

Ways & Means®

A Quarterly Newsletter For The Fellowship Of Debtors Anonymous

First Quarter 2015

Job Opening for D.A.'s GSO Office Manager
Debtors Anonymous is [accepting applications](#) for the Office Manager of the General Service Office. All interested persons are encouraged to email their resume with cover letter to resumes@debtorsanonymous.org.

Reflections on Carrying the Message: Beautiful Suggestions for Sharing D.A. Recovery

On January 10, 2015, the WSC Public Information Committee hosted a fellowship wide call entitled “Carrying the Message: Simple Ways to Share D.A. Recovery.” There were over fifty participants on the call from all over the US, and others called in later to listen to the recording, including members from Europe and Latin America.

There were three powerful speakers on the call, all of whom shared their experience, strength and hope around carrying the message of Debtors Anonymous. My hope here is to summarize some of their suggestions in an effort to demystify Public Information (P.I.) work, and to encourage more people in the fellowship to feel comfortable carrying the message of Debtors Anonymous.

Carol A. was the first speaker on the call. What struck me about Carol's story is the ease with which she was able to talk to people in her life about D.A. This has not been my experience. When a friend or loved one in my life displays signs that I once displayed—signs that led a good friend of mine to suggest D.A. to me—I tend fumble around in my own head for a little while trying to

come up with the right thing to say so I don't upset or offend anyone, then I wonder whether it's a good idea to say the word “debtor,” and ultimately I either fall short in my efforts or fail completely by staying silent. The program of Debtors Anonymous saved my life, and yet it is the most difficult thing for me to talk about with others. What can I do?

Carol has a solution, and it's so beautiful and simple: When someone is sharing something we recognize as qualifying behavior for D.A., we refrain from thinking THIS PERSON NEEDS D.A. Instead, we listen for and share the “ME TOO.”

A friend says: “I am so stressed out about money. I'm sick to my stomach about it.”

We reply: “That was ME TOO. My money worries affected my health. But I'm a lot more peaceful now. I am in a support group that has helped me with my stress.”

Or this: “I'm late on the rent again and I'm sure my landlord wants to evict me.”

We might say: “That was ME TOO. I was always late on the rent, constantly paying late fees and worrying that I’d run into my landlord. I pay my rent on time every month now. It’s not a problem for me anymore.”

Or this familiar (to me) refrain: “Creditors are calling me all the time. I can’t take it.”

We extend our hand to the still suffering debtor: “That was ME TOO. It’s so painful. I’m so sorry. I’m in a support group that has helped me with that.”

Carol shared that it took her twelve years from the time she heard about the program, before she finally walked into her first meeting. I had a similar experience, although it took me about a year before I was willing to go. Carol suggests that the same thing that keeps us from going to D.A. initially prevents us from being able and willing to carry the message: that thing is SHAME.

Shame kept me from coming to the rooms, and shame keeps me from talking about the solution with people who need this program. Why? Carol believes that it is very hard, even for us recovering debtors, not to take on the message that if you have money problems you are a failure. This rings true for me. I don’t want to be a failure, and I certainly don’t want to send the message to someone that I think they are a failure. Carol suggests that the words DEBT and DEBTOR trigger a shame response in people, and so she keeps these words out of the conversation until she senses readiness in her friend (hairdresser, mother, neighbor, sibling, therapist, co-worker, etc.). Carol had many more beautiful things to say. Listen to the recording!

We were very lucky to have Lawanda C. on the call. Lawanda is a GSB member and the Board liaison to the WSC P.I. Committee. She shared that although she had no prior P.I. experience when she joined the GSB, she took on the position with grace, humility and integrity, the way she would any other job. This was very inspiring to me both in terms of carrying the message and as a way to practice the principles. Lawanda is a good example of “being the message”: she reaches out to others through the quality of her own recovery, which the Public Information Manual states is “the best way to carry the

message.” So when all else fails, I can just focus on the quality of my own recovery, employ grace, humility and integrity, and do the best job I can possibly do. Thank you, Lawanda, for the power of your example. Lawanda, too, has many more suggestions and experiences to share. Please listen to the recording and enjoy.

Mike C. shared about the importance of “starting where you are” with Public Information, i.e., your own meeting, your community, and within yourself. Self-reflection is key in carrying the message. He also talked about creating regular habits of doing outreach, such as simply talking to people about D.A., having cards printed out with meeting and contact info and drop them at churches and libraries, and creating an email packet to have ready to send out to anyone you come across who may benefit from receiving D.A. material. Mike honed his ideas from studying the D.A. Public Information Manual online. He shared his appreciation for the fellows who created such a valuable service document. There are letters, flyers, and pamphlets within the packet that can be printed, customized and distributed. Everything a member needs to do Public Information is contained within the Public Information Manual. We thank Mike for his service as a Public Information Officer and hope members will be inspired by his experience to dive right in and practice carrying the message.

This call inspired the WSC P.I. Committee to put together a follow up call entitled “A Call to Action: Carrying the Message of D.A. during World Service Month.” This call will take place on March 28, 2015, in preparation for “One Member, One Action Day” on April 15th, the day we are encouraging everyone in the fellowship to reach out in some small way to the debtor who still suffers.

Recordings of the Carrying the Message call reviewed here is available by calling (605) 562-3139, Access Code: 246247#, Reference: 2 #

Thank you! We look forward to having you on our next call!

—Bevin D., GSR
WSC P.I. Committee

Ways & Means®

Carrying The
D.A. Message
Since 1988

Ways & Means, an electronic meeting in print for the fellowship of Debtors Anonymous, is published quarterly by the D.A. General Service Board. It is a forum for sharing the experience, strength, and hope of D.A. members, groups, and other service bodies. Articles are not intended to be statements of D.A. policy, nor does publication constitute or imply endorsement by D.A. as a whole, the D.A. General Service Board, or Ways & Means.

A PDF version of the Ways & Means can be downloaded free of charge from www.debtorsanonymous.org, the world service D.A. website. Multiple copies may also be downloaded for distribution at meetings. Back issues are also available.

Submissions from readers on any aspect of D.A. recovery or service are welcome. If chosen, submissions will become the property of the Debtors Anonymous General Service Board, and will not be returned. As with all D.A. publications, everyone submitting writing, artwork, or other creative work will be required to sign a standard publishing release form granting rights to the work to D.A. and releasing D.A. from legal liability. Those submitting work to Ways & Means automatically acknowledge that they will not receive compensation for their work, and that the work may be viewed by an unknown number of readers in unknown locations.

Please submit work by e-mail to: waysandmeansda@hotmail.com, or in hard copy form by mail to Ways & Means, c/o D.A. General Service Office, PO Box 920888, Needham, Mass 02492. Include your full name and mailing address, phone number, and e-mail address. (This information will be kept confidential). Story ideas and questions should be sent to the same addresses.

Editing and layout for Ways & Means are done by the Communications Committee of the D.A. General Service Board.

A Call to Action:***A Fellowship-Wide Call March 28***

This fellowship-wide phone sponsored by the World Service Conference Public Information Committee and the World Service Conference Diversity Caucus will offer experience, strength, and hope regarding carrying the message of Debtors Anonymous to still suffering debtors. Specifically, we aim to encourage members of the Fellowship to practice simple actions to carry the message on One Member, One Action Day, April 15, 2015. This call will explain how D.A. members and groups can participate in this public information activity.

The goals of the call are:

- To spread the word about One Member, One Action Day on April 15, 2015
- To share with the fellowship simple actions we can take to “Carry the Message” of D.A.
- To assist members and groups in creating special spending plans and action plans for "One Member, One Action Day" and similar PI activities
- To spread awareness of existing tools like the Public Information Manual and the Debtors Anonymous Manual for Service

Everyone is welcome to attend. Public Information representatives are especially encouraged to participate.

When: Saturday, March 28, 2015

11-12:30 PM PST / 2-3:30 PM EST / 6:00 PM UTC

Outside North America: Coordinate according to your time zones.

Dial-In Number: +1 605-781-0005 (U.S.)

Access code: 246247#

Some charges might apply depending on your phone service. There are web-based phone alternatives available. International call-in numbers are available through the D.A. eNews or by request at dacarrythemessage@gmail.com.

—Chris A., GSR

World Service Conference Public Information Committee.

Carrying the Message of D.A.

Five Simple Ways of Carrying the Message of D.A.

Here are some simple actions that any D.A. member may take to participate in D.A. Public Information efforts:

Anonymously leave a piece of D.A. literature on public transportation or at a supermarket, library, or place of worship. Free downloadable resources are available at

debtorsanonymous.org/literature/literature.htm and in the “Public Information Manual for Debtors Anonymous,” at debtorsanonymous.org/_docs/PIManual.pdf

Anonymously post a flyer on a bulletin board at work, school, a community center, etc. You can find flyers available for use here:

http://www.debtorsanonymous.org/_docs/12-Signs.pdf

Listen with compassion to someone who has confided in you their suffering with compulsive debting. Gently share your own experience, strength, and hope, and invite them to a D.A. meeting. Describe it as a support group.

Share the “Helping Professionals” pamphlet with or request an appointment to speak with a therapist, bankruptcy counselor, banker, minister, rabbi, priest, or other professional. Share your own experience, strength, and hope, and show them how to access D.A. resources.

Let everyone in your D.A. meeting know about One Member, One Action Day on April 15. Share the actions in this email, and the importance of carrying the message in helping our members stay solvent.

—D.A. World Service Conference
Public Information Committee

One Member, One Action Day: Carrying the Message of D.A. on April 15

The founders of Debtors Anonymous (D.A.) established our Fellowship on April 15 – a day many in the United States fear because tax returns are due. The choice of date made a statement that this 12 Step program would be a spiritual solution for creating prosperous lives, unencumbered by fear.

To commemorate the Fellowship’s founding, a growing number of D.A. members participate in One Member, One Action Day on April 15 each year. On this day, we collectively practice Step Twelve with each member taking one action to carry the message of recovery. Groups may also act together, choosing an action and/or actions as suggested in Tradition Five: “Each group has but one primary purpose – to carry its message to the debtor who still suffers.”

When newcomers arrive (and they will when you Carry the Message), help them feel welcome. Ask for their number and call them. The World Service Conference Public Information Committee and the World Service Conference Diversity Caucus invite you to practice these actions on One Member, One Action Day, April 15, and beyond, as we begin to celebrate D.A.’s 40th Anniversary year!

—D.A. World Service Conference
Public Information Committee

Research Trip in Europe

The following article is dedicated to the memory and spirit of Gloria, the previous Treasurer for DA Espana who passed away in December 2014. RIP Gloria.

So I'm in a corner cafe in Paris with my companions. The lights of the city are twinkling, and people stroll by on the pavement in the autumn night air. I've ordered a Salade Nicoise. There is one fluently bilingual man translating between myself and the others. The depth of the conversation is profound. I'm with Le Bureau of French D.A. and we've just acknowledged the fact that wanting to die over money is probably something we, as fellows in D.A., could call one of the 'signs'.

In France a PRG is called a Decompression. Le Bureau is, I think, the equivalent of an Intergroup.

I have just attended a D.A. meeting in French. Someone offered to translate for me but I didn't want to be a disruption and so I listened hard and gradually I began to understand the frame of the shares if not the nuances. The only thing I felt sad about was that I didn't get the jokes. And there was plenty

of laughter. What a miracle this programme is.

In the cafe, afterwards, we are just the service representatives. We talk of the common problems of being a small fellowship. They have a small number of people who do service, as do we in the UK historically. One year, no one came to their Conference, only the president and the treasurer. Not being quorate, they waited the whole of the next year to make decisions.

But now there are four very strong groups in Paris and Le Bureau is currently prosperous, and stable. Their spending plan is to get the GSRs from all over France to the Annual Conference and to trimester meetings (three times a year). They pay 100% of a GSR's fare and focus on giving and getting Decompressions after the business part of the meeting. Last year members from Belgium, Switzerland and Luxembourg came to the Annual Conference.

This meeting we are having in the cafe though, this is a first in Europe. The treasurer says I am a peony, which turns out, thanks to a translation app, to be a pioneer.

The UK has sent me on a fact finding mission to see if an idea about forming a European Regional Intergroup (ERI) that we have been kicking around at the UK annual convention the past couple of years, could work. We get members from all over Europe at that convention who have been interested in more fellowship across Europe.

As a step towards an ERI, a small group of English speakers in England and France (Cannes) have been working on a convention for June 2015 and we put out PI in August, hoping to spread the word at WSC Chicago. But as my translator so delicately puts it, the PI reached Paris before I did. Alors, the internet has its drawbacks for diplomacy. But now I can explain the spontaneous nature of the way Cannes has begun to get something off the ground and how much the UK wants to work in fellowship with Europe.

I outline our vision - that the countries in Europe will send GSRs or ISRs to the convention and that on the Sunday we will have the first face-to-face meeting of an ERI.

Le Bureau thinks it's a great idea and will take it to The Annual Conference. At the time of writing, they have voted to

send a representative and quite a few others are going too.

So I walk home through this exquisite city, with the Eiffel Tower as my landmark. I have a couple of days to enjoy Paris and then I head for Spain.

I take the TGV in the small hours and wake to the rising sun as it burns the mist off a blue dawn. The great double decker train speeds south across the continent. I am heading for Girona, in Catalonia, where I will meet with D.A. fellows going to the first Retreat organised by Intergroup Norte Espana. There is to be a service meeting at the retreat where we will discuss the formation of the ERI.

Girona is an ancient walled town, says my ancient guide book- this latter I determined to leave somewhere on this trip, in a hotel perhaps, for someone else, and I will buy a new one on a digital platform, for lightness and because I plan to be back.

I am to meet the Intergroup in the railway station. I haven't met them before and my Spanish is that of an inattentive schoolgirl. Besides in Catalonia they speak a different language. I am getting by on a wing and many prayers.

A small, chirpy group of people find me and Gloria from Girona tells me we are going to eat and meet before we travel to the retreat centre in Solius.

What she means is that we will sit by a lake for hours, enjoying

the warm Spanish sun and a banquet of self-serve dishes for which we will pay a bargain price of 9E including drinks. She means too that Spanish D.A. members will arrive from all over the country and there will be a growing energy among them, among us, that moves me in a way I'm rarely moved.

There's a reason for this - it turns out that in Spain, there are few meetings and they are small - maybe one in Madrid, one in Barcelona...Barcelona may have closed down. One in Vigo. So, the main D.A. lifeline is an internet meeting and an instant message group. Few of these people have ever met before although of course they have shared deeply and anonymously. Hugs and body language are rare among members, so everyone is making up for it.

We drive now in convoy through the Catalonian countryside for about an hour, out to Solius where the peace and quiet of the centre envelops us. We have lovely single rooms, with modern showers, three meals a day and a full programme of meetings planned.

I am particularly humbled by the generosity of the people who do simultaneous translation all weekend so that I can understand the chairs and shares. After a while I get used to sharing with gaps between my sentences, so the same translators can give people what I have said in Spanish. Then,

incredibly, about halfway through the second day I begin to understand some of what people are saying in Spanish. This really is a worldwide fellowship.

In the business meeting, we discuss the pros and cons of paying for website hosting in order to get rid of offensive advertising. I outline the UK vision to Intergroup for an ERI as I have to Le Bureau back in France. I get the same positive response and someone suggests a conference call to begin with which we think will be sometime in early January 2015.

I come away glowing, spiritually refreshed and very humble.

I gave both Le Bureau France and Intergroup Norte Espana the questions that last year's International Caucus and Committee prepared for Allen A to bring to the UK Intergroup in 2013 for discussion. UK D.A. gratefully acknowledges the support for the ERI from the fellowship and general service committees in the USA.

Just this week, one of the Cannes convention committee has been in touch with D.A. Germany and I have an email address for Italy. So I might go back to the UK Intergroup and suggest I go.

Ho hum, the selflessness of service!

—Josie
UK ISR

My Path of Service in Debtors Anonymous

Before I made it to D.A. in 1997, I was using credit cards to buy my groceries and falling three months behind on my rent. For my first several years in the program, I stubbornly refused to stop debting. I was also afraid to cancel and cut up my credit cards. I went to meetings and wrote down my money, but at first that was all I was willing to do. Despite my resistance to the program, I was overly enthusiastic about throwing myself into service. This action was premature, since I just wanted to distract myself from my own glaring problems by focusing on someone else's. Not so fast, my sponsor cautioned. He recommended that I refrain from doing service at the group level until I had completed all twelve steps. He was good to me in a firm, clear way. When I got myself into tight spots financially, he would say, "How do you plan to get out of

this? I bet you have something up your sleeve." I didn't, but his point was to train me to begin taking responsibility for the stressful situations I created for myself.

I spent the 1990s living below the poverty line while earning a PhD at an Ivy League school. When I moved to Los Angeles in 2001, I was ready for a change. I had completed the steps for the first time with my New York sponsor, so I took on a commitment as a General Service Representative. I travelled back to New York on a visit in 2002 to represent my group at the World Service Conference. As a result of my service in the program, my understanding of work in the world slowly changed. I began to think of myself as a worker among workers. I took on a humble job as a cater waiter to express my willingness to earn. By 2004, I had taken on a full-time position at a company that

I worked at for nine years. As a result, I was able to buy a house and build up a sizeable retirement nest egg.

After I left that job, I decided to take on a GSR commitment again, offering my service as an expression of gratitude and abundance. Now I am in a position to share the gifts of the program that have been so generously given to me. I also do service on the Southern California Intergroup. I sponsor several men, and I give Pressure Relief Groups whenever I am asked. When I answer a call from a debtor who is suffering, I am freed from my obsession of self through listening with compassion. I often have heard it said that service will set me free. I have found that continues to be the case. ■

Around The Fellowship



Greetings from Sydney, Australia

The 7th AUSTRALASIAN Convention of D.A. was held in Sydney on the weekend of 18th and 19th October. The venue was McMahon's Point Community Centre with sweeping views over Sydney Harbour, which left us all feeling very abundant.

The Debtors Anonymous fellowship is growing in the Australia and Asia Pacific region and, over the years, there has been a history of fellowship days, sponsorship and service.

A Saturday Skype meeting has people from around the world taking part including members in Australia and Asia and it was through the experience of this meeting that the idea of expanding on the Australasian fellowship came about. Members of the Skype meeting attended the 6th Australasian convention in Melbourne and it was there that the idea of an Australasian Network began. A series of quarterly Skype meetings was held to build upon the idea of a network with a view to meeting face to face at the

Sydney convention this year. Essentially the rose of the group is to carry experience, strength and hope to small groups and isolated individuals in the Asia Pacific region.

The Asia Pacific Regional Network now has representation from most areas in Australia and a number of members in New Zealand, Bali and China. We would like to build our relationship with world service and find way of working together in the regions to address some issues including:

- cost effective ways of distributing literature
- ways of reducing the cost of postage
- strengthening connections with World Service
- how we can best support members in outlying regions to carry the message

The Asia Pacific Regional Network next meets via Skype in January 2015 and the next Australasian D.A. Convention will be held in Melbourne in October 2015

Ways & Means is always interested in hearing about interesting and inspiring events and accomplishments going on around the fellowship. Please send submissions by e-mail to waysandmeansda@hotmail.com or by physical mail to Ways & Means, c/o DA General Service Office, PO Box 920888, Needham, MA 01949