

SPOTLIGHT:

DA Service

It sometimes strikes me as hilarious that I am a Trustee on the General Service Board of DA. I don't feel particularly qualified or worthy of the position. I've been free from incurring unsecured debt for only eleven years. There are many DAs with many more years of recovery. I'm sure there are a multitude of DAs who are more spiritually evolved. Certainly I know there are many who have newer cars, bigger houses, wiser investments, and wads of cash in the bank. So, what makes me think I am worthy of being a GSB Trustee?

Here's what I've figured out: All it takes is honesty, openmindedness, willingness, good time management, and organizational skills! You can do it, too.

People who choose to do service at the Board level aren't smarter, wealthier, or more spiritually evolved than anyone else. We are just

more willing than your average DA to immerse ourselves in the sometimes messy business of helping DA operate and grow.

I got my first taste of DA service in Southern California, where there are enough meetings to attend three a day if one needs to. I found myself sitting on the periphery of a thriving Intergroup meeting. I was shy and terrified, completely out of my comfort zone. I couldn't bring myself to speak, but I listened and took notes, dreading in advance my group's business meeting. I was too scared to give a verbal report, but I diligently published a concise, spell-checked paragraph about issues I didn't understand and left it on the literature table.

I learned that if you hang around as an Intergroup rep for very long, people start to know your name. When that happens, you can expect to be elected to an Intergroup position. Inter-

group in Southern California has a Service Board, and so I found myself on it as a workshop coordinator.

They say recovery begins when we stop debt-ing. I believe my recovery in DA moved to a new level when I learned to say "yes" to service. Keeping my records, not using credit cards—for me, those weren't the challenges. For me, the hardest part has always been—and still is—connecting to my fellows. I had felt apart, alone, "terminally unique" for so long; doing service meant I was constantly being challenged to interact with others. It was a painful, exciting, growing time, the heady early days of service. I

wasn't in DA to make friends, but somehow I did anyway. I began to feel part of something bigger than myself, something that had meaning and purpose.

Through this time I worked the Steps with a sponsor, and as is sometimes the case, things changed fast—and not

in a pleasant way. My relationship fell apart, I couldn't seem to find a job or a place to live, and in despair, I moved to Portland to figure things out. Portland struggles to maintain five DA groups. I found one I felt relatively comfortable with, and once I got over my tendency to say, "Well, in California, they do it like this!" the group elected me as their GSR. I felt like I was getting on a roller coaster.

My first World Service Conference was across the country, in Craigville, Massachusetts, a little town way out on the end of Cape Cod. GSRs from everywhere came to a rustic retreat center to conduct the business of DA. It was mid October and frosty cold. We slept five to a room. Being vegetarian, I lived on hummus and pita bread for the week, while the others put on bibs and ate lobster. I joined the Literature Committee and met DAs from all over the country.

Announcements

20th DA World Service Conference
Wednesday August 16th –
Sunday August 20th 2006
Fellowship Day, Saturday August 19th
Town & Country Hotel, San Diego, CA

5th DA London Convention
Saturday 7 October 2006
10am - 5pm
Prosperity from Clarity
Bloomsbury Central Baptist Church
235 Shaftesbury Avenue
Nearest tube: Tottenham Court Road,
Covent Garden, Leicester Square,
Suggested £5 contribution
Contact email only: sg@mailbox.co.uk

Attract New Readers for W&M
Now that Ways & Means has become an on-line publication, help us get it into the hands of other members, especially those who don't have easy access to the Internet. Try downloading it yourself, printing out copies, and bring them to your meetings. You could even bring it up at your business meeting to allocate literature or 7th tradition funds to pay for the cost of the copies. Help us get this incredible "meeting between meetings" to the folks who could use it the most.

— The Fellowship Communication Committee

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Editor's Corner

The DA fellowship is bustling with final preparations for the 20th Annual World Service Conference, to be held this year in San Diego, CA. Individual groups fund their General Service Representatives' attendance at the event by steadily raising funds over the preceding year. Every dollar donated to a group's GSR fund facilitates the smooth running of DA's service structure and allows our trusted servants to get the job done. By contributing in this way, individual members participate in the work of the World Service Conference, even if they don't actually attend themselves.

In the current issue, several members reflect on what practicing service means to them and to the fellowship at large. They share about how their experience of past World Service Conferences has affected their lives. One member shares how a progression through various service commitments led her, to her great astonishment, to join DA's Board of Trustees. These testimonies of service commitment are inspiring because they detail how intimately related our personal journey and our service work can be. The decision to be of service often manifests itself in a deceptively simple act of saying "yes" to an invitation to help, but it can have momentous unforeseen benefits.

We round out the current issue's articles with a member's account of the insights gained during and after her father's death. As always, we have our lively letters to



the editor section, "The Forum." Remember, by simply attending meetings, whether you are listening or sharing, you are being of service to the entire fellowship. Ways & Means is a venue that continues to welcome written shares from members wishing to be of service. We would welcome articles for the Fall 2006 issue of Ways & Means on the subject of "Holiday Survival." If you would like to share your experience, strength, and hope on this or any other DA-related subject, please contact us by email and give us a brief description of your submission idea. And keep on reading; we can't keep it unless we give it away. ☺

Kieran K.
(Los Angeles)

WAYS & MEANS

A Quarterly Newsletter for the Fellowship of Debtors Anonymous

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Ways & Means, our "meeting in print," is a quarterly electronic newsletter for the fellowship of Debtors Anonymous. It is a forum for sharing the experience, strength, and hope of DA groups, members, and service entities. Articles are not intended to be statements of DA policy, nor does publication constitute endorsement by either DA or Ways & Means. A PDF version of the Ways & Means can be downloaded at no charge from the Debtors Anonymous Web site, www.debtorsanonymous.org.

The newsletter may also be distributed electronically via an email subscriber list.

Submissions from DA members for publication in Ways & Means are welcome. If chosen, submissions will be published anonymously by the Debtors Anonymous General Service Board. If requested in writing, your first name, last initial and city will be placed at the end of your submission (for example, James X., Hazzard, KY); otherwise your submission will be attributed to "Anonymous." By submitting work to Ways & Means, you are acknowledging that you understand you will not receive any compensation for your work, and your work may be seen by an unknown number of readers in unknown locations. Your submitted materials and all rights therein will become property of the Debtors Anonymous General Service Board, and will not be returned.

If you accept this agreement, please submit your materi-

als to the editor at waysandmeansda@hotmail.com. Include full name, address, phone number, and email address (this information is not for distribution or publication, and will be kept confidential). If you do not accept this agreement, please do not submit your materials.

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The Heart of Recovery

If the 12 Steps are the strong, sturdy backbone of DA recovery, and the 12 Traditions are the life coursing through its veins, DA service work is its heart. Service is vital to recovery. At a steady, reliable 75 beats a minute, service is central to moving out of the trap of isolation, compulsive spending, hoarding, and debting, and into the expansive bigger life of the recovering debtor.

When we go around the room and introduce ourselves at my DA home meeting, or at a Visions meeting, BDA, Intergroup, or the DA World Service Conference, and I say, "I'm Debra, I'm a debtor," what I'm really saying is that my primary purpose is to carry the message to the debtor who still suffers. The way I carry the message is through service to others. Not just personal service. But DA service at the meeting, Intergroup, and World level.

When I first came to DA early in 2003, I was scared to admit I was a debtor. I thought if I admitted it, I'd be branded for life, stuck there forever. The opposite was true. Once I accepted that I was a debtor, I was willing to stop debting. But not until I had been in the program for almost a year. At the ninth month mark, I hit my bottom. I had \$100 to my name, no job, thousands of dollars in debt, and a huge vision that was going to crash and burn if I didn't get some help.



I got a DA sponsor. I started Step One. I became willing to stop debting one day at a time. And I started doing DA service work. When I was at my bottom, at the encouragement of my sponsor, I agreed to become a trusted servant for my DA home meeting for 13 weeks. My sponsor said my job was to take action, to do the footwork. Awareness, acceptance, action. The rest was in the hands of my Higher Power.

Motivation follows action. Though I was terrified, I agreed to show up early at DA meetings for 13 weeks straight, lead a group that averaged around 40 debtors a week, and run the business meeting once a month. When I made that commitment, I had to show up in a big way for my DA community. It changed my life.

So did attending the 2005 World Service Conference. The WSC is one very large business meeting.

And anyone who has ever led a DA business meeting knows what a challenging experience it is. It takes a lot of HP. Speaking up at business meetings has taught me assertiveness and humility. And it has grounded me more strongly in the First Tradition that personal recovery depends on DA unity.

The thing I have learned the most from DA service is that the way I show up for myself and others in DA, is the way I will show up in my personal life: in my business, relationship, friendships, job, financial, emotional, and spiritual endeavors. Service is important because it roots my HP into the way I live each day. It gives me a voice. It mirrors for me what it means to be humble and stretches me to follow the 12th Tradition, principles before personalities.

I've been noticing lately how it is often the same DA members doing service over and over again. And sometimes they begin to get burned out. I mentioned this to another DA member at dinner in between bites of fresh romaine and marinated mushrooms in a delicious crab salad. We started discussing ways to attract more DA members to service and I asked her why she thought it proved so difficult. She picked up a bite of juicy rhubarb cobbler with her fork and, before it hit her mouth, she looked me squarely in the eye and said,

Heart of Recovery . . . (page 3)

"Well, I've got a theory. Debtors want something for nothing."

Bingo. Light bulb. She had hit the nail on the head. But something for nothing leads to spiritual bankruptcy. And the best kept secret is that giving back jumpstarts a DA program faster than lightning in a rambunctious Midwestern thunderstorm. Service, the heartbeat of DA, keeps us alive.

Whatever your debting game, whether you underearn, compulsively spend, debt, or hoard, the way to experience more abundance and prosperity in your life is to give of yourself to others. As the DA pamphlet, *Service*, states, "As we learn to give freely of ourselves through service in DA, our connection with our Higher Power is renewed and strengthened...this is the 12th Step in Action." And as it says in the AA Big Book under the heading *Into Action*, "The spiritual life is not a theory. We have to live it." Service is part of living a spiritual life.

Debting is a disease. It's an addiction. I will always be a debtor. But by attending DA meetings, having and being a DA sponsor, working the 12 Steps, studying the Traditions, and performing service at every level, I learn a way out.

DA service has transformed my life at every



level. I have learned to see myself more clearly through the lens of DA recovery, a program of rigorous honesty. I am grateful for the people who gave before me and showed me the way. Only through service can we give to others what has so generously been given to us. 🍷

Debra H.

(Minneapolis, MN)

Ways & Means 2006 Publication Schedule

Issue Date	Submission Date	Publication Date	Theme
Fall, 2006	Sep 1	Oct 1	Holiday Survival
Winter, 2007	Dec 1	Jan 1	Taxes and Clarity
Spring, 2007	Feb 1	March 1	Spring Cleaning

Submit articles, preferably in a Word document, to: waysandmeansda@hotmail.com. If you are interested in submitting an article to Ways & Means, take a look at previous issues to get a sense of the kinds of articles we publish. The recommended length for articles is 400-800 words, although shorter pieces are welcome too. Articles are usually written in the first person and often detail a member's experience, strength, and hope regarding some aspect of their recovery from compulsive debting. Articles focussing on the Steps and Traditions are particularly welcome, and we also appre-

ciate jokes and illustrations. We also have special sections such as the Forum, which is for letters to the editor, and the 12th Step Corner, which provides a platform for updates about the fellowship's Public Information efforts. We welcome articles from Intergroups providing updates about DA doings in their region and from DA groups and individuals around the world. If you would like to inquire about the suitability of a particular topic for publication, feel free to contact the editor at waysandmeansda@hotmail.com.

Beyond The Money

I'm a recovering compulsive spender, debtor, and under-earner. Because of my working the Steps with a sponsor, using the tools of abstinence, meetings, pressure relief groups, sponsorship, spending plan and visions, I am free of \$22,000 of debt and I am current on my one remaining debt. I have retirement funds, savings funds, a prudent reserve, and a contingency fund. I know the balance in all my accounts, and I am amazed to have nine months' abstinence from debt-ing after relapsing twice in 2004 and 2005.

Most importantly, I have a conscious relationship with a God of my understanding that helps me daily. It isn't about the money. It's about God and faith. As a result of working a thorough 6th and 7th Step, I realized that I treat love like I do money. I crave more of it, spend it wildly, and have unreasonable expectations (like hitting the Lotto). I also expect money, like love, to fill me up, make me happy, and take away my needs. If right now you're thinking, "not another addiction I need to look at," hang in there, it gets better.

About two years ago, I learned that my dad was dying. I had made amends to him two years before in what was a tear-filled experience for us both. I'd done a variety of living amends, yet I was never satisfied I'd done enough or could be enough. My attitude was in part due to the way my dad treated me growing up, but it also owed a great deal to my view of myself as a victim. As last year unfolded,

Higher Power gave me the resources to drive back to Ohio from Minnesota seven times to be with my dad as he was dying. It was a powerful, intimate, draining, frustrating, lonely, spiritual experience, and it continues today.

When I knew dad was leaving us, I upped my efforts at meditation and prayer, working hard to open my heart. I wanted to quiet my head so I could be whatever might help him in his journey. One night, as I sat looking at him resting, he came out from whatever state he'd been in and said very politely, "Hello. Why do you come to this meeting?" I grinned and replied, "Because I love you and want to see you!" He smiled politely. "I see. And how often do you come to this meeting?" I thought about it and said, "About every two months." He nodded, smiled, and drifted off again. I no longer had any doubt whether I had the energy to get to a meeting that night.

A month after dad died, I was talking to him while walking in the woods. I thanked him for his financial frugality that allowed me an inheritance. DA taught me how to handle it soberly. I was searching my heart for what I needed most and said to him that being with God now, he had access to spiritual power that I couldn't even imagine. I knew he loved me, although he had a hard time showing that to me often. My throat closed up when I said, "Dad, you left kind of a mess down here with me in regards to relationships. It's time to pony up and send me a healing, corrective

relationship. I trust that the outcome is in all your hands up there. Thanks for being my daddy."

Within a month my friend Jim became present in my life in a deeper way. My friendship with him has been profoundly healing, showing me that I am a lovable woman of integrity. We dated through the winter and by April my father's house sold on God's timetable. The journey of letting go of my father's home was very bumpy and painful. Jim lovingly supported my family and me. On the day of the sale, I asked Jim to go one last place before we left town, my parents' grave. With my arm around Jim, I thanked my dad for the house, for sending the fine young couple who purchased it, and for sending Jim to me. I cried in gratitude and sorrow.

On Memorial Day, Jim and I broke up with many tears and thank you stories. The healing, corrective relationship with a good man included a healing, corrective ending, which I had never had. Recovery from compulsive money hemorrhaging translates into recovery from compulsive emotional hemorrhaging too. I miss Jim, and I miss myself more when I am not filled with the goodness of my spiritual disciplines. Today I choose to believe that my parents are watching how I handle this ending, giving me their love. This long leash I'm on is an incredible gift, and I hand it over to my HP and the program. Thank you DA for teaching me there is no limit to abundance.

Anonymous

The Forum: Letters To The Editor

Editor's Note: The Forum is a setting where DA members can write in to raise questions, express concerns, and make suggestions about issues that seem relevant to their experience in recovery. Members may respond to these questions, concerns, and suggestions in subsequent issues as a way to foster constructive dialogue between DA members, rather than solicit expert opinions. To respond to these letters or to address any issue, email waysandmeansda@hotmail.com.

DA Gone Mad: A Member's Nightmare

I had a nightmare last night. I dreamed I was a newcomer with a few months of not debting, and I was making the rounds of DA meetings. Hmmm, should I try the Women's Self-Debtors Self-Care Meeting, where we meet at a local beauty salon and get manicures and pedicures while we share? Should I get serious and attend the Big Sky Spirituality Meeting where we alternate formats between astrology, palm and tea-leaf readings, and a magic 8 ball? My favorite was the Friday Aromawareness Meeting where members brought leftover body oils, perfumes, soaps, and bath salts, and talked about how the scents helped us connect with our inner overspender

All of a sudden I found myself elbow deep in doilies at the Old Timers' Arts and Crafters Meeting. We tackled tough spiritual issues through treasure mapping, scrapbooking, candlemaking, and puppet shows. I knew I had blown my spending plan, but I left with a frameable poster of the DA Promises. I'm so worth it!

Wherever I went, I had my DA T-shirt, my DA tote bag, and my DA coffee mug, constantly reminding me not to debt. My pockets were full of DA chips and coins which reminded me of my prosperity and abundance. At home my walls were plastered with

vision collages and treasure maps, my shelves were stacked with God bags, God boxes, and God cans. Because God can, right? God, I hope so.

In my dream, I was an Intergroup Rep, and I helped organize a "Put the Fun Back in Fundraising" Summer of Joyous Happy Freedom. We kicked off the season with a trip to the ballpark, then we had Cosmic Bowling (those black lights are so cool). Next week we've got a field trip to the art museum. And next month, the ultimate—wait for it . . . a fabulous retreat in the mountains! We'll read the latest bestsellers on compulsive shopping, listen to guest speakers, and go horseback riding (Intergroup got us a fabulous group discount). I may have to put a little on my card but it's so good for my program.

I have so much recovery in my dream! Whatever I want I get because I believe my Higher Power wants me to be happy. Happiness to me (this week) is two new end tables and a loveseat for my den. I don't want to be one of those horrible deprivation addicts. I'll just take a little more out of my IRA. It's not like I'm debting. It's my money, and I've got plenty of time before I need to pay it.

Suddenly, I found myself at a really weird DA meeting. They laughed when I said I was a time-space-sleep-debtor. The secretary read some blah-blah about not debting, and then the speaker shared about the Twelve Traditions. I'm not

really sure what those are (I think it's mostly an East Coast thing). Anyway, I totally didn't get the part about Tradition Five—that a DA group's primary purpose is to carry the message to the debtor who still suffers? Whatever. Hey, I'm not suffering. I tried to share about the cute picture frame I made for my DA Promises and my freshly manicured nails. They just laughed. I invited them to join us for the museum tour, but they laughed more. They sure laughed a lot for a bunch of debtors. I think they were in total denial.

That's when I woke up. Whew, back in the real world. I'm still feeling a little anxious. Luckily, I live, eat, and breathe DA. I think I'll go to the Wellness meeting and get some guided meditation. Maybe I can get someone to give me a ride home because I'm not driving this week (got a ticket for expired tags). I need to set up a Tension Relief Meeting. I could really use a therapeutic massage. Have a cell phone I could borrow? I need to call my sponsor.

You think this scenario is far-fetched? It's happening now at DA meetings near you. We are losing sight of our program's primary purpose, and thus our ability to serve, and perhaps save, the suffering debtor. Wake up, DA!

Serenity Seeker



DA Service . . . (page 1)

I met a skunk, too, one night as I was walking back from the dining hall. I didn't meet any Trustees, though; on the podium, they looked elegantly inaccessible, intimidating, and overdressed. The Convocation—the assembly where the delegates make motions and vote—was confusing, and happened to be held in a rustic church with wooden pews. I saw the sun rise over the Atlantic Ocean. The entire experience was magical.

I traveled to Albuquerque in 2000, and again joined the Literature Committee, where I presented the piece that my subcommittee had worked on during the year. When I saw people I remembered from the previous Conference, I felt glad. I felt like my presence made a difference. I was asked to be a member of the now disbanded Editorial Board of the Literature Committee. I witnessed the final revisions of the DA Promises, sitting in the sunshine by a huge window. Outside it was 95 degrees and hot air balloons floated down a green river valley.

For my third year as a GSR, the Conference gathered in Baltimore at a maritime academy. We shared the cafeteria with young cadets in uniforms. The towels were awesome. Again, I returned to the Literature Committee, ready to report on Editorial Board activities. To my surprise and intense discomfort, I was elected committee chair. With the help of three GSB liaisons, I fumbled my way through the committee meetings, and managed not to faint when it came time to give a report to the Convocation. I was particularly proud of my written report, which I hoped would make up for all the things I would have said if I hadn't been petrified with fear.

Somewhere along the way, my perception of DA shifted: I started thinking beyond my local group and Intergroup, and began to see DA as a whole. I learned that the delegates' responsibility to their groups continues during the year as they work on the action plans they created in their committees. I spoke with new

GSRs attending their first Convocation and remembered my own fear, confusion, eagerness, and excitement. I saw how some delegates returned the following year, and how most did not. I felt like I was witnessing a grand, slow ballet. For the first time, I began to trust the committee process instead of allowing it to frustrate me.

Partway during that year, I was asked if I wanted to submit my name to be considered for General Service Board Trustee. By that time I knew two or three Trustees, so I was no longer intimidated, but I didn't feel like I had enough years of recovery to serve at that level. I gave it some thought and decided to follow my personal service motto: When the finger of service points my way, say "yes." I submitted a service resume. Some weeks later some Trustees called me and gently probed to see if I had a clue about what I was getting into. I didn't, but I said I was willing to let Higher Power direct the outcome. And so I was elected to the GSB and began my first 3-year term when I was ratified in New York at the 2002 Conference.

I am coming to the end of my fourth year as a Trustee. I think I'm just now beginning to get a grasp on the dynamic and fluid relationships between the GSB Trustees, the General Service Office, the Conference, the committees of the Conference, and the groups. Most days I feel bogged down in the day-to-day details of trying to get things done. But every once in a while, like when I write a share about my life in DA service, I see the bigger picture. I set aside the action plans, and ask God for a wider perspective of what DA is now, what it is becoming, what it could someday be. Then I am rewarded with a view of my own small part in the grand, slow ballet of DA.

My recovery had deepened and broadened in ways I never would have thought possible even a few years ago. My attitude is more likely to be serenity than frustration these days. I strive daily to understand what it means to be a servant leader. Every day I have a chance to connect through service to a Higher Power of my under-

standing.

I try to do service without any expectations. I have hopes, but I try to steer clear of making my happiness contingent on achieving a certain outcome. I don't always succeed. Usually it's after I don't get my way that I realize how attached I was to a particular agenda. Service is humbling. A DA friend once said, "Service is the pit that sucks you dry," which can be true if you have an expectation of a specific outcome. Service is an opportunity to practice surrendering all outcomes to God.

Service in DA is practical. I learned communication skills by speaking at DA workshops; that experience qualified me for the job I enjoy today. Every day I hone my organizational skills. Sometimes I actually accomplish things. I am learning when to speak and when to keep my mouth shut. If those aren't practical skills, then I'm not a debtor.

I am perplexed by DA members who say they are taking a "service moratorium," or doing 90 days of "task abstinence." I don't think I would have survived if it hadn't been for service. Nothing kept me coming back to DA except my service commitments. Even if I totally flub things up, even if I'm not perfect, I still need to show up and offer what service I can, "to live usefully and walk humbly under the grace of God."

I like the life DA has given me. I do service for me, not for you, because I can't keep my recovery unless I give away what I've learned to others. If it helps you and DA, wow, that's wonderful. But I never forget that I need you all a lot more than you need me.

I expect to rotate off the Board at the end of my sixth year. Would you like to be the one to take my place? I'd be honored to pass the service baton on to you. ☺

Carol B.
(Portland, OR)