

"We do talk about each other a great deal, but we almost invariably temper such talk by a spirit of love and tolerance."

Hello, Central...

The Newsletter of Los Angeles Area A.A. Central Office

Maintain and enhance your sobriety with service at Los Angeles Central Office

The active sober alcoholic may find three primary ways to enrich their sobriety through service at LACO. We offer volunteers service opportunities through phone shifts, the twelve step list and the speaker's list. Our regular volunteers all note that their cares and concerns diminish after working with newcomers for a few short hours. We feel service proves the spiritual law that no spiritual gift can be maintained as well as by giving it away. Since the 1970's, only 4 of our regular volunteers have gone out and gotten drunk.

A Worst-case Scenario.

A tremulous newcomer, resolved at last to take action about his problem drinking calls LACO. The phone volunteer who answers the call checks the database and gives the time and location of a meeting close to the newcomer. The would- be newcomer goes to the location at the listed time to find that the lights are out and the helping hand of AA is closed. The meeting has moved and has not notified LACO. It is not likely that many newcomers in this position make it to the fellowship that has saved our lives. This is a bad and quite possibly fatal first impression.

LACO needs your help to prevent this nightmare from happening at your meeting! Here is how to keep your listing current in our database and also on our website, if desired.

Please check your meeting listing in the print directory. If it is not correct, have the secretary of your meeting obtain a "group information" form (in the print directory or on our website). The form must be filled out completely and then mailed or faxed to LACO. The address

and fax number are listed in the print directory and website. LACO will then update your meeting listing in our database and the next printing of the directory.

Please don't forget, LACO must be notified if your meeting -

- 1) Is new and not yet listed.
- 2) Moves or changes meeting time
- 3) Shuts down
- 4) Changes its names or meeting type.

Also, if your meeting is not listed on our website and it is your group's consensus that it be listed, fill out the "group information" form and check the box which asks if your meeting wants to be listed on the website directory. This form must be then mailed or faxed to LACO.

And last, please don't forget to monitor your group's listing and notify us if the group information is incorrect or out of date. The future members of our fellowship need you to make sure AA will be there for them at the right time, and place.

Greetings to the friends of the Los Angeles Central Office from your new editor!

Our phone shifts are the primary service opportunity at LACO. We offer fixed weekly or biweekly four-hour phone shifts from 8:00 AM through 12:00 midnight. We also have eight-hour 12:00 AM through 8:00 AM shifts. We also can place volunteers on a contingency list to fit the volunteer's availability. The day shifts require one year of sobriety and eight hours of training. The training time is 8:00AM through 4:00 PM. If you desire to be of service as a phone volunteer, call LACO on the day you would like to train, as long as we are fully staffed, you can come in for training. We recommend training over two days. Once trained, volunteers may be placed in regular rotation or on the contingency list. The midnight to eight shift is the entry-level service position at LACO. It requires only six months of sobriety combined with a willingness to share experience, strength and hope. If you desire a midnight - to - eight phone shift, call Joe M. at: 213-235-5475.

Hello, Central... is back and will appear on a monthly basis.

For me it is both a privilege and an honor to grow into the position of editor for *Hello, Central...* My first contact with AA was through the old central office at Harvard Street.

In the heat of August of 1993 after numerous repetitions of bad breaks and harsh misunderstandings, I at last discovered that failure was the best part of me trying not to drink like a sociopath. I knew nothing about AA except that they had meetings of some sort and that I needed them badly.

So I looked up AA in the Yellow Pages but I could not find any meeting locations listed. In fact, I could find only one listing and it was for something called the Los Angeles Alcoholics Anonymous Central Office. It was only four blocks away from where I was trying to live as best as I could while drinking the better part of a quart of whiskey a day.

So it was at the well-worn old central office on Harvard Street that I turned myself in to AA. I surrendered to the man selling AA literature at the front desk. He offered to take me to my first meeting after his work shift ended. That man was Harvey P. who is now the LACO manager and my former sponsor of 16 years.

Through this bit of good fortune for both of us Harvey made certain to always find me plenty of service opportunities to maintain and enhance my sobriety. I started with midnight-to-eight shifts at six months of sobriety. After 1 year I moved up to regular day shifts. At 10 years of sobriety I started coordinating the midnight - to - eight shifts, becoming a member of the LA Central Office Service Committee.

I am grateful to be sober since I first stumbled into LACO. For me, gratitude is an active verb, so I am pleased to have the new opportunity to increase my service to Central Office. I will be telling you all about the numerous ways to give back to LACO through service opportunities and donations, so that the newcomers will always find the helping hand of AA here.

Editor

One alcoholic talking to another is the heart of our program. Being on the 12 step list will put the volunteer on the front line of recovery. We still place many twelve step calls and need both men and women for this vital service. No set sobriety time is needed for this commitment. Call LACO to get on this list.

What is LACO?

"What exactly is Central Office?" I was asked this question several weeks ago at a regular meeting of mine. This question was posed to me by an enthusiastic newcomer who took me more than a little aback; as this was the first time I was asked this question by someone so new to the program. I did not want to overwhelm him with my 17 years of experience at Los Angeles Central Office.

I can more easily explain to the experienced member of Alcoholics Anonymous what our role is in the local sober community.

Unlike the above newcomer, many of our members know that LACO sells AA literature at no profit to itself. Not a few of our fellowship have heard a Central Service Representative ask their meetings for phone volunteers at Central Office. Some of us have made contact with AA through LACO's website. But many of our members don't know that LACO maintains 12 step and speakers lists, or that we have a toll free number. This service allows all who call to get experience, strength and hope from a live volunteer 24 hours a day. In addition the caller can obtain the latest meeting locations and directions as well. LACO still places 12 step calls to bring newcomers to their first meeting. I chose not to tell the newcomer this.

I also could have told him that LACO is just as much a place to be of service as it is a service provider to the AA community. As I noted above, we ask our CSRs to stress in their reports that LACO constantly needs sober phone volunteers. We have 168 hours a week of phone shifts to fill. Our volunteers who give their time on the phones make the majority of our service possible while earning themselves the reward of 12 step work freely given. I have found that nothing takes me out of my own small world of

day- to- day challenges like a few hours on the phones talking to newcomers.

Although our 12 step work is never recompensed for, LACO does have operating expenses, which have to be paid through our own contributions. These expenses are for the things that make our 12 step work possible. We have the expenses of rent, phones, electricity, and special workers, who we are directed in our eighth tradition to recompense for their skills, which make our service possible at LACO.

Thus, since we don't earn money through our sales of literature, the financial contributions of local AA groups and individual members have kept LACO in service to our sober community. We use gratitude month each June to ensure to raise awareness of our role as well as ensuring that we remain self-supporting through our own contributions.

To the eager newcomer I gave a much simpler answer of what Central Office is. I told him that LACO is the place where AA's message of recovery is transmitted to our local sober community. I can tell you here that our mission is to distribute the message of AA's recovery through our literature sales, website, speaker and twelve step lists, and most importantly, our phone volunteers. As long as LACO carries AA's message, the miracle of recovery will continue throughout the Los Angeles Area.

Joe M.

The speaker' list an excellent way to be of service at LACO. One year's sobriety time and willingness to speak at open and closed meeting are required. We also ask that if you are on the speaker' list that you be on the twelve step list as well. Please mail in your information to:

**Intergroup Speakers List Committee
C/O LA Central Office
4311 Wilshire Blvd,
Suite 104
Los Angeles CA,
90010-3714**

Please provide the following information.

- 1) Full name**
- 2) Address**
- 3) Telephone number**
- 4) Sobriety date**
- 5) Reference or Recommendation**

"We are not cured of alcoholism. What we really have is a daily reprieve contingent on the maintenance of our spiritual condition."

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We're on the Web!

See us at:

www.lacoaa.org

We are to be self-supporting.

Tradition 7 directs us that we ought to be self-supporting through the contributions of our own membership. Many AA's primary contact with Los Angeles Central Office is to buy the vital conference approved literature for their individual meetings. Many but not all know that LACO sells literature at cost. We even sell the big book below General Service's set price to make them more available to the newcomer. Yet even though we are a non-profit organization, we still have many of the expenses of a regular business. We must meet our financial obligations for rent, phone service, Internet and website, electricity and vendors. LACO meets its expenses, which make 12 step work possible through individual and group donations.

As many AA members gain sobriety and begin to prosper they choose to contribute to the future of AA. so that future members will find help at the their time of need. Members have several ways to contribute to LACO.

- 1) One-time donations.
- 2) Birthday donations.
- 3) Monthly supporting donations.

Individual donations are limited to \$5000 a year and are tax deductible.

Once an AA group has met its prudent reserve, it can contribute to AA to ensure future members can find the meetings they need to recover. Page 9 of the current printed directory gives our suggested group contribution plan.

Donations to LACO should be sent to PO BOX 70159 Los Angeles, Ca. 90070. Group donations should also make certain to list the meeting information so we know whom to thank for their financial commitment to LACO's future.

*Harvey P.
Office Manager*

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