serenity - Ocklawaha	
164 Pages Group	\$ 21.00	Happy Hour Group	\$ 150.00	Start A New Life	\$ 33.60
ACOA		Happy, Joyous & Free	\$ 911.40	Steps and Promises	
ALANDN	\$ 60.00	Headstart Group	\$ 670.75	Stop Whining and Sober Up	\$ 50.00
Acceptance	\$ 100.21	It's In The Book		Strength In Numbers - Belleview	
Alive and Well	\$ 45.00	Keep It Simple	\$ 200.21	Summerfield Group	
Anonymity Group		Last Call Group	\$ 50.00	Sundae Social Group	\$ 276.36
As Bill Sees It - The Villages	\$ 696.05	Last House On The Block		TLC Group - the Centers	\$ 1.76
Belleview Eye Opener Group	\$ 80.00	Life Is Good Sober - The Refuge		TenBroek Group	
Belleview Group	\$ 223.75	Living Sober	\$ 631.34	Unity Group	
Bonfire Group - The Refuge		Lunch Bunch	\$ 357.42	We Give Thanks	\$ 140.00
Breakfast Club	\$ 2919.18	Mano Abierta	\$ 25.00	We Give Up	\$ 124.89
Came To Believe	\$ 35.20	Marion Oaks Group		Weir Crazy - Summerfield	\$ 475.00
Citra Group	\$ 25.00	McIntosh Group		Young People's Group - YPG	\$ 10.00
Come As You Are		New Attitudes	\$ 320.39		
Conscious Contact	\$ 629.94	New Life Group	\$ 20.83	BIRTHDAY CLUB	\$ 156.00
Experience, Strength & Hope		No Name Group	\$ 103.35	DOUBLE NICKELS	\$ 60.00
Forest Group	\$ 305.00	Nueva Vida		FAITHFUL FIVERS	\$ 10.00
Ft. McCoy Group	\$ 100.48	Ocala AM Men's Group	\$ 505.00	INDIVIDUALS	\$ 98.36
Fountain of Gratitude - Salt Springs	\$ 238.74	Ocala Group	\$ 3208.29		
Free To Be	\$ 30.00	Ocklawaha AM Group		DISTRICT 17	\$ 776.00
God's Way Group	\$ 14.22	One Page At A Time			

Local Events and Meetings of Interest

Ocala/Marion County

For a complete listing of the more than 140 meetings of AA per week in Ocala/Marion county visit:
www.aaocalamarion.org

Monday

Beginners Meeting

17th Street Group

6:00pm every Monday
Church of Christ
2730 SE Maricamp Rd., Ocala

Wednesday

Meditation

Conscious Contact

7:00pm every Wednesday
St. Matthew's Lutheran Church
3452 NE Silver Springs Blvd., Ocala

Spanish Speaking

Grupo Nueva Vida

7:00pm every Wednesday
150-A SW 23rd Ave. (1/2 block
South of Ft. King), Ocala

Thursday

Eat 'n Speak

Keep It Simple Group

Last Thursday of the month
Eat: 7:00pm Speaker: 8:00pm
Small fee for meal
ALL INVITED!
Ascension Lutheran Church
5730 SE 28th Street, Ocala

District 17 Monthly Meeting

6:00 pm last Thursday of the month
All GSRs. Everyone welcome.
St. Mark's United Methodist
1839 NE 8th Avenue, Ocala

Friday

Speaker Meeting

Experience, Strength and Hope

8:00pm every Friday
Druid Hills Methodist Church
1712 SE Lake Weir Blvd., Ocala

Spanish Speaking Grupo Mano Abierta

7:00pm every Friday
2082 Walnut Street
Dunnellon, FL

Saturday

Eat 'n Speak

Ocala Group

Last Saturday of the month
Eat: 7:00pm Speaker: 8:00pm
Small fee for meal
EVERYONE INVITED!
St. Mark's United Methodist
1839 NE 8th Avenue, Ocala

Spanish Speaking Grupo Mano Abierta

7:00pm every Saturday
2082 Walnut Street
Dunnellon, FL

Sunday

Intergroup 17 Monthly

5:15 pm second Sunday of month
Intergroup Reps. Everyone welcome.
St. Mark's United Methodist
1839 NE 8th Avenue, Ocala

New Groups & Meetings

Monarch Overcomers Group

Tuesday through Friday
6:00 pm
15509 SW 34th Ct. Rd.
Marion Oaks
More info: 352-207-6011

Day by Day Group

Wednesdays, 7:30 pm
200 SW 40th. Lot 12
Ocala, FL
More info: 352-629-2894

New Beginnings Group

Fridays 7:30 pm
Sunset Harbor Baptist Church
9200 SE Sunset Harbor Road
Summerfield, FL
More info: 352-283-0778

"No Name Yet" Group

Open meeting, 7:30pm
Every Friday
9200 Sunset Harbor Road
Summerfield, FL
Info: Mike G. 352-245-3272

Lifesaver Group

Open meeting, 12:00 noon
Monday through Saturday
Recovery Road at CornerStone Ctr.
6793 SW Highway 200
Ocala

Upcoming Events

Friday-Sunday, July 17-19

North Florida Conference of Alcoholics Anonymous Area Assembly.

Gainesville.. Florida

July 18, 2009

Carry It On. Our Primary Purpose

Guest speaker—Myers R.

Primary Purpose Group
Starke, FL

\$10 registration. Limited tickets.
386-623-2564

July 29-August 2

53rd Florida State Convention.

Jacksonville, Florida.

www.53.flstateconvention.com

August 14-16, 2009

11th Annual

Big Book on the Beach

St. Pete Beach, Florida

Phone: 727- 360-4754

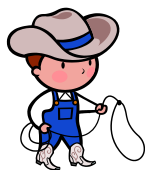
September 4-7, 2009

Tampa Bay Fall Roundup

"The Language of the Heart"

Tampa, Florida 33612

www.tampabayfallroundup.com



First Ocala Roundup Resounding Success

More than 145 people packed the fellowship hall of St. Matthews United Methodist Church on April 25, 2009, for the first-ever Intergroup 17 Ocala Roundup.

The Happy, Joyous and Free group graciously hosted the event, which included a sumptuous buffet lunch followed by two speakers: Arleen, an Alanon speaker from Gainesville and Shawn, the AA speaker from Tampa.

Diane R, a member of the Happy, Joyous and Free group and an organizer of the event said, "I am grateful to be part of the AA community and my home group and would like to thank to all who helped. Roundups have been around since I came into the Program in 1971. The Tampa Bay Roundup is a weekend event at a hotel with speakers and social activities, and Orlando even invited artists in the fellowship to exhibit their arts and crafts. It was wonderful."

Diane also notes, "There are many creative members of AA and your help is needed to develop ideas for AA events. We are so fortunate here in Ocala and surrounding areas to have people who support events like the Intergroup picnics and the District 17 gratitude dinner."

Take Diane's advice. Volunteer for service! Call Intergroup at 352-867-0660, talk to your GSR, or attend District 17 meeting on July 30 (see facing page).

53rd Florida State Convention July 29th - August 2, 2009 Jacksonville, Florida

Speakers from around the U.S.A.
Marathon Meetings
Family Workshops
Young People Meeting
Buffet Friday
Golf Tournament
Horseshoes Tournament
Comedian-Jeff Allen



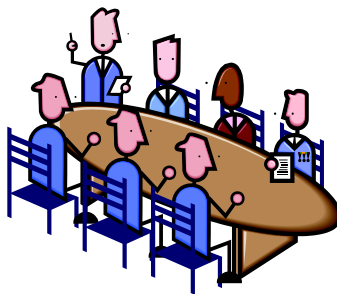
5k Run/Walk
Ice Cream Socials
Dances and Entertainment
Non-English Speaking Meetings
Grapevine
Dr. Bob's Archives
Old Timers Meeting
Meditation Meetings

More information and register online
www.53.flstateconvention.com

Book your hotel room now! www.jacksonville.hyatt.com
Hyatt Regency Jacksonville Riverfront Tel: 904-588-1234

**There's always time for gratitude.
Here's your chance to show it.**

**Volunteers needed
District 17
2009 Gratitude Dinner
Many service positions open.**



Interested? You're invited!
**Gratitude Committee Meeting
Thursday, July 23
6:30 pm
Starbucks on the Square**

More info or questions?
Call Francine: 352-390-7415

In Memoriam Bill Javor



Bill Javor, an active and beloved member of the Living Sober Group, died June 20, 2009 with 33 years of continuous sobriety. He served this fellowship with all his heart and soul.

You may have known him—he was the first one to greet you, hand you his card, and tell you to give him a call. We will miss him, but we will never forget him.

The Living Sober Group will hold a memorial service in honor of Bill on July 5, 2009 at 1pm at the First Congregational United Church, 7171 SW Hwy 200, Ocala. For more information, contact Tony E. at 690-7053.



**InterGroup 17 Meetings
You're invited!**

Anyone interested is urged to attend and learn more about all the great opportunities for service work within our local AA community.

Next Meeting

Sunday, July 12, 5:15 pm
St Mark's United Methodist
1839 NE 8th Avenue, Ocala

InterGroup Reps., please send your contact info to:
ocalaintergroup@msn.com or call
352-867-0660.

**InterGroup 17
Ocala-Marion County
Florida**

3666-A N.E. 25th Street, Ocala, Florida 34470
Phone: 352-867-0660 Fax: 352-867-7819
Email: ocalaintergroup@msn.com

Hours of operation

Monday-Friday 10 am to 5 pm
Saturday 10 am to 2 pm

Website

www.aocalamarion.org

24-Hour Hotline

352-867-0660

Free Subscription. The Voice by e-mail.

For your free monthly subscription,
send an e-mail with "Free Voice" in the subject line to:
ocalaintergroup@msn.com.

The Voice sent by e-mail is in PDF format and can be read using Adobe Reader. Free download available at www.adobe.com. Printed copies available at InterGroup office.

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Stamp