

AL-ANON IN INSTITUTIONS

Volume 13 No. 1

WORLDWIDE HIGHLIGHTS

March 1983

No One Should Do It Alone

There is a lot of enthusiasm about institutions in Florida; and there are many questions about where to begin.

I would emphasize to DR's or Institutions Chairmen that no one can do it alone.

Institutions Service work is a big job in each District and the more Al-Anon interest and involvement we can generate, the more ground we can cover.

Past experience indicates that the best system is a rotation of Al-Anon members within the groups. What seems like an overwhelming job for a few dedicated people becomes a small, rewarding experience, when all are willing to participate.

If you are chairing a meeting in an institution, take someone from your group who has never been there before.

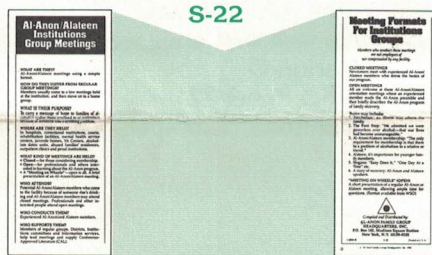
I have found the leaflet S-22 (Al-Anon/Alateen Meeting Formats - Al-Anon/Alateen Groups in Institutions), from the WSO to contain valuable information.

It has provided an excellent base for me to use as a beginning; as well as an ever-ready reference as I progress.

As coordinator, part of my work is to send to the WSO Institutions Secretary in New York news of our experiences, strength and hope in dealing with institutions in Florida. This news is then shared with our fellowship through *AL-ANON IN INSTITUTIONS*.

Florida has made it a practice of being "heard." With the help of Florida members I hope to continue sending ideas plans or stories.

Chriss P.
Institutions Coordinator
Florida



The Challenge Is Here and Now

Each of us has an opportunity for a challenge to carry the Al-Anon message via institutions. Giving that special hope to some family member or friend of an alcoholic whether in a mental health center, outpatient clinic, prison, rehabilitation unit, abused family residence, or juvenile home, will bring untold rewards. **The challenge is here and now. Let's take it, and let's go with it.**

Seek out *one* institution in your vicinity. Call the director, staff head, or administrator. Ask for an opportunity to meet and talk about the Al-Anon program.

While preparing for the appointment, ask another member to accompany you. Please remember to take along a few pamphlets and leaflets to leave to continue carrying the message.

If you and the institution's administrator agree to try to establish an Al-Anon meeting at the facility, arrange for a convenient meeting room, day, and time. After this, make contacts for other Al-Anon members to aid you. **Remember, check the "Guidelines for Institutions Service," and the leaflet S-22 (Al-Anon/Alateen Institutions Group Meetings).**

The experience is rewarding.
Vera M.

Institutions Coordinator
Maryland / D.C.
excerpt from Al-Anon-cer - 11/82

Unity Established

Our Institutions Committee was invited to the First Annual Southern California AA H & I (Hospital & Institutions) Conference in May, 1982. We had a booth in the lobby, which resulted in two requests for information on Orientation Meetings. Hopefully, next year we will be participating in some Workshops. **Most important, communication and**

Sharing Is Growth

unity between AA H & I and Al-Anon Institutions Service has been established.

My work as Coordinator has been easy, thanks to local Institutions Chairmen in the various Areas. We have five Intergroup Institutions Chairmen and only 2 more to go.

The Orange County Area is serving five facilities, four Hospitals and a Shelter for Battered Women.

The Inland Empire Area, has eight facilities; five Hospitals and two Homes for Wayward Teens and one for Battered Women.

The Los Angeles Area is in a transition stage. We have a new Intergroup Institutions Chairman, Bettie P. and she has been confronted with a number of Institutions problems. Most of the meetings at the Hospitals in the LA Area are no longer orientation type Al-Anon meetings. The LA Area has only one orientation meeting in the VA Hospital and this is a new meeting.

We are now looking into facilities other than hospitals. We are exploring the Traffic Courts. But it all takes time and patience cutting through, red tape.

Ruby M.
Institutions Coordinator
California (S)

No Trick-Or Treat!

Every six months the Stoney Mt. Penitentiary has a party for about 100 people, 50 to 75 Al-Anon and AA members. They always invite the speakers of the past six months who have received clearance.

On October 31st, there had been two excellent AA speakers, a woman and a man called "the great Tommy B." We lined up for supper about 8:30, the musician had started to play, I was through the supper line but not everyone was. Suddenly a white-faced resident got up to the mike and said "I'm sorry, but something dreadful is happening in here and everyone will have to leave *immediately*," (and not for a moment did I think it was a Halloween prank). Experienced in maximum security prisons, we knew we could not take the food out, so we just left it. We got our coats and marched out with guards about every 12 feet. There had been a recent change in location of the meetings, we were now within the very heart of the prison and had to march past the cells. Also the residents amongst us had to move out of the Cultural Centre as well. The Guards would not give out any details about what this "something dreadful," was. Even the guards we knew and dealt with, would not talk to us.

About eleven o'clock that night we found out that some prisoners overpowered four guards and were holding them hostage. They were in prisons a long way from their relatives and friends and wanted to be moved. They later were.

No one was seriously hurt. One guard was hit on the head with a baseball bat, by a prisoner, but when he developed a severe headache, the prisoners released him. This siege lasted about 48 hours.

One girl, to whom I related this story said, "you had better keep this quiet if you want anyone to go in with you again." But I feel it is just the opposite. To discontinue my work "inside", because it is too dangerous is preposterous. I think that it proves just how much we are protected when we are there. I am not laboring under any delusions that prisons are a piece of cake and the inmates are cream puffs, innocent, or falsely accused and sentenced by mere chance. We did as we

were told and the guards were there to protect us. After all it wasn't the visitors that were taken hostages; it was the guards. I also feel it was a testimony to the way the guards in Stoney Mt. treat their prisoners, there were no beatings. People in protective custody were not harmed in any way, and in a prison, that is remarkable. (Protective Custody in Canada could be child molesters, stool pigeons, sadists and cops.)

The "hostage takers" could just as easily have come to the AA meeting and done what they did, but they chose a Halloween party and did not take the guards until all the guests were out. Their respect for AA was apparent, as was the changed attitudes of the prisoners in the AA program.

So all is well that ends well.

Marion O.

WSD Panel 22

Manitoba, Winnipeg, Canada

Juganetz

A Most Receptive Audience

I was invited to a penitentiary in this area, for what the inmate AA group called "Al-Anon Evening." There were around forty AA inmates, the current Manitoba Delegate, Marion O., and myself present. I felt immensely grateful to the WSO Institutions Committee for the constant encouragement to start Al-Anon groups in institutions, and to continue carrying the Al-Anon message within such walls.

Over a twenty-year period, I have been invited into such meetings, and have always experienced feelings of profound gratitude to have been granted the privilege. The men who are there, listen to whatever message the Al-Anon members bring, **they are one of the most receptive audiences I have encountered.**

As they listen they seem warmed by a message of compassion and views of understanding. They ask sensible and realistic questions, frequently express a dawning awareness that parental alcoholism in their childhoods may have affected their development. Some indicate that their own tendencies toward overuse of alcohol as a way of coping with their environments may possibly be related to family alcoholism.

Ruth H.

Winnipeg Manitoba, Canada

Legend of a Name, "Hanging in There"

I recently discovered that I belong to two groups, in Foxboro, Mass. "Seeking Serenity" and the Walpole "Hanging In There." We've had a group in the maximum security prison in Walpole, Massachusetts for four or five years, but just recently a name was selected and the group registered in New York.

One night we asked the men how they were doing and several said, "Hanging in there," and thereby hangs the legend of the group's name. It's a nice feeling to know this group is now official. We've had some "touch and go" moments when we weren't sure they wanted us there, or we wanted to be there. Some nights when no inmates showed, we held a meeting anyway, among ourselves.

We've been through personnel changes at the prison and with the, One Day at a Time, Live and Let Live attitude we are now a registered group! **Anger, frustration, tears, joy, laughter and quiet determination have gone into the success of this group and through all of this we've learned a few do's and don'ts.**

We stay on Steps 1, 2, and 3 and well away from 4. We're not there to listen to the inmates confessions, but to pass along and share the basics of the Al-Anon program.

We urge inmates to participate so that the meeting doesn't become a lecture and encourage questions after the meeting. We individually explain the program as we use it. In most cases, the men are friendly and interested, once they find out we're not "reformers" or "do-gooders."

Each month we bring literature. I save all my FORUMS and my husband's GRAPEVINES and bring them along. We give away an ODAT whenever possible. We have a raffle, decide on the winning number and the inmate who guesses the number, gets the book. We encourage them to tell their families about Al-Anon. One member told us his wife joined a group and loves it. We left walking on air that night.

The prerequisite for coming to the meetings is to participate in the AA program at the prison. This is a rule of the prison, not ours, but find it very helpful.

We tell them they can use the Al-Anon philosophy in their daily lives in dealing with other alcoholics in prison; many have come to the realization during the meetings that they are children of alcoholics.

(continued on page 4)

Counselors of a Correctional Facility View Al-Anon

Al-Anon is one of the most effective programs I have experienced in 30 years of institutional work.

Al-Anon was one of five parts of the Pre-Release Class here at the Delaware Correctional Center. I sat in on most of the sessions and was highly impressed on two levels: first, how readily the inmate groups responded, and second, the meaning Al-Anon held for me.

My training was in group therapy and I have rarely experienced such effective group discussions, in terms of how easily the group moved into free and open interchange, how skillfully Al-Anon members handled the few times when an individual would try to get the whole discussion off the subject, etc. I marvel at the skill and the humility. Members keep saying, "we're not professionals, we don't know how to lead groups." Well, fine, better some of the professionals should learn from Al-Anon members like you.

I mentioned to my colleague, Leo Boyle, that I question in my mind, "is it Mary Ann, George and Steve, or is it



STATE OF DELAWARE
DELAWARE CORRECTIONAL CENTER
SMYRNA, DELAWARE 19977

Al-Anon?" He responded, "probably some of both." To further satisfy myself, my wife and I attended an all day Al-Anon Mini-Conference in Newark last summer, and found the answer. Clearly it is the Al-Anon program. We attended sessions led by others and while I respect and am grateful to you all, quite professionally, I think, you really haven't sold yourselves to me; rather the Al-Anon program has. When I first heard Mary Ann say, "The Al-Anon program works," I could see that she was confident about her statement, but I didn't know what she meant. Now I do.

The experience of having someone say, "I have had a bad time, sinned, been hurt, fallen, failed, but have overcome a great deal; I'm proof of suc-

cess, and you can do it too," is rather impressive.

I tried to analyze what happened in each of the 13 or so classes. Al-Anon members met each new group "cold" and by the end of the first hour every member of the group was hanging on every word, thinking and feeling deeply. I can't fathom it.

As I recall, at the first session, George conveyed the feeling of being unusually open and honest; that is startling. Then at the next, his apparent comfort in revealing personal parts of his life. There is no question in my mind that if one is to come across as a real person he certainly will refer to his outside, private life, but it is so seldom done that it is novel and winsome in a group meeting.

Learning in an atmosphere of love seems more effective as displayed by the warm feelings of Al-Anon members.

So, my conclusion is, Al-Anon has something to say to those who are incarcerated and it says it effectively.

Frank A. Loftus
Counselor

In my view, Al-Anon in the Delaware Correctional Center, particularly in the Pre-Release Classes, has been a valuable interlude in which two very important processes took place.

One, the residents were afforded the opportunity to hear how one human being has wrestled with the problem of alcohol abuse in a close family member. Few residents do not share this situation, but few, have found a healthy way of dealing with the problem.

Two, the residents and staff, were given the opportunity to view another human person open, and honest about their feelings, failings and frailties. They saw that the person did not die as a result, did not crawl away to hide. But what they did see, in my view, was, how benefits could result from such openness, and a "measure of happiness" was indeed obtainable. Yes, it was and I hope will be of great value to all the people of The Delaware Correctional Center.

Jon H. Zimmerman
Counselor Supervisor

I wish that Mary Ann and George were a permanent part of the correctional system. As Al-Anon members they brought so much knowledge and humility to the program, it not only affected the inmates but it affected me as well. I still use Al-Anon methods to help those who are in my building.

The people who were in the Al-Anon program are now scattered throughout The Delaware Correctional Center and the state. Some are in programs and others are still trying to get themselves together.

We will try to get our building back in shape, and resume Al-Anon meetings, as soon as Pre-Release Class gets its classes started again.

Leo A. Boyle, III
Counselor

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AL-ANON
Guidelines

GUIDELINES FOR ALANON SERVICE IN CORRECTIONAL FACILITIES

INSTITUTIONS KIT

FOR

AL-ANON / ALATEEN FAMILY GROUPS

AL-ANON IN INSTITUTIONS

Volume 12, No. 3 WINTER/Spring 1983 October 1983

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Where: Anytime, Anywhere. Reach Out for Help

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We Will Try Again

Last year we had to drop several institutions groups for the following reasons: at one facility there were problems with the social workers who wanted to coordinate the meetings. This was unfortunate because at this clinic the doctors recognized the growth in the patients who had attended Al-Anon meetings.

At another facility a regular group was started. Here they are meeting half an hour before the regular meeting to pass along information about Al-Anon and refer potential members to regular group meetings. At a third clinic it was not possible to motivate the directors in favor of our work for Al-Anon. At this facility the nurses and social workers requested the meeting, but since the administration did not agree we had to disband the group. We tried to meet with the administration to inform them of the purpose of Al-Anon and tell them we were willing to cooperate concerning the time and day we would hold a meeting, nevertheless they did not welcome us. However, we will try again in the near future to meet with them.

From the Guidelines for Institutions Service which we received from the WSO, we developed a guide for ourselves which will be helpful and it has clarified a great many doubts we had. We feel the cooperation of the Al-Anon PI service minded members here, will also help the growth of the institutions groups.

We hope with the support of our GSO and WSO we will increase our services to institutions in this country.

Magdalena E.
Mexico

My Husband Helped to Lead the Way

"How I got into the Women's Jail — long, long, trail — long story. In 1949 my husband, only weeks sober in AA, went with a fellowship friend to the Prince Albert Penitentiary and talked with the Warden. The Nor Kel AA group grew from this conversation. In 1950 we moved to Edmonton.

There my husband started a meeting in the men's jail. I met the Warden from each institution my husband visited and was always asked to contact families of those inside who were attending AA meetings. In 1952, my husband was the first employee of the Alcohol Foundation, later A.A.D.A.C. He opened the first halfway house in Alberta for alcoholics — all the time I followed in his footsteps, helping families.

Belmont Rehabilitation Centre (detention from jail) helped alcoholics, but not their families. At this point in 1962, my husband had also started groups in Alberta Mental Hospitals, Ponoka and Edmonton. There Al-Anon members spoke for the first time at their AA meetings. A psychiatrist heard us and talked to me about Al-Anon. We held meetings there from 1962 to 1973 when a new administration stopped both AA and Al-Anon meetings.

At the Correctional Institution for Girls, I convinced the Superintendent an Alateen meeting would be beneficial and so a meeting was started.

Although my husband paved the way it wasn't always easy, but the satisfaction was great. Since I'm a letter writer, all through the years of 1954-1965, I wrote to the people in government, asking how come they give instructions to diabetics' families and none to families of alcoholics?

I truly believe that the way to get Al-Anon into any place is to find someone with a concern for this problem who works at a facility, and through the principles of attraction, show them.

Catherine S.
Canada

"Hanging in There"

(continued from page 2)

We prepare for a beginners meeting because there's always someone there who has never heard of Al-Anon. We gave up trying to hold the same type of discussion meeting as in outside Al-Anon groups, the atmosphere here doesn't encourage the same type of openness about shortcomings we enjoy at our meetings. However, there is a great deal of sharing about feelings towards the alcoholic and alcoholism, in fact, the Security Officer has often reminded us, that "time's up."

Joan N.; our "fearless leader," calls each of us monthly to confirm that we're going so she can give this information to the office at MCI-Walpole, as required, for clearance.

We are four women who are the "core-group" with one or more additional members, each month. Recently, we added a male member, who plans to enlist some of his friends.

Dottie, Kay, Joan and I want to pass on our enthusiasm and our encouragement to other members chairing Institutions Group meetings and say, "keep hanging in there." Its fulfilling, exciting and totally rewarding.

Violet L.
Foxboro, Massachusetts

Giving It Back With Gratitude

Service is very meaningful to me. I started giving back to Al-Anon before I was "dry behind my ears." Somehow, I seemed to be in the right place — but wondered, would it be the wrong time to be asked to serve on the steering committee? This was at a time of my life when I hardly knew where I was, what I was or who I was. I knew nothing about a steering committee, and wondered what this committee would steer.

I had been going to state Assemblies as GR (Group Representative) and/or Alateen GR for a long time. After corresponding with our Delegate for some time, she asked me if I would serve as Institutions Coordinator, and I said I'd give it a shot. Later I wondered why I said yes, doubts and fears crept into my mind. My first committee meeting of our state was filled with trepidation. Believe me, I worked on me and talked to my sponsor who suggested getting back to the program and pointed out I had choices. The day of the meeting came and there I was, nominated as the Institutions Coordinator.

A year has gone by and beautiful things have happened. **The professionals I have dealt with, mostly by mail, have been cooperative and most praise Al-Anon. We now have 10 institutions meetings, and more Al-Anon members who are becoming interested in bringing Al-Anon into institutions.**

Because Al-Anon gave me back my life, I wish to give back to Al-Anon as much as I am able.

Suzanne K.
Institutions Coordinator
Pennsylvania



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Published triannually by Al-Anon Family Group Headquarters, Inc., 1 Park Ave., New York, NY 10016.
Subscriptions: Individual—\$1.50 per year; group rate—\$3.50 per year for 10 subscriptions; single copies—15¢ each.

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