

Spring 2014 Assembly Presentation / Fear-Faith-Fun In Area Service

This Fall Assembly will be our Election Assembly for the new **Panel 55 Area Officers and Coordinators**. In an attempt to help members look at his/her service experience, we are introducing a simple **Service Resume**.

- It might be helpful to read the *Some Things to Think About / Fall Election Assembly*. It was posted for 2011, but is appropriate for any Election Assembly.
- A copy of the **Service Resume** was handed out to every member.
- The **updated job descriptions** for Area Officers and Coordinators are available on the NYN website. Please review before filling out a resume for a specific position.
- All of these items are available on the **nynafg.com** website under *Area Information and Forms*.
- With our limited time, we asked Area Officers and Coordinators to write and give a brief (two minute) share. In no particular order, we tossed a beach ball to the next person to share. It was unfortunate that we did not hear each one share his/her fear about stepping up to a new level of service and the growth received. Maybe reading some of these shares will help you decide to step up to a new growth opportunity.
- **Fear does not always present itself when standing for a position. Sometimes it occurs when you have been voted into the position!** Knowing that there are others who have gone before us, who have had similar fears, and are willing to share experience, strength and hope, is supportive and comforting....**Service Sponsors** ...we never have to do anything alone. We grow by leaps and bounds when we learn to ask for help and find that others want to help us succeed. It is a “we” program.
- The sharing is not labeled by name. Some chose to share on a previous Area position. You are encouraged to speak to any Officer or Coordinator and ask questions.
- We asked that resumes be sent to the Area Chairperson prior to the Assembly. It helps if we know if there are members interested in specific positions. **These resumes will not be posted anywhere.** *If you wish to stand for a position, you will be asked to fill out the resume and read it to the Assembly members. Forms will be available at the Assembly weekend.*

Officer / Coordinator Sharing on Fear / Faith / Fun

When I first stepped up to a position at the Area level, I felt pretty comfortable about it. It was Convention Coordinator. I had been active with the Salt City Roundup for about 10 years at that point. I really thought that I knew what was involved in hosting a convention. I have to say, I was not challenged too much.

From the time I first became active at the Area level, going to Assemblies as a GR, there was one position I said I would never do...Secretary. I watched the women who were in the position taking the minutes during Assemblies and reading the minutes from previous Assemblies and AWSC meetings. Then they had to listen as people would give corrections to the minutes.

I knew I could not do that job. I have a hard time spelling. I knew that I couldn't get all that information down correctly and make sure my spelling was correct. I also hated the idea of people standing up and telling me where I made a mistake. My worst fears were making mistakes!

So a couple of Panels ago, I stood for another position. I didn't get it. When the time came for people to stand for Secretary, I found myself standing there. What was wrong with me...this was the position I said I would never do. Something pushed me to stand. We all know what that was. I was elected Secretary.

In the 3 years as NYN's Secretary, I found that my spelling didn't matter...spell-check takes care of that. I found that I could get everything down in my minutes (I'm the only person who can read my handwriting when I'm taking minutes). Having people stand and make corrections was a relief. I didn't have to be perfect. You all would help. More than once during those three years, someone would say to me I did a great job with the minutes. I needed those positive words. At the end of my term, I was so grateful for having stepped past my fears. I truly enjoyed being the NYN Secretary.

In September of 1995, the Fall Election Assembly was scheduled to be held and I planned to attend for the day. I was considering the possibility of standing for a position. After a number of attempts by Mary G., chairing the meeting, to fill the Treasurer's position, I reservedly raised my hand as the thought process took place. I was willing and doing this type of work was familiar and most of all, I didn't need to write a newsletter article. I could do this and did for two terms. Then I stepped away for the next three years, returning in 2011 to that Fall Election Assembly. That year I was elected to the Alternate Delegate position and knew that, yes indeed, this would mean I would have to overcome my fear of writing because I would be expected to write a monthly article for the Area newsletter. As the Alternate Delegate, I was also the Area *Forum* coordinator and this could be the focus of my newsletter articles. I loved receiving the monthly *Forum* magazine and it had been a great help to me in my recovery. Yes, I could write a short article on the *Forum*, but I depended on a lot of help from my Higher Power. Each month I would ask my Higher Power to sit with me as I began to put my ideas on my yellow pad and after about a page and a half, I would have all I could put together and so off I would send it to the current Newsletter Editor.

After some time of doing this, another Trusted Servant called about something else and said, by the way, did you see that one of your newsletter articles had been picked up by the WSO staff and appeared in the Area Highlights. What a boost to my confidence. And so I moved on in Service,

my fear of writing has been lessened and I now look forward to seeing what the next month's topic will be so I can do my homework and put my thoughts together.

A fear I had when standing for the position of Newsletter Editor is that I didn't have or know how to use Microsoft Publisher, which is what it was being published in. I ended up learning a whole new program, which I couldn't have done without a lot of help and support from my two proofreaders.

A fun growth experience related to being the Newsletter Editor happened when it was brought to my attention that I made a change in someone's NHL article without checking with them first. Being human, my first reaction was to be defensive. But by working the first Three Steps, and having that little willingness to see it differently, I realized that I was in error. The only way to fix this was to admit my error and apologize. I am grateful this person had the courage to let me know that they were not happy and then to be open-minded enough to accept my apology. At that moment, all the guilt and bad feelings disappeared, and we were both laughing in gratitude and amazement for this blessing from the Al-Anon program! Wow!

A fear that I have been facing regarding my position, as Literature Coordinator, is coming to the microphone and giving my report. My heart races and I feel my anxiety level go up. My fear is that I will have an anxiety attack in front of all of you. So far, it hasn't happened.

A fun part of my position was receiving the newest book "*Reaching for Personal Freedom*" ahead of time and bringing it to the groups that I attend and passing it along for everyone to see. Keeping NYN informed as to the changes that are occurring in our literature and new projects that are in the works is something I enjoy.

Working with other officers, coordinators, and past delegates has been an eye opener for me. I have experienced maturity, dedication, and regular communication with all. My friends teach me how I can improve.

A rewarding experience I had recently was when I met a young woman at a conference. The woman said "You saved my life. Weren't you at the beginners' meeting in Canandaigua?" It took me a few minutes to recognize the woman. Then it hit me! I looked at her and said "I wondered what happened to you!" I met this woman two months ago when she was told by her employer to come to Al-Anon because her daughter was in the emergency room due to an overdose. This woman was with her daughter at the conference and she introduced me and the daughter said she has been sober for two months. We all hugged.

What did I not like about Public Outreach? Me, hold a position? I am too scared. I am not good enough. I'll fail. I can't take that risk. All I have to do is say yes and remember "Progress not Perfection". I certainly have not reached perfection, but I have learned to face my mistakes, ask for help, and say what I feel...and that is good enough.

What do I like about Public Outreach? What do I do well? I like being creative and having fun. Service and Public Outreach is all about "Attraction rather than Promotion". Service and

Public Outreach is all about encouraging others to join us, having fun and even going to exotic places.

Dan, a GR I trust, read over the duties of Web Coordinator, and told me that there was nothing difficult technically about the position. So, a couple of minutes later, when they asked for a volunteer, I stood up.

I was overwhelmed with emotion, and wasn't sure I could speak when I walked up to the mic to tell them my background. I kept my head down and just talked into the mic without looking at anyone.

Over the years, I've learned a lot about myself in Al-Anon. The first thing I learned was that it was bad to project the outcome of taking a risk, and that projecting was what I did all the time.

Although I was a GR after only six months in Al-Anon, it took me fourteen months to get up the courage to chair a meeting. At that time, the chair was expected to personally ask people to share their story. With my low self-esteem, I was sure they would refuse, so couldn't do it. When I was able to ask people to share, it was like a miracle was happening to me. Everyone agreed to share, but that wasn't the point. Taking the risk by asking them and risking rejection, was causing the biggest positive change I ever experienced, and I thought a miracle was happening. That was long ago, but I can remember the change was obvious to others at that meeting.

I learned from that experience that no one, professional or otherwise, could give me self-esteem. I alone could do that and I had to do the work, taking little steps in the process that has taken me to a knowledge of myself and what I need to do to be a healthy, fairly happy person.

One big change is that I can now reach out to people. I don't have to wait for them to approach me, which was a real handicap. I can do things now that positively effect others. My son in AA said "If you want good self-esteem, do esteemable things." It works for me and seems to build on itself.

When I stood for Alateen Coordinator, I was afraid of conflicts that might arise in the different meetings throughout NYN. I actually was looking forward to doing the paperwork as I could "sit down" on the job.

My funny experience in service happened in my first year as Alateen Coordinator. I had planned my knee surgery and then realized that I was not going to be able to attend both the Fall Assembly and NYNAC. It was our first year at the new location.

I had to ask for help. I called Helen H. and she started laughing. I had no idea why. She told me she was just recuperating from knee surgery herself. So, not lonely did she agree to help me out filling my missed service commitments, but she gave me good advice for the surgery before, during and after. Helen, my HP and I had a good laugh over having the right people, in the right place, at the right time. There are no coincidences.

I remember that day at the last Election Assembly, when I heard the position of Area Secretary announced. The responsibilities and duties were read and as I looked around, I was the only one standing! I have been active in Al-Anon since 1982 and attended my first Assembly many years ago. I have had the privilege of serving, but never at the Area level. I became active in service in Al-Anon very early. I realized that being in service made me feel obligated to continue my

personal growth in the program and benefit from that service. My sponsor and I had discussed the possibility of my standing this time. Her advice? Higher Power will give you “a push.” So began my journey. My first steps were unsteady, but I was on my way to discovering a whole new world filled with unlimited possibilities. Each time I sat with my fellow elected officers, I felt a confidence and faith that YOU had elected ME. I resolved to put my doubts aside and remember, “It is progress not perfection.”

Three years have passed. This experience has given me the faith to see and accept the best in me and others and to recognize I do have limitations, especially when it came to my computer skills!!! I have learned to ASK for help and I am teachable!

Today, I can put aside any thoughts about how I may differ in opinions or beliefs from the members. Now I try to focus on what we have in common----our spiritual connection. We are all members of the worldwide fellowship of Al-Anon.

This past Election Assembly was the first one I could stand for a position. I can remember trying to figure out if I could / should / would stand for anything. When I finally decided there was a position I was interested in, by the time I got up the nerve to stay standing (or rise again from my chair), one of my good friends in the rooms was standing for the same position! Well, that answered that! I did not want to run against them... after all, they deserved the position more than I did!

Then there was another possible position I might consider, but by the time I finished pondering it in my head, that position was filled! So went my first Election Assembly.

Not long after the Assembly, I got a phone call from someone at the AWSC meeting asking me if I would be interested in taking a position. ME???? You’ve got to be kidding. But I didn’t say that. Instead, my Higher Power said (no, it really wasn’t me saying it!) “ Can I think about it and get back to you?” So thinking about it got me where I am today.

Being in my service position has been a tremendous growth experience for me. I have served (and continue to serve) at the Group and District level, but this is my first Area position. Everyone has been so helpful and each one is just a phone call or email away. I have felt the warmth of people I had not known very well, been able to laugh with them over silly things and have been encouraged by the other officers and coordinators, as well as the little notes that accompany donations. Thanks for this opportunity to serve.

The service position that gave me the most fear/fun/growth was NYNAC. The fear with working with the teens was that it would bring up bad memories of my teen years. The other fear was being responsible for other peoples’ money.

The growth came when I was able to share my teen experiences with the teens in loving interchange during topic meetings and hugs for healing. The teens showed me compassion and love and I could put my past bad teen experiences in their true perspective. I was able to keep track of money, disperse it properly, having enough to pay all the bills. This was my responsibility.

The fun came from sharing meals with the teens, enjoying the talent show, dance and bonfires. (Singing and eating s’mores) and enjoying the beautiful Fall days each October.

My biggest fear in taking a position at the Area level was (and still is) speaking in front of a group of people. My voice would quiver and my whole body would shake. It was very difficult, but if I was going to grow in this program, I had to try and get over my fear. The thing that helped me the most was the love and support of everyone in the room. No one made fun of me or criticized me for my shaky voice and body. I still have that when I speak, but not as bad as it used to be. I have to remember that this is a program of progress not perfection. Boy am I living proof of that.

Fear of not being accepted had always held me back from participation in many activities. Each time I stood for an Area position, my fear was a mix of not being elected or being elected. Then the fear was doing everything that was expected of me in the proper way. My Higher Power gave me so many opportunities to grow in my program and as a member of the human race. I struggled in my mind when I felt overwhelmed with a project and finally when I asked for some guidance from someone who had gone before me, the loving interchange was there. What a great feeling to not be alone anymore. Having held many Area positions, each began with some fear and uncertainty. What came as the terms progressed was finding shortcomings to work on and in the turning over of a position some grieving, before moving on. All is part of my growth process.

Fun comes in many forms. Sometimes it sneaks up on you. Thank you Al-Anon and Alateen for allowing me to be silly sometimes and to laugh at myself. One position presented me with a poncho and a plunger...I began to rethink if I wanted to continue with the position! I did and it was my biggest growth spurt. I have worn some crazy costumes and silly hats. I have been in some pretty strange skits... and still you don't run in another direction when you see me coming. I love the hugs and smiles that often greet me at gatherings.

Service has provided me with a chance to grow and participate in my life in a manner that feels productive, even when there is chaos all around me. Challenges have been sometimes frustrating but always exciting in a positive way. Thank you for the chance to improve my life and build a family of choice to love and support.

Actually I had two big fears when I stood for my position. One was writing that monthly newsletter article. My first service position in NYN was treasurer and I was comfortable with working with numbers and simply presenting those numbers to you in print. But to write an article was very scary because I would have to share my own material, something that was MY Own Thoughts. NOW that was scary. Many times I needed to ask the newsletter editor for an extension because I wasn't quite done. I have worked through this fear one article at a time. The second fear was making a mistake when chairing the Assembly. Well, that happened and I was able to make amends and move forward. I was able to say I don't always know what to do and reach out for help – my famous words are now, Help me out here. I've had so many personal growth opportunities while in this position and I am so grateful for that. I feel so lucky and blessed to have so many members in NYN service that offer me a listening ear along with their experience, strength and hope. If I can do this, so can you.
