

Freedom from Bondage

The Newsletter from Region 5 of Overeaters Anonymous
Fall 2018



From the Chair

What a great Fall Assembly! It was so wonderful to see the cooperation between the Intergroup Representatives and watch the friendships develop and grow. All of the committees work so diligently to complete their tasks which are all seeking to spread the message of recovery in some way.

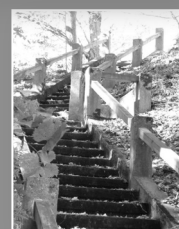
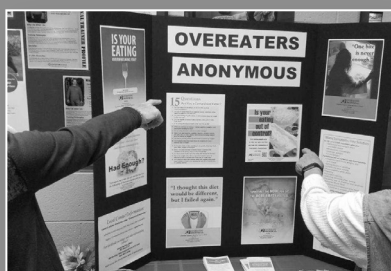
As I mentioned in answer to one of the questions regarding my goals as I head into my second term as the Region 5 Chair, I would love to see our numbers grow at our Assemblies. It would be great to see our numbers increase over the next two years and beyond. I know that is not something that I can do by myself and I am hoping that all of you will return to your Intergroups and encourage others to come to Assembly to see what it is like.

Thanks so much to all of the Intergroup Reps for your dedication to growing OA recovery and to the Region 5 Board for all that you do to make Region 5 such a great place to live in Recovery! *TOGETHER WE GET BETTER!*

— CJ M.

WEBSITE GRAPHICS CONTEST

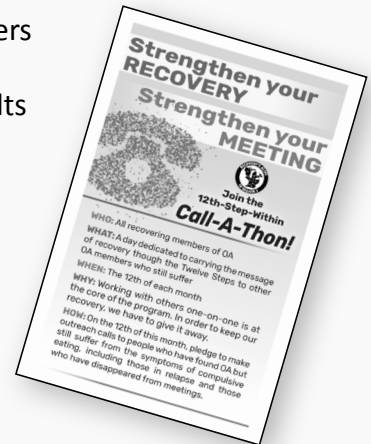
Here are the top 10 voted on graphics (out of the 82 graphics submitted by Region 5 members) from the Fall Assembly.



The opinions presented in this newsletter are those of the authors, and do not necessarily represent OA as a whole.

Growing Recovery in Region 5

As a subcommittee, we were asked to reach out to newcomers and members whom we have missed at meetings – **Each One, Reach One**. In getting the perspective of another member of the committee, it seemed that the results of this assignment did not meet the expectations. The object was to grow recovery. We hoped that by contacting members our meetings would increase in numbers. Unfortunately, many of the calls went unanswered and many who said they needed to come back did not appear. So, while the intent was to grow recovery in membership, the action of doing the work did grow personal recovery. And isn't that a model of Carrying the Message? The work of Step 12 is ongoing and so the work of this subcommittee will continue – whether as a whole or individual. Where would we all be if Step 12 ceased?



ANOTHER OPINION

Participating in the **Each 1, Reach 1** subcommittee was extremely rewarding for me and, I believe, most of the folks at my local intergroup who chose to participate. During the five months of this initiative, we made a total of **117** outreach contacts. While it is not possible to measure the success of these contacts, many of which were texts or voicemails, I believe that the practice of taking the 12th Step is never without benefit. For my own recovery, I spend a lot of time on Steps 10 and 11. However, through the years phone calls to newcomers and/or those who I have not seen recently has diminished. While I carry the message in

the rooms, I have not practiced the 12th Step Within as much as I believe it is necessary, so this assignment was timely and important for me to continue. It is uncomplicated – simply remember on the 12th of each month to reach out – and it has merit. I was able to reunite with those who kept the lights on for my arrival and to let others know they were on my mind and I would love to welcome them back to a meeting. After that, I put the results in the hands of my Higher Power – Let Go, Let God. I also know that it has given me the incentive to become a more active participant in our TSW Committee locally. This has always been close to my heart and now I can put it into action.

Subcommittee Intergroup to Intergroup

I chose this group because I think it's important for people to know how vital Intergroup is and what it does. My belief is that by strengthening our Intergroup, this trickles down to OA meetings and trickles up to Region 5, encouraging OA members to participate further. Thereby growing OA within our Regions. I was encouraged to go to Intergroup to see how it works. I did and I stayed and I'm not sorry, it has been an integral part of my recovery. I started out as an Intergroup Representative, then a Region 5 Representative and two years ago I had the privilege of being a Delegate to WSBC going to my first conference in Albuquerque, New Mexico. What a thrill. Hard work but worth it to do service and take part in OA worldwide. Meeting fellow travelers from all over the world. It's been really exciting to be a part of Region 5 and the planning for this Workshop, and being a part of helping to revitalize struggling areas. At this point I have been a part of inputting suggestions and ideas for the Workshop in Michigan, on October 7th of this year. The second Workshop is hopefully going to be in the northern Illinois area. I am also very encouraged and excited to be a part of the Workshop because I want everyone to know how indispensable Intergroup is and how important it's been to my recovery.

Less is More

Around thirty years ago I attended OA for the first time. I came with the intention of losing weight. In about a year I was able to lose around 80 lbs. and several dress sizes; however, I don't think I ever really understood what the program was about. I left the program thinking I could do this on my own. I gained back all of the weight and much more. After 25+ years of losing weight through various methods and again putting more back on, I found myself forced into early retirement due partly to health concerns brought on by my obesity. I knew then that the only way I would ever achieve lasting success was to go back to OA. What I did not know then was that the weight loss which I desired and found was not even close to all this program had to offer me. I became abstinent early in the program, but after a few months I found a sponsor and started reading more OA and AA literature, attending more meetings, and developing a deeper, richer relationship with my Higher Power. I then realized that OA was less about what I have lost and more about what I have gained. Through the support of the fellowship and a more meaningful connection to God, I have found a more meaningful life than ever before. I am truly grateful for this program!

Maintaining Your Anonymity with Your Email Address

In today's ever more complicated digital world it is becoming challenging to maintain one's anonymity in the public. It is important to consider how the use of your email address might impact our own or anyone else's anonymity as we recover and help to carry the message of recovery offered by the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions of Overeaters Anonymous. A few simple suggestions can protect your identity and in turn your fellow OA members.

Overeaters Anonymous has published a wonderful set of guidelines for protecting your anonymity in a digital world. Nothing suggested in the guidelines is particularly difficult to achieve. All of the suggestions go a long way to making a safer place for all of us. I strongly encourage you to take a few moments to read this document and to encourage others to read it as well. You can find the PDF at: <https://oa.org/files/pdf/Anonymity-Guidelines-V2-proof.pdf>.

This guideline says, *"Within the OA Fellowship, members have the right to decide for themselves what they reveal. At the same time, we share a responsibility to guard the anonymity of our fellow members."* The problem is most of us don't think through all of the ways we reveal who we are. One way is our email addresses. It is common to

create email addresses with personal information including names, addresses, birth dates, etc... It says in the guidelines, *"We need to use caution in OA-related emails. We are publishing at the public level when we post on social media or blog. What we send or post may easily be seen, even repeated, by others within and outside the Fellowship. When we break our anonymity in digital media, we may inadvertently break the anonymity of others. Others may rightly or wrongly assume that our "virtual friends" are OA members."* When you give your email address you can be assured that for the most part you have not broken your anonymity. When you give your email address to someone outside of Overeaters Anonymous, you cannot guarantee that your email address will be used in a responsible way. When you put your email address in a document that is then posted on a website or distributed to people outside of Overeaters Anonymous, you are taking a chance that it will not be used in a responsible way.

No, I don't believe there is a nefarious organization who is trying to figure out who are members of Overeaters Anonymous. But there are automated programs we call Bots and Spiders that are actively scanning the internet looking for information it

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can use for advertising and other ways to classify and categorizing people. Who knows what they are using this information for? The anonymity guidelines suggests that if you are in a service position that you create a new email address that identifies the service and not you. Just as you would not post your full name on a website, you should avoid putting your personal email address that identifies who you are into a website.

For example, John Smith would be losing his anonymity because his personal email address of "john_smith@MyEmail.com" was posted on the internet. Even if his email address was jsmith@MyEmail.com, jhnsmt@MyEmail.com, or smith1959831@MyEmail.com, too much information would be available that people in the public sector could easily figure out it is you. Adding address information makes it worse not better. For example jsmithwestervloh@MyEmail.com narrows down the Smiths with a J to Westerville Ohio even with the missing letters. It cannot be underestimated the sophistication of automated bots and spiders that are crawling over the internet.

Including your personal email address in a newsletter is also not advised. You cannot guarantee the newsletter will not be shared with people who are not in OA. In fact, we often give out newsletters and flyers for events to the public, as a way of attracting people to OA. The newsletter or flyer may be posted to a website as a PDF document. Even though the document is a PDF, it doesn't mean it is protected in any special way. When Mabel Brown in New York reads your email and they see john_smith@MyEmail.com, she knows that John Smith is a member of Overeaters Anonymous and his anonymity is compromised. So avoid putting personal email addresses and full names on any document that may be released to the public.

Instead create a new email address. There are many email services that are free or inexpensive to use that are available on the internet. You should do your due diligence and research which email service would best suit your needs. When

you create the email account, you will be asked to create an email address. This is the time to be creative and avoid using email addresses that would identify you in anyway. Examples of good email addresses are: RecoveryIsCool@MyEmail.com, BananasIsntAFruit@MyEmail.com, AbstinentToday@MyEmail.com, or CSSISecretary@MyEmail.com. Email addresses should be short and easy to type but memorable. Using a phrase or the service position is better than something cryptic. While rcvyfrevr1@MyEmail.com is anonymous it is also difficult to type and not easily remembered.

Creating an anonymous email doesn't mean you are abandoning your personal email address. What a pain it would be to contact everybody to let them know you are changing it. There are better options. For example, you can simply maintain two email addresses that you check; one for your private correspondence and the other for public communication. I maintain three email address, one for work, personal, and the last for my OA service position. I have all three setup on my phone, at work and on my personal laptop computer. The only problem I have found is that sometimes I am thinking I am sending email from one account and instead it gets sent out from another. However, I am getting into the habit of checking the from email address every time I send an email.

While this works you may not want to be checking two email accounts for your email. Another option is that you can forward the email from account to your personal email address. Much like when you move from one house to another, the post office sends your mail to your new address, you can configure your OA email account to forward the email to your personal email account. You also have the option save the email or just forward it. When you create the email account open the email program and look for the configuration, preferences, or options button/link. This will open a set of choices that you can use to customize the email account. In this case, look for the mail forwarding option. Add the email to the box provided. You can even forward the email to

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multiple addresses by adding the extra email addresses separated by a semi-colon. There may be a checkbox option to delete the email after it is sent on. Leave this checkbox unchecked to save the email in your inbox.

The nice thing about doing mail forwarding is you will get all of your email in your personal email account. This gives you a chance to read the email and decide if you want to respond. Avoid replying from your personal email account for emails you receive from people or organizations outside OA. It would be better to log into the second email account and send the email from there.

Setting up an anonymous email address is a very good idea that requires very little time. If you need

help ask for it. There are many individuals in OA who are technically astute, who would be more than willing to give a helping or guiding hand. Before you give your personal anonymity away, take a moment to read the OA Guidelines and create an anonymous email address to use. As it says in the Anonymity Guidelines "A good idea to remember about anonymity in all environments, digital or otherwise, is to never share anything that you would not want to appear on the front page of the newspaper. While you may keep the anonymity of others, you cannot ensure that other people will keep yours."

– Joel I., Region 5 Secretary
R5Secretary@Outlook.com

Save the Date

MARCH 8-10, 2019 Region 5 of Overeaters Anonymous Spring Assembly, Hyatt Regency, Downtown Milwaukee, WI. *More information to come.*

SEPTEMBER 27-29, 2019 Region 5 of Overeaters Anonymous Convention.



LINKS:

www.oa.org

[OA Podcasts](#)

[The 12 Steps](#)

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[A Guide for Anonymity](#)

[in the Digital World](#)