

Lifeline

December 2012

Connecticut Area 7 Newsletter for Al-Anon / Alateen

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Announcements:

Events:

- Serenity Breakfast
Sunday, January 20, 2013, 9:30 am
\$25 (Register now. See Page 7.)
Crowne Plaza Hotel
100 Berlin Rd., Cromwell, CT 06416
- Al-Anon CT 2013 Convention
March 15-17, 2013 (Register now)
Crowne Plaza Hotel
100 Berlin Rd., Cromwell, CT 06416
- Al-Anon International Convention
July 5-7, 2013, Vancouver, BC
(Registration NOW available, passport needed)
See www.al-anon.alateen.org/members
for details and registration information.

Need Support:

- Wednesday 7:30-8:45 pm
First Church of Winsted
95 North Main St., off Rte 44, Winsted, CT
Use back door, upstairs
- Saturday 4:00-5:00 pm Open Meeting
High Watch Recovery Center
62 Carter Rd, Kent, CT
- Saturday 3:30-5:00 pm
Youth Center (small stone church)
School St., Unionville, CT
Closed Women's Step Meeting.

Format Change:

- Thursday 8:00-9:30 pm, New Haven
305 St. Ronan St., New Haven, CT
Changed to a Step meeting using *Paths to Recovery*

Time Change:

- Thursday 7:00-8:00 pm
East Haddam Al-Anon and Alateen groups
Congregational Church
499 Town St, East Haddam, CT
Have begun a CD lending library



*"The most precious gift we can give a loved one
is ourselves: our time to share, our ears to
listen, our hands to hold."*

My Goal

My goal for 2013 is Freedom.

Freedom from the inherited effects of multi-generational alcoholism.

Freedom from familial dysfunction.

Freedom from parental expression of rejection and abandonment.

Freedom from personal pursuit of perfection, judgment, control and self-righteousness.

Freedom from living a dual life.

Freedom from feelings of anger and resentment long repressed within my heart.

Freedom from emotional scars of painful and disappointing childhood memories.

Freedom from caring what others think of me.

Freedom to be myself for who I truly am.

Freedom to feel the right to express myself – my thoughts, my feelings, my ideas and my beliefs without fear of reprisal.

Freedom to listen to others as God listens to me.

Freedom to help others as God helps me.

Freedom to love and encourage others as God loves and encourages me.

Freedom to live out God's will as God inspires me.

Freedom to do for others as I would like to have done for me.

Freedom to be an expression of God's love to others as others express God's love for me.

Freedom to embrace growth and transformation.

Freedom to be more than just adequate.

Freedom to see God in all things, through all experiences and at all times.

Freedom to be the precious child God intends me to be.

Freedom is my goal.

Carolyn D



Statement of Facts From an "Old-Timer"

I joined Al-Anon back in 1972 when the "Program" was just that ... A program to help me cope, change, learn, and live by good spiritual principles: the Twelve Steps, the Twelve Traditions and Twelve Concepts. "In Al-Anon, we strive for an ever-deeper understanding of these steps, and pray for the wisdom to apply them to our lives" is quoted before we say the Twelve Steps at every meeting.

Step One tells us to admit we are powerless over people, places and things. We need to remember that Al-Anon is a spiritual program.

Step Two tells us that we "Came to believe that a POWER greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity." I was not sane back in the 60's and early 70's because I was dealing with the disease of Alcoholism alone. After joining Al-Anon, I realized I was not alone ... That there were other people joined together with a Higher Power, supporting each other.

Step Three says, "Made a DECISION to turn our will and our lives over to the care of GOD AS WE UNDERSTOOD HIM." This gives us the RIGHT to call a POWER greater than ourselves: HIGHER POWER, GOD, HE, SHE OR ANYTHING ELSE. My choice is God. My God is omnipotent, omnipresent and omniscient, a power much greater than me. That does not make me religious or a cult or anything else derogatory. It does help me to be a spiritual human being.

The opening at the beginning of each meeting, including the Serenity Prayer reminds us of the First Step and the closing at the end of each meeting is the second and third step in action. These words we speak, hear, and listen to are very powerful. The words spoken by everyone at the meeting are very powerful.

I believe and trust, as the founders of the AA and Al-Anon programs, Bill and Lois, did that there is a Power greater than ourselves who can restore us to sanity ... All we have to do is ask, listen, believe.

Gloria C

What Group Representatives Want to Know

The following are from the Ask-It-Basket Questions at the GR (Group Representative) Workshop held at the November 2012 Assembly by past Delegates Joan V. and Taffy P.

“You are the Links  of Service”

1. How do I get an Alternate?

From my own experience, I generally look around the room and try to find someone who I believe is not only capable, but someone that I can work with. Then comes the “tap on the shoulder.” It is not enough to put out the request to the group; you really need to have a one-on-one conversation. In my earlier days, I would think I could possibly do it, but someone else might volunteer—so I’ll just wait. When I was tapped on the shoulder for DR in my former district, I came to the realization that someone else believed I had the capabilities to do the job. And because they believed in me, I believed in myself. “Is there any reason why you could not be my alternate?” is a good start. Remind that person of their qualities for the service position.

2. How can I get members to sign up or volunteer for service?

Again, I would use the above suggestions. I’ve had gatherings at my place for service commitments, i.e. stuffing envelopes for conventions, or committee meetings. There is always food, a pot luck dinner (at my place anyway) and camaraderie when members get together to share the work. Try it the next time your group is planning an anniversary or if you are involved in another service commitment. Ask others to come to your place. This is one of the reasons my favorite saying is “Service is Fun!”

3. What gifts have I received from Al-Anon service?

Personally, I have received more gifts than I can count. Listing a few: getting involved in Al-Anon service has given me so much confidence in myself. I began to realize that I can do a position that I had originally thought was not possible. I learned to really listen since I couldn’t take minutes if my thoughts were racing with things that I wanted to say. And, most importantly, I learned how to be a leader and not a puppet. I can’t make everyone happy and if I am dancing to their tune, I am not doing my job. Sometimes it was difficult being in the “cross-hairs” (opening myself up to criticism) but I did survive and came out a better person as a result. I’ve become more interdependent because I know that I can not only trust the process, but I never have to do anything alone.

4. Why is rotation of service so important? No one is stepping up and the GR spot will be vacant if I don’t stay.

I believe that rotation is not only important for my own recovery; but for all those members around me. It was explained to me once that you cannot sit on a one legged or two legged stool; you need a three legged stool to sit properly. The same is true for working our Three Legacies. The Steps teach us how to be better people. Traditions teach us how to work with people in our meetings/home/workplace. And the Concepts teach us how to work with the world at large. Therefore, all members who are serious about their personal recovery need to work all three of the legacies and that means taking on service positions.

For every service that I have taken on, I have learned more about myself and my abilities. The bottom line is if you don’t drop the ball (step down) then no one else can pick it up. In my district, there is a GR who services two groups (read WSO policies on

*page 78 “Multiple Group Membership and Office-Holding” in the Service Manual) because no one is willing to step up. The fact is this GR is enabling the second group not to elect a group representative because they know this person will continue to do the job for them. If that GR were to step away from the service position of the second group, they would have to find a qualified GR on their own. **Trust the process.** If the group is not strong enough to continue until a new GR steps forward, then maybe as Lois W. often times reminded us, that group isn’t meant to be.*

5. What about animals and children running around the meeting room?

Wouldn’t one consider this the same as someone’s cell phone going off or, worst yet, someone answering his/her cell phone during the meeting? We don’t allow our members to have their own private conversations during our meeting since it is not only disrespectful to those who are looking for recovery, but disruptive and annoying. I’ve been to a meeting where someone in crisis had to leave her home with her children to get out of an abusive situation. Since our night meeting did not have a babysitter, several members who had already shared took the children into another room and kept them occupied while the mother was able to share and get phone numbers. That is the only exception I can see for bringing children to a meeting. As for pets, does the facility allow pets? Is anyone in the meeting allergic? Someone needs to speak up. Why are we members so afraid of hurting others feelings when they obviously aren’t concerned with anyone else?

6. How do we get others in your group to speak up when someone is not following Al-Anon principles? People think the GR is responsible for this.

*As I mentioned in my presentation at the GR Workshop, the group representative is not the “Al-Anon police”- Tradition 2: For our group purpose there is but one authority—a loving God as He may express Himself in our group conscience. Our leaders are but trusted servants; they do not govern. *We are guardians of the Traditions and Concepts.* That’s why it is imperative that our GRs have a good understanding of the Traditions. Concept 1 (The ultimate responsibility and authority for Al-Anon world services belongs to the Al-Anon groups.) reminds us that all members are responsible for a healthy group. When approached by someone who wants me to take care of what they perceive is a problem in a meeting, I have generally asked them if they have mentioned it to the offending party. If I am aware of the offense and have already approached that member, but it continues, then I strongly suggest that it be discussed at a group business meeting and ultimately with a group inventory addressing the specific issue. Remind members that they do not have to accuse but rather voice their own opinion about feeling uncomfortable or unsafe whenever another member behaves in an unacceptable manner. In this way, we are not gossiping nor criticizing, but voicing our concerns. Recognizing that at all times we are God’s children, deserving of love and respect; and He is present in our meetings and group consciences.*

7. My group took a group conscience and they did not want to take a group inventory. Where can I go from there?

Tough group! “Taking a group inventory, a rededication of the group to its primary purpose, a study of the Traditions and Concepts of Service as they apply to the problem at hand, and seeking the experience, strength, and hope of other local groups, perhaps at district meetings, are all good methods of overcoming group difficulties.- p 51, Service Manual) Have you ever thought to program on taking a group inventory or discussing group issues at a business meeting? In our Service Manual, pages 49-50 on Group Business Meetings, Group Inventories, and the WSO Guidelines on taking a group inventory have some good reading for a meeting topic. Remember by using the Group Inventory and focusing on Traditions 1 and 2, everyone is entitled to have their say. We don’t criticize or put down anyone’s opinions or actions. It’s about respect and having an open mind, realizing that everyone has something important to offer in any given situation (maybe even the offending member). I don’t have to agree with everything, but I don’t need to be disagreeable.

8. What is the GR’s role in the health of the group?

I believe #6 and 7 answer this question. We are the guardians of the Traditions and Concepts. Whenever there has been an issue that needs to be addressed, using our Traditions and Concepts have always placed me in good stead. And just as important, if I want my group to remain healthy, I make sure that I attend all assemblies (in their entirety) to bring back information. I am the voice of my group. When I do not share with my groups what I have learned at the assemblies or district meetings, I take away their voice to share their opinions on important matters. Don't ask if you can give your report; just start going thru the information. Don't look at those who might disagree. If anyone says anything, you can say: “Thank you for sharing, I hope you'll support me in my service commitment.”

9. How do I best use a service sponsor?

My service sponsor told me emphatically that I was to “call her at least once a week.” I could email her as many times as I wanted, but I had to call her once a week.” Best advice I have gotten. It made me aware that I had made a commitment and needed to be responsible for following through. Through these weekly calls, we would discuss all sorts of ideas or issues whether or not I had a question. She reminded me to keep in touch with my group/districts so that I could be aware of what is going on. Today, she is one of my dearest friends. I couldn’t have gotten as far as I have in service without her counsel.

10.KBDM – Please give an example of giving information to group before making a motion.

One can read on the WSO members’ website under Conference Summaries. In the 2006 Conference Summary, there is a discussion about KBDM on pages 6-7 (WSO. A brief excerpt is: “Members of the Executive Committee who had each been a part of the knowledge-based decision-making process from the beginning of its use by the Board defined the process as looking at a topic through certain agreed-upon criteria to see if it is something that the group wants to pursue. The idea is talked about first to see if the group agrees with all or part of it. If so, pertinent background information is gathered and shared with those responsible for making the decision. Then, if it is decided

that the idea is something that is worthwhile, a decision can be made through motion and vote.

Knowledge-based decision-making has four essential elements based on a philosophy of: open communication between leadership and membership; dialogue before deliberation; all decision makers having common access to full information; and it exists in a culture of trust.” If you remember, the discussion about whether to have an AFG Office and LDC in Connecticut was a good example of using KBDM. Information was gathered and presented to AWSC and all district representatives, discussion took place at the Area meetings and at assemblies. Finally a motion was made and voted upon. As a result, Connecticut now has an AFG office and its own LDC.

11. How do you handle feeling of being in charge or responsible for everything? Taking it personally when no one volunteers to be anniversary chair? When do you know that what you do is ‘enough’ or ‘good enough’?

Perfect reason to have a service sponsor to talk things over. Believe me when I tell you that I have had those same feelings at one time or another. At my home group years ago this very topic came up and I voiced those same concerns. After the meeting, a long time member came up to me and said, “You’re just over responsible” and reminded me not to be “so serious.” It took a good deal of talking to my service sponsor who would keep telling me that I was worthwhile as a trusted servant. Her trust in my abilities did much to build my self-esteem and made me realize that the job I was doing was certainly “good enough.” It takes time and constant work on ourselves, but persevere and eventually you will come to realize that as long as you know that you have done the best that you can, no one else’s opinion matters. Also, if no one steps up, perhaps there will be no anniversary.

12. What if a group wants to use a closing that is from another program, and there is chanting and pumping of hands after the closing ends?

Your group isn't the only one doing this. It is constantly popping up at other meetings that I attend. I would suggest that you consider the slogan, “Let It Begin With Me.” After our closing prayer, and just before people start the chant, I straighten my arm so that the person next to me cannot pump. I do not join in with the chant either. It’s taken some time, but now those that surround me at the closing realize that this is something that I do not participate in. Eventually others begin to drop off too and in my Step meeting no one does it anymore. The main thing to remember is that this is not Al-Anon.

13. Would it be possible to give self-encouraging tips for GRs when they have just fumbled through the GR report?

Although one does not want to criticize or embarrass another trusted servant, there have been times that incorrect information was given to the group. At those moments, I have raised my hand and asked the GR if I could possibly clarify something that was said. If pertinent information was omitted, when our group is asked if there is any other important information to be shared after our reports, I feel comfortable raising my hand and sharing that information. As the link between worldwide Al-Anon and the group, if the GR arrives 1/2 hour before the meeting, and prepares the report, this will alleviate any stress.

A Users Guide to Knowledge Based Decision Making

Seven years after the Knowledge Based Decision Making (KBDM) process was introduced at the World Service Conference and recommended for area use there still seems to be confusion, mis-understanding, and avoidance in Connecticut.

KBDM is simply an Al-Anon way to come to an informed group conscience. It is the reverse of "parliamentary procedures" which we have learned so well as the norm in the outside world. It may feel like the process is up-side-down, but it does work.

The process is simple:

- An idea is suggested
- If the group agrees, the topic is discussed
- Background information is collected and shared, asking the questions
 - what do we know?
 - what don't we know?
 - what do we need or want to know to make a decision?
- All who will participate in the group conscience feel they understand and can make an informed group decision
- There may be a consensus; if not, then a motion can be made and vote taken.



Note: There is no time limit on this process. Allow it to unfold as needed.

Keep reading if you want to know why we do it this way...

- This process fosters open communication between the leadership and members
- No one feels "they" are making "us" do something
- Open dialogue takes place before discussion of specifics
- All decision-makers have the same access to all the available information
- Decision making takes place in a culture of mutual trust
- Participants are part of the process, more voices are heard and more solutions are suggested
- Group members are more likely to support the decision made because each member is equally responsible for the decision
- Members with minority views feel they are heard
- There tend to be fewer emotional knee-jerk decisions
- Negativity is diffused

You Never Know

The LDC (Literature Distribution Center) got an email this month that really says something about how the program can ripple out in ways we don't realize. It read:

“Good Morning.

I am wondering if you could help me.

Many years ago I found a small blue book at a yard sale, titled *One Day At a Time in Al-Anon*.

It has a daily passage and today's reminder. It has been a source of comfort and inspiration in my life since the day I happened upon it.

I would very much like to know if this book is still being published and is available for sale as I would love to give it to my daughters for Christmas.”





Dear all Al-Anon and Alateen members,

I am reminded that this month requires maybe a little more patience than usual. Being the month of Christmas, shopping and cooking delicious cookies, etc., we can get caught up in the hustle and bustle of the holidays.

I am always aware of the spirituality of Christmas and how I need to look at my blessings and realize that I have everything that I need even if a quick passing flash through my mind brings pictures of shiny new cars and sparkling diamonds.

Our book ... "In All Our Affairs, Making Crises Work For you" (B-15) sits in my bookcase and unfortunately I do not pull it out as often as I should. So today as I write this I sit with the chapters in this book on patience and gratitude. On page 130 a paragraph talks about being willing to change, but I am not an instant makeover. I see that I also can show patience to others but of myself, no. Then as I kept reading it mentioned self-centeredness; What? Me?. And then, the quote at the end of the chapter said maybe patience is the middle ground between thinking that I am perfectly justified in my way of thinking or that I am the worst person in the world. Wow, food for thought.

On page 212 I found solace in the fact that gratitude can take on many faces. My growth can benefit by acknowledging the fact that I can look at issues and be aware of balance in the lessons I learn. That they can leave me with the experiences of being cautious, defensive, hard, frightened and rigid, or more flexible, faith-filled and available to life. And in that the lesson is forgiveness as this page tells me. So do I forgive myself or do I judge myself?

The words on a page, although important are impersonal, and so as I love myself enough today, I reach out to a sponsor or loving Al-Anon member to heal my wounds when I go to extremes in bashing myself.

This Christmas I hope all members of this wonderful program find peace and happiness within and enjoy the memories that you create. And that you always get more than you give.

Merry Christmas and Love in Service, CAL



Step Five

“Admitted to God, to ourselves and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.”

I have an analytical mind, so I have questions. Why do I need to admit something to God when the God of my understanding already knows everything about me? I believe the answer is so that I know it. So that I realize that it's not the secret I thought it might be.

Which brings me to ...

Why do I need to admit it to myself?

I believe that it's because I often try to deny the truth to myself, to rationalize things. I first need to be honest with myself. But also kind. I am not a monster; I am a flawed human being and that's OK. But I can be better and happier if I can curb some of my flaws. And I can only do that, with the help of my Higher Power, if I admit them first.

Now we come to admitting them to another human being. Why do I need to do that? Haven't I done pretty well by creating a nice facade for others to see?

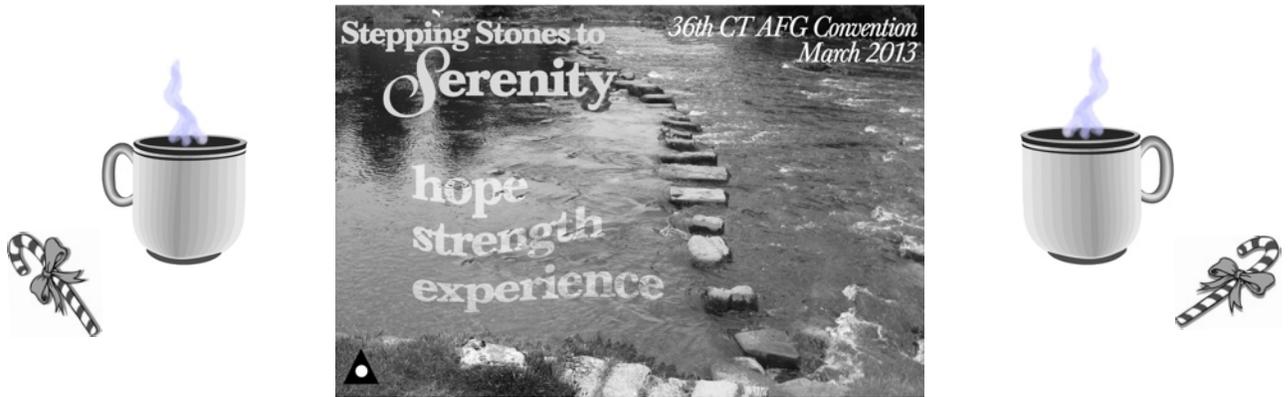
I worked in a business where we needed to solve problems. We would gather all the information

and then work out the solution. But sometimes, after staring at the problem for a while, we could not figure it out and we would gather our information and take it to a colleague and start to explain the problem to them. More often than not, as we tried to explain the problem, out loud, to another human being, we found the answer even if the other person had not yet figured out what we were talking about!

It did not seem to work if I just said it out loud to myself. There had to be this other person. I don't know why this worked but I have been on both the talking and listening ends and it works!

Then we have the exact nature of my wrongs. Often I have found that what I first perceive as my problem is not the real problem but is itself caused by a deeper one. For example I have a tendency to procrastinate. But it's really because I feel I have to do everything perfectly. Since I can't do it perfectly, I don't do it until I absolutely have to and can no longer worry about doing it perfectly. If my Higher Power and I work on the perfectionism, I believe the procrastination will lessen.

Susan



Buffet: 9:30am **AI-Anon, Alateen, & AA Speakers: 10:30am**

Spanish interpretation will be available

Featuring a Hearty Breakfast Buffet ~ \$25.00 per person
 assorted fruit breads, scones & danish, butter & assorted cream cheese spreads,
 sliced fresh fruit, fluffy scrambled eggs, french toast, maple syrup, crisp bacon strips,
 sausage links, home fried potatoes, fruit preserves, orange, apple, & cranberry juices,
 fresh brewed coffee, decaffeinated coffee, & tea selections

Limited to 100 Pre-Registered Participants ~ First Come First Served ~ **Register Today!**

Deadline January 6th, 2013 (See registration form below or
www.ctalanon.org / Convention Page / 2013 Serenity Breakfast)

Questions? Email convention2013@ctalanon.org

In case of inclement weather, visit the AFG Convention page on www.ctalanon.org

Times are tough. Why would I spend that much for a breakfast?

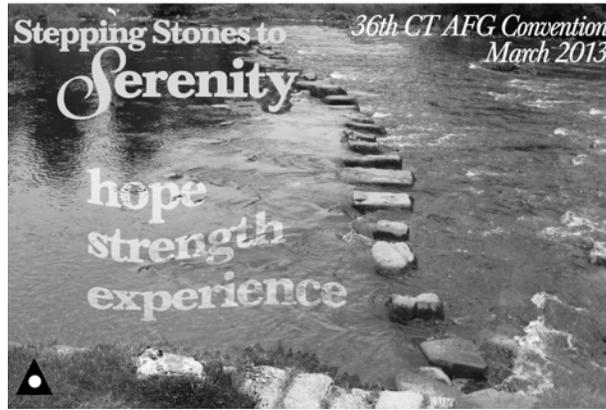
I deserve a **break** in January when things can look pretty bleak.
 Maybe someone would get this for me as a **gift** I could really enjoy. (Hint, hint)
 There will be **smiling** AI-Anon friends, music, a raffle and SERENITY.
 I will hear **great speakers** and enjoy a delicious breakfast I don't have to cook.

----- Serenity Breakfast Registration -----

Full Name _____
 Address _____
 Town _____ Zip _____
 Email _____ Phone _____
 Name on Tag _____ AI-Anon ____ Alateen ____ AA ____ Spanish Speaking ____
 Current Area Service Position _____



Make \$25 Check Payable to: CT AFG Convention
 Mail To: CT AFG Convention, PO Box 1820, Meriden, CT 06450 By January 6, 2013



It's **NOT TOO EARLY** to make **hotel** reservations

Call 860-635-2000 &
use Hotel Code AYZ when booking.

OR

Go online to www.ctalanon.org / 2013 Convention Page
“Save the Date Flyer” and click on
“Click here to make a hotel reservation”
Use Hotel Code AYZ.

Volunteers needed

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| <p>DECORATIONS - Are you creative? REGISTRATION - Can you hand out envelopes? WALK-IN REGISTRATION - Can you spare an hour at the Convention? GREETERS - Do you like people?</p> |
| <p>RAFFLE - will be accepting ONE BASKET PER DISTRICT filled with Al-Anon and Alateen items. PLEASE give any basket donations to your DR or bring to your District Meeting. Raffle Baskets should be delivered to the Raffle Table by 3pm on Friday March 15th. Volunteers are needed at the raffle table during the convention weekend.</p> |
| <p>• ENTERTAINMENT – Release your inner Thespian. Come to our next meeting on December 16th, 3-5pm at the Crowne Plaza Hotel, Cromwell, CT, Immediately following the convention committee meeting.</p> |
| <p>• DANCE COMMITTEE LOOKING FOR DJ If you are a DJ or have a DJ recommendation please email names and contact information to convention2013@ctalanon.org by December 15, 2012</p> |

Next Convention **Committee** meeting: Dec. 16 / 1pm Crowne Plaza Hotel, Cromwell, CT

To Volunteer or for More **Information**: convention2013@ctalanon.org

Registration Flyers are available at your meetings and online at www.ctalanon.org
Convention Page / 2013 Convention Preregistration Form

Deadline for January Contributions is Dec. 24, 2012

- Al-Anon **announcements**
- **Sharings** on using the Al-Anon tools
- Email **Subscriptions** available
- Send your items to lifeline@ctalanon.org

Please contribute a sharing this month!

➔ **Lifeline** is also available online at www.ctalanon.org Lifeline tab

