

The Caterpillar

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January 2006

AL-ANON HELPS WEATHER THE STORM

Submitted by Angela A. Baton Rouge

No sooner than the Hurricane stopped blowing and the power was restored, did I begin firing emails to Al-Anon friends all over Louisiana. A wonderful, unexpected by-product of my volunteering to serve as my home group's GR was the friendships I had formed with amazing Louisiana people in recovery whom I met at the Area Assemblies. These were not ordinary people; they were tremendously dedicated people who worked strong programs that included giving of themselves to make sure Al-Anon in Louisiana stayed healthy and strong for all of the rest of us, and for those yet to come. Each Assembly, I basked in their presence, drew from their experience, strength, and hope, and grew in my own program in leaps and bounds that I'd never before imagined.

So when I realized that many of these dear people had been dealt a terrific blow, I had to know how they were doing! I truly cared about them, just like I cared about members of my own family. Thanks to the technology of email, it was easy to send out a mass message of, "How are y'all doing?!?" It didn't take long for the replies to start coming in. Folks reported staying with friends and family in Texas, Alabama, New York, Lafayette, and right here in Baton Rouge. Folks sent new phone numbers, and asked for calls, prayers, and word of other friends. The cables literally hummed with correspondence! And all of it was so positive, so uplifting. Every time I opened a message, it was as if I'd stepped into a mini-Al-Anon meeting!

As the days go by, I hear from more and more of them. Some are just getting power back. Others are relocating and updating everyone. Some are reporting the loss of their homes and businesses, as well as the salvation of their family members, despite overwhelming odds. Still others are not yet accounted for. The positive messages continue to sustain me. Why would I choose the depressing alternative of the national network news? These people are practicing their programs, picking up their Al-Anon tools on a daily basis, staying in close contact with a Higher Power, sharing with me how the Steps and Literature are working magic to create serenity in the "aftermath." One friend reported that her family accused her of taking "happy pills", because she has remained so calm!

The underlying theme contained in all of my special Al-Anon Hurricane messages is this: GRATITUDE. Almost every one of them expressed the following sentiment in some form or other: Thank Goodness we have our program to carry us through whatever life sends our way as the result of this natural disaster. We are the lucky ones! We have the principles of our Al-Anon program to give us a road map for how to live in the "new normal" that is evolving after the storm.

For now I am taking it all One Day at a Time, thanks to their wonderful support. Still, I look forward to the day when I can be reunited with my Louisiana Al-Anon family and we can welcome newcomers into the fold.

Out of the lessons drawn from the disappointments and success alike, may I be able to discover value in life's struggles and find joys and triumphs that endure.

Scared Space

Just for today I will be unafraid. Especially I will not be afraid to enjoy what is beautiful and to believe that as I give to the world, so the world will give to me.

Al-Anon Just for Today

Happiness cannot be traveled to, owned, earned, worn or consumed. Happiness is the spiritual experience of living every minute with love, grace and gratitude.

Denis Waitley

Sharing Secrets

Gretchen H. La
Forum, June 1992

At an AA meeting recently people spoke about a home group member who had just committed suicide. Someone said the girl who died had never shared what her pain was about with anyone they knew of. They said she always seemed okay, but everyone knew that must not have been so. Someone remarked, "some of us must die so others can live." A calmness came over me. I knew without a doubt that girl's death had a purpose and I had received another message from God. I believe the message was to share with others that our secrets can kill us.

I was always a square peg trying to fit into a round hole. My secrets had almost killed me before and they could again. I am not an alcoholic but I am recovering from the family disease of alcoholism. Since I came to Al-Anon almost eight years ago I seldom spoke in meetings unless I was called on, because I didn't think anyone could benefit from what I had to say.

I am guilty of saying I am okay and smiling when I am really not, but now I am not comfortable with dishonesty. I know sometimes I have to fake it till I make it, but first I have to share with someone how I really am inside. Now I try harder to open up and share my experience, strength and hope with others more often. I don't want to die now. I can't live with much emotional pain anymore and recently I remembered *some of us must die so others can live*. I must go to more Al-Anon meetings and share with others what I have learned. A secret shared isn't the same weapon as it is if kept inside. If I go to meetings and share my pain as well as my joy with my sponsor, I am the one who will be healed inside.

I have been depressed lately and there are a few things going on in my life, but if I don't open up and share, no one can help me. I am responsible for my own recovery and I must be willing to do my part. I must let out some of the negatives inside me to replace them with positives. There is no better way to do this than working my Al-Anon program. Thank you Al-Anon for always being there and teaching me a new way to live. I will try to do my part by being more willing to open up and be honest with myself and others. I have been healed from the inside out before, and I am responsible for doing it again.

THE LIGHTER SIDE

The Forum, October 2005

Nothing was funny when I came into the program four years ago. It had been a long time since I really laughed. The people in my first meeting radiated with joy. In contrast, my problems—magnified by my character defects—weighed me down.

Two weeks ago my home group had a meeting where we arrived dressed as our favorite character defect. One member ran around the room dressed as "Snoopy." Another wore only black and white, portraying the way she thought before Al-Anon. Still another member arrived dressed to the nines. She was a "material girl." My favorite was the member dressed as "sloth." I entered the meeting room wearing my work clothes, exemplifying my close friend, "procrastination"!

It was a delightful meeting. The topic was character defects—just imagine laughing at our painful shortcomings. The squeals of recognition were even better than the laughter. "I thought I was the only snoop," and I would never have guessed that of you," and "Oh, my gosh, I do that too!" We all left the meeting feeling lighter and filled with joy. Al-Anon has been a miracle in my life and one of its greatest gifts is humor.

AL-ANON WORKSHOP

Saturday, February 4, 2006

9:30 a.m.-2:00 p.m.

**St. George Activity Center
7880 St. George Drive
Off of Siegen Lane—across from Chili's**

JOIN US FOR "THE FORUM" A PRESENTATION WITH MEMBERS OF AL-ANON

(Panels of Al-Anon speakers will share their experiences on various program topics followed by question and answer sessions. Registration forms may be picked up at meetings and at the AIS office on Lindale.)

**COST---\$20.00 for the day
(includes lunch and light breakfast)**

"Serenity opens my mind to new ideas."

Hope for Today, Page 360

Round Table Topics *From The Forum December, 2005*

Each month The Forum (Our monthly publication) includes Round Table Topics and questions to stimulate discussion.. Groups can use Round Table Topics for their meetings.

KINDNESS

- 1. What are several ways I can be kind to myself?**
- 2. If I'm not treating myself with kindness, is it possible to be kind to others?**
- 3. Am I kind to alcoholic loved ones who are still suffering from the disease?**
- 4. When I'm kind to someone, do I expect something in return?**
- 5. When is it kind not to help someone?**

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