

Anniversary Meetings

September 2015

- **Thursday Night Enders Island**
Thursday, September 10, 2015
6:30 pm refreshments, 7-8:30 pm Speakers
Anniversary Meeting "All Are Welcome"
St. Edmunds Retreat, Enders Island
Father Joe's building, Mystic
- **The Barely Awake AFG**
Saturday, September 19, 2015
9 am Potluck Breakfast, 9:30 am Speakers
24th Anniversary Meeting, Babysitting available
Federated Church of Colchester
60 Main St., Colchester
- **Serenity on Sunday Step Meeting**
Sunday, September 20, 2015
6:30 pm Food, 7 pm Speakers and Raffle
6th Anniversary Meeting
Chauncey Building, Gaylord Hospital
Gaylord Farm Rd., Wallingford
- **Fall into Serenity with the Kitchen Group**
Wednesday, September 23, 2015
9:30 am Meet & Greet, 10 am Speakers
Anniversary Meeting
St. Mark's Episcopal Church
147 West Main St., New Britain
- **Wednesday Centerbrook Paths to Recovery**
Wednesday, September 23, 2015
6:30 pm Refreshments, 7-8:30 pm Speakers and Raffle
4th Anniversary Meeting "Al-Anon Step Meeting"
Trinity Lutheran Church
109 Main St., Centerbrook
- **Collinsville Monday Night AFG**
Monday, September 28, 2015
6:30 pm Potluck Dinner and Raffle, 7:30-9 pm Speakers
30th Anniversary Meeting
Collinsville Congregational Church (Church behind the Green)
7 South St., Collinsville
- **Hole in the Wall Alateen Group**
Monday, September 28, 2015
6 pm Potluck Dinner, 6:30 pm Speakers and Raffle
Anniversary Meeting. Raffle 1st prize is the queen-sized afghan that
was started at the 2015 CAWW
Backus Hospital, Main conference room
326 Washington St., Norwich

October 2015

- **The Loving Hugging Friends of Al-Anon**
Wednesday, October 14, 2015
6 pm, Potluck Dinner, Speakers and Raffle
37th Anniversary Meeting
Westchester Congregational Church
95 Cemetery Rd., Colchester
- **Tuesday Night Newington Step Group**
Tuesday, October 20, 2015
7 pm, Food (snacks, desserts), 7:30 pm Speakers and Raffle
30th Anniversary Meeting "12 Steps to Serenity"
United Methodist Church
401 New Britain Ave., Newington

Special CT AFG Workshop Event TEAM Event 2015

Together Empowering Al-Anon Members
Saturday, October 3, 2015, 9 am – 5:30 pm.
Registration opens at 8 am. Pre-registration only – No Walk-Ins
Sign up today! See the website for more info: www.ctalanon.org
South Congregational Church (Home of the CT-AFG LDC)
277 Main St., Hartford (Where the AWS Assemblies are held)

CT AFG Public Outreach

These events have booths reserved for Al-Anon which need to be staffed for two-hour increments. Public outreach is an easy and fun opportunity to practice Step 12 simply by showing up, answering questions about the program, and handing out Conference Approved Literature. Please email the contact person and sign up.

"...When anyone, anywhere, reaches out for help—let the hand of Al-Anon and Alateen always be there, and let it begin with me."

- **CT Women's Expo**
CT Convention Center, Hartford: Sept. 12-13, 2015
Contact: Pat R. – ctpublicoutreach@ctalanon.org
- **Total Life Expo**
Mohegan Sun, Uncasville: Saturday, Sept. 19, 2015
Contact: Janet P. – ctpublicoutreach@ctalanon.org or
Gay B. – ctpublicoutreach@ctalanon.org
- **Southern CT Women's Health Expo**
Webster Bank Arena, Bridgeport: Sept. 26-27, 2015
Contact: Mary Ann T. – ctdistrict4publicoutreach@yahoo.com
- **NBC Health and Wellness Festival**
Exhibition Hall in the XL Center, Hartford: Oct. 17-18, 2015
Contact: Pat R. – ctpublicoutreach@ctalanon.org

Where the Teens are the Teachers

I have learned more about courage and trust in a “power greater than myself” in the past six months from the Alateens in my group than I had ever experienced in 25 years in Al-Anon. I have been granted their permission to publish some examples...

There was a teen in my group who had been coming to meetings for about a year. I invited her to speak at an Anniversary Meeting for the first time. I had no idea where she would go with her sharing. I gave her the guidelines on speaking and turned the rest over to my Higher Power.

She arrived with her father and older sister. They had come to hear her speak for the first time. In her sharing she talked about her mother. She was so angry with her mom that she had moved in with her father and hadn't spoken to her for two years.

She was asked to visit her mother in the hospital. She didn't want to go but did. After that visit she never saw her mom alive again. This teen shared with the room the one thing she will always regret: her anger had prevented her from touching her mom at that last visit, even though those around her were encouraging her to do so.

The room was emotional and wowed by her bravery. Then I heard her say, “It was never talked about again.” This 16-year-old girl had the courage to speak her truth in front of her father and sister. To me this was a miracle unfolding. That family is starting to heal through her. When she finished her father got up, walked to the front of the room, and gave her a hug and a kiss. There wasn't a dry eye in the house. I will never forget that Anniversary Meeting and I think of it often.

Our group had a 14-year-old speak as a keynote at the CT State Conference of Young People in AA. He did not hesitate to say yes and was fantastic.

We had another 14-year-old Alateen be asked at the last minute to keynote at the New England Conference of Young People in AA. Their scheduled speaker could not appear because of bad weather. She did not hesitate to say yes and did a wonderful job.

Our mother group needed a speaker for their Anniversary. I wanted to ask our oldest member, who had only been coming for a year. She was shy and soft spoken. At 19 it

would be her last opportunity to speak as an Alateen at that Anniversary.

I hesitated to ask because I thought she would say no. I confided in the Co-Sponsor. He agreed that it would be a great growth opportunity for her and added I wouldn't know until I asked. I asked and she didn't hesitate to say yes. That Anniversary usually has about 70 people so I asked if she would consider using a microphone because she is so soft spoken. She said yes. The night of the Anniversary she chose to speak second. She looked filled with fear awaiting her turn.

I was blown away when she started to speak. She was loud enough without a microphone for everyone to hear and said she wanted to read a page on FEAR from the Alateen “A Day at a Time.” She then talked about the different fears she had surrounding her mother and what she was learning from Alateen to help her to work through them. She got emotional—along with her father who was in the room—but she pulled herself together and did a great job. We witnessed another family healing in progress, another WOW program moment.

Imagine all this has happened in just six months! I can't wait to see what the years ahead will bring. I can't begin to describe how much courage I have gained since having it demonstrated to me by the Alateens.

Initially I was scared to death to be an Alateen Sponsor. I wasn't the greatest parent. Teens scared me. My Higher Power kept knocking at my heart and finally I knew it was time for me to surrender and volunteer.

Today I don't know what I was afraid of. I have done so much with these teens that I never would have dreamed that I could. They are teaching me to take it one day at a time and to trust my Higher Power.

I feel blessed to see the miracles taking place in these teens. They are our hope for the future. I'm thinking the future is looking pretty good from the seat this Alateen Sponsor is sitting in.

— Christine B., CT Alateen Sponsor

Become an Alateen Sponsor!

Please consider this service opportunity. If it is not for you think of someone you believe has potential and ask them! Email Dave T., Alateen Coordinator at: alateen@ctalanon.org.

Alateen sponsor forms are on our website www.ctalanon.org. Sign in as a member — user name: higher; password: power. Once on the members page click on Alateen and follow the prompts.

Attention Alateens:

Keep submitting to *Lifeline*! My goal is to collect your future submissions for a special Alateen double issue. Under 800 words please.

My Fears

After my mother assaulted me for not allowing her to drive intoxicated I had a lot of fears. She had never laid a hand on me or my siblings before. I feared that she would assault me again and I did not want to be around her. I changed my life so I would see her as little as possible. I would especially avoid her when I knew she would be drunk.

I feared that what my mother did to me was my fault and that I deserved it.

I feared how my mother would act in the future. I did not know how she felt about going to prison.

I couldn't express my fears to my family and friends because I was confused—did I actually have anything to fear?

After going to Alateen, I realized that everything that had happened was not my fault—that it was the alcohol. I learned I should not dwell on the past nor fear the future—I had to take it one day at a time.

I identified with the slogan “Pain is inevitable, suffering is optional.” My pain was what I experienced that traumatic day. My suffering was continuing to fear and worry that everything that had happened that day would happen again. I learned that this was holding me back. I had to leave my fears in the past and keep the focus on myself—on the person that I wanted to be.

I've used this experience to help grow. Without Alateen and the people in my group I would still be living in fear.

— Rachel P., CT Alateen

“It isn’t my job to fix my alcoholic”

The most important day of my life was March 25, 2013, the day I walked in to my first Alateen meeting. A week before I was waiting for my guidance counselor in her office. I spotted a pamphlet that had an array of questions about alcoholism. At the bottom it said, “If you answered yes to any of these questions, then Alateen is for you!” I answered yes to all the questions and started on an amazing path to self-discovery and serenity.

My qualifier is my step sister’s mom, Melanie, who came to live with my family and me because of her life troubles. At the time, Melanie was a disheveled woman. She had a dangerously thin frame and thinning, popcorn-colored hair. Her giant blue eyes usually had bags underneath. Her normally cream-colored skin was tinted gray from a lack of sleep and hangovers. She tried to disguise these features with badly drawn eyeliner and by dressing like a preteen.

I never saw Melanie drunk. I only heard loud snoring and mumbling from the next room and the stories my mom told me after we decided to kick her out. All I saw was that she either never stopped moving or never started moving. When my step sister lived with us they would verbally abuse each other.

I always felt it was my job to mediate the situation because I was “mature.” It was my job to fix things, it was my job to help them get along, because if I didn’t, who would? It never worked but I tried over and over again, hoping for a different result. I have learned at multiple Anniversary Meetings that my mission was in fact the definition of insanity. The end result was feeling worthless. I felt that it was my job to help everyone and make everything better. I always focused on them instead of myself. I didn’t even know how to focus on myself.

Before discovering Alateen I struggled with depression and anxiety. There were times it got so bad I was not able to get out of bed and go to school because I would be crying so much. I didn’t have any friends because I was not able to talk to people. During high school and the first few months of my time at cosmetology school, I was that small looking, unapproachable girl with a dark cloud over her head. This girl sat alone

at lunch tables, refused group projects, and turned people away because she was afraid of rejection.

Alateen is the most amazing, eye-opening experience I have ever had. It is best described by one of my sponsors, Steven, who once said, “It is a safe place to find out who you are in the face of chaos.” Not only did the program help me with coping with Melanie, but everything I have learned is applied to my daily life.

Although I do use and appreciate the slogans such as “Let go or be dragged,” the thing that resonated with me the most was said by another Alateen. She said that it wasn’t her job to fix other people’s problems. I jumped at that thought. I remember being truly amazed that it wasn’t my job to fix Melanie. Now, “It’s not my job” is my favorite thing to say when I feel a need to take care of people that don’t need or want my help, whether it be Melanie, or a friend that is always sad no matter what you say.

I also learned how to separate myself from Melanie’s situation. As a human being, it’s extremely easy to get swept up in other people’s business and chaos, and let it affect my emotions. After a while of knowing that it isn’t my job to fix my alcoholic, I realized my actual job was to take care of myself.

By doing my best to stay away from her during the times when she wouldn’t stop running around, and not asking what was going on with her, I detached with love. Of course I love her, but for my own recovery I needed to steer clear of her problems and take a good look at my own.

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During this time I was slacking off in cosmetology school. I was extremely behind and it was close to graduation. I got myself together. My greatest accomplishment there — other than graduating and getting my

license — was doing 52 haircuts in about two weeks. I believe that your qualifier is not an excuse for bad grades or for negativity in your personal life. By personal life, I do not mean home life, which for me and most likely many others, was a negative place to be. I mean your school or work life, and whatever you do to help yourself thrive.

Although alcoholism is a family disease, as it affects everyone in the family, it is not specifically your disease. You don’t have to be that person. Thrive in your life. Get those good grades or that promotion at work and surpass them. In the future you will shine in your accomplishments instead of lurking in the shadows of the alcoholic and their problems. Of course I speak for only for myself now, but it is something I have actually done. I’m not Melanie and I know for a fact that you are not your alcoholic.

Over the past two years, I have grown as a human being the way a sunflower seed grows with the right amount of sun and water. Just as a weak person in society, a sunflower seed is eaten, but when it is nurtured, it grows, shines, and is admired for what it is. Before the program I was that seed — small, weak, and edible. Today I am the sunflower — tall, bright, and admirable, growing taller and brighter as each week passes.

My depression and anxiety have substantially subsided and I have been off of medication for over a year. I have made real connections here — with other seeds who are finding their place in the sun just as I have.

From March 25, 2013 to today, I have made tremendous progress. I never thought I would speak in front of a group of people, and so far I’ve done it three times. I never thought I would make lasting relationships with people. I never thought I wouldn’t be depressed. That every day I would get out of bed with ease — most of the time with a smile — and get where ever I need to be.

Every week I become a better person just by showing up to my meeting. I have only shared a glimpse of my growth throughout the years, but I thank you all for letting me share my experience, strength and hope. There is no way to explain how grateful I am for Alateen.

— Kayla E., CT Alateen

Service Work is Right for Me

In my family of origin, I was criticized for most everything I did. Eventually, I internalized this message and became hesitant to do much of anything. In my years in Al-Anon, I have slowly acclimatized to service work, volunteering more as my level of comfort grows.

It started with my first meeting, where a long-time member encouraged me to read aloud from ODAT. Everyone listened respectfully. Later on in that meeting another member encouraged me to share. My offer was totally accepted by those around me. I felt like part of things. It was my first positive brush with service work.

I moved on to setting up at meetings. It gave me a little bit of pride to know that I had helped decorate the table with the slogans and put out the reading binder. It helped to know that I had contributed to facilitate something so important—our meeting. And best of all, my work was welcomed by the

other members in the group.

Soon I volunteered to take on the role of group treasurer. My group actually applauded when I told them I would step up. This display of gratitude overwhelmed me. I served for a time, and though I did make the occasional mistake, I was not rebuked. I felt inspired that others could accept my less-than-perfect work and even thank me for doing my best. I couldn't ever remember that happening before.

Though there have been times where other Al-Anon members have criticized my way of helping, I have taken those times as a learning opportunity to consider that we are not perfect. I cannot expect my Al-Anon family to be perfectly accepting of me all of the time (though everyone is usually quite welcoming).

As I continue going to meetings and my confidence increases, I keep growing in service and trying out new roles.

— Carolyn B., CT

Kitten Rescue Mirrors Al-Anon

On the Atlanta, Georgia Beltway, during a July afternoon rush hour, a friend and I were headed to the AA International Convention. I was watching for our exit number while she negotiated the bumper to bumper stream of traffic.

Suddenly my friend exclaimed, "Oh! Is that a kitten?"

At first I saw nothing except that traffic was slowing to our right and in front of us. Then, in a gap that opened between two cars, there was a flurry of motion, almost like a plastic bag being blown about by traffic induced breezes, and I saw a tiny kitten wildly scrambling between the vehicles.

We sat in our now stopped car while traffic on our left continued to race past. The lanes to the right had come to a halt. As I tried to think of a way to rescue the little creature, a man left his pickup truck and crossed to where the kitten was crouched beside the car in front of us. Seeing his approach, the kitten retreated under the car, so he got down on the pavement and came up grasping a very frightened and angry ball of fur. As he returned to his truck he held his

captive high so all could see.

Once they were both safely inside, windows closed, traffic again resumed its mad rush but not without a few friendly beeps of thanks and congratulations.

I watched for our exit and thought about how wonderful the world is. For a few moments everyone present came together and stopped to save a life.

After we left the beltway my friend and I talked about our experience and how it mirrored my life.

Before I found Al-Anon I too was scrambling wildly about, looking for an escape from the insanity of alcoholism in my home. Then, when it seemed things could get no worse, someone took me by the hand, sat me down and explained that Al-Anon was for me, not the alcoholic, and I would get the help I needed if I would just accept it.

Just as the kitten fought its rescuer, I didn't believe at first. Like the man holding that struggling ball of fur, my rescuer had the patience to hang in there until I realized there is help and hope.

— Sue G., CT AFG Chairperson

Dreams from the Spring Assembly

The following is a compilation of the "Dreams" members submitted at the June 2015 Spring Assembly:

- District picnics
- Increased awareness of Al-Anon and Alateen in AA
- Diversity
- Informational meeting for Alateen sponsorship
- Alateen in schools
- Public awareness of Al-Anon
- Babysitting meetings for single parents
- No more twice yearly Assemblies
- Encourage before and after socialization at Assemblies
- Healthy meetings
- Rotate Assemblies to increase member's attendance
- To remind younger members to keep coming
- Have a Serving Spirit
- Increase Alateen meetings throughout the state
- Alateen Public Outreach
- Increase volunteers at LDC to increase hours of operation
- Family activities
- Promote service
- Service = Serenity
- Outside Assembly meetings
- Electronic funds for financial funding instead of envelopes
- Speaker meetings
- Encourage a \$2 minimum to the basket

How are we as an Area going to bring these dreams to fruition?

Love and Peace,

— Ann B., CT AFG Delegate

Lifeline needs Al-Anon and Alateen submissions!

(Under 800 words please)

Let us know how the Al-Anon program works for you • Send a story that would attract members into service • What's new with your group? Email lifeline@ctalanon.org. Please submit Anniversary Meeting notices two months in advance.

Get your event publicized on the website by submitting to webmaster@ctalanon.org.