



# GRATITUDE IN ACTION

*"Gratitude should go forward, rather than backward, in other words, if you carry the message to still others, you will be making the best possible repayment for the help given to you." —As Bill Sees It, p.29*

Special Tenth Anniversary Edition

Spring 2009

## *Gratitude in Action*

Welcome to the first issue of the all new *Gratitude in Action*, your e-newsletter of FA service. This newsletter will be distributed to the entire fellowship via email.

All WSI contacts, intergroups, chapters, and all FA members currently listed in the office database (people who have an online account) will automatically receive an e-newsletter. If you do not have a personal login, you may set up an on-line account using "My Login" at: [www.foodaddicts.org](http://www.foodaddicts.org). Click on "My Login" near the top right corner of the homepage, choose "first time user," and follow the screen instructions. If you have questions email the FA office at [office@foodaddicts.org](mailto:office@foodaddicts.org). We will stress linking you to documents and contacts that you can use, so grab your mouse and let's go!

## *FA is Ten Years Old*

*This issue is going to celebrate the fact that FA is ten years old by giving you some history of how we got to where we are, and hopefully give you a picture of just what FA looks like in 2009. Each of our regular articles/groups/contributors has written their contribution from that perspective, and with this view you may find yourself more in touch with the organization that we have built that makes our recovery process possible.*

*Here are some memories from ten years ago...*

### **Memories from the first FA chair...**

The emotions and excitement of the early days of FA were refreshed, as I tripped down memory lane to write this piece.

March 22, 1998, my friend called to read a document to me, which had been written by my old sponsor, who was no longer an OA member. The document detailed why we did not fit under the organizational umbrella of OA. At that point, I was so tired of trying to make OA change, I said "It is time to leave OA". The two of us were not alone in our desire to have a recovery program that fit our needs as food addicts. We were joined by a group of such dedicated members, that within a short time we were able to found a comprehensive, functioning program. Some of the more poignant memories are:

- Leaving OA, most of the meeting spaces and all of the money.
- FA members reaching deep and sacrificing to send anonymous start up donations
- Selecting a name. One suggestion was Recovering Food Addicts. The German membership vetoed that name. The acronym of RFA meant Red Federated Army. Votes were counted and we were named.
- Many planning sessions conducted in my friend's kitchen.
- The first intergroup meeting, in which we passed the bylaws with such unity.
- The first WSBC (conference) when members from all over the world stood to be counted and many tears of joy were shed.

In closing, I would like to say God has worked through FA to save many lives, including mine. Let us continue in the spirit of the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions to go forward in that knowledge.

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### **And reminiscence from the second chair...**

*My God, has it really been over ten years now?* I remember when we decided to leave OA; I was ecstatic. I was in program about 10 or 11 years at that time, and had spent those years attending the local OA Intergroup. There was no unity of abstinence there; the room was filled with people who weighed and measured flour products, and it was very troubling. When my sponsor told me we would be leaving OA, my response was relief. I had been in the hot seat a number of times at that intergroup, and I was delighted to know that in our new program we would have unity in our definition of abstinence. That was the key, as it remains the key to our unity today in FA. Another long-term friend, who had entered program when I did, was terrified; because she was worried we wouldn't survive as FA. Our meetings were very small in the beginning. But I was certain that where there was truth, there would be growth, and I knew there was truth in our halls. My conviction has, thank you God, been confirmed in the growth of FA all over the world.

The first step was to break away from OA, and then to incorporate with the Massachusetts Secretary of State's Office as a not-for-profit organization. Following incorporation, we needed to apply to the IRS for tax-exempt status as a 501(c)(3) (charitable) organization. Two other fellows and I met with the attorneys at my law firm and they prepared the filings, which were successful. We received our 501(c)(3) status about six months later, as I recall. We incorporated under the name of the General Service Office of Food Addicts in Recovery Anonymous (FA-GSO), and established an intergroup called the New England Intergroup (NEI). We chose our officers and held our first meetings, during which we approved bylaws, proposed and voted on our name, and set up committees.

NEI and GSO operated as one entity for the first few years. We held our first national business convention in 2001 Manchester, New Hampshire, and it was at that convention that we officially established ourselves as a worldwide organization and determined that the GSO would need to operate as the central organization, separate now from the local intergroup, NEI. It was tremendously exciting to watch FA transform from a local group with a limited number of outlying members outside of Boston, a "central office" in one member's home, and no more than a phone number in the yellow pages as "public information," into an organization with substantial numbers, reach, and presence in the world. We didn't exactly "mushroom," as Bill writes of AA's early explosion, but we were certainly growing, slow and steady. What an honor and a privilege to be in the program in those days.

### **And from our current chair...**

When I think back to FA's beginnings, and development, and present-day service, I am most struck by the many ways we work—and have worked—together. Each person's work is vital to the whole, and this has been true from the time before we became officially FA.

I have happy memories of the meetings of our first literature committee, formed after we became FA. The committee developed FA's pamphlets, "Twenty Questions," and other written materials. Our little group attended a Saturday morning FA meeting, ate lunch, and then spent hours perched on cafeteria chairs discussing each draft in minute detail. We knew that the writing would explain directly or would indirectly indicate the assumptions at the heart of FA, so we worked very hard to think clearly, and we made every effort to communicate principles in ways that would make it evident that we were not talking about rules. We cared about every noun, every verb, every adjective and adverb. Our discussions were passionate. Never angry, we were sometimes good naturedly heated as we thought about what to say and how to say it. Conversations ranged from why we do what we do to the minutest points of

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grammar. One among us was a Latin teacher, to our great benefit. The discussions were exhilarating and fun.

In the past years, I have been privileged to serve on the World Service Board and, now, as chair of the board. The past three years have been challenging and thrilling. During this time, the board has come into its own as a board. Today, in our board meetings, we try to work together to address big issues that involve the welfare of the whole of our fellowship. We examine these issues as a group and then move forward according to group conscience. As FA has grown, we have turned our attention to questions that never would have crossed our minds in the early days. We have worked to learn how to support FA members who are alone in an entire country or alone in a region. We have considered how we can best safeguard anonymity on the web and yet make sure that the FA message of hope reaches those who have never heard of us. We are expanding our literature, and we are working hard to shift from serving the fellowship through an informal, intimate office to an office that must handle the complexities of a small business.

Service at the World Service International (WSI) level is a gift that is guaranteed to promote spiritual growth! This is not always comfortable, but it is truly a gift. In the end, though, I am left thinking about the essential importance of service at the individual, meeting, chapter, and intergroup levels. I hope that we will never privilege WSI service in our minds as being more “important” or “special” than service at the more individual or group level. Ultimately, the strength of FA depends upon the strength of individuals and meetings—the constituents that WSI is privileged to serve.

### *Some other memories from way back when...*

I became the first treasurer of FA because I'm a professional bookkeeper. I don't remember how much money we had to open the account, but it can't have been much. It grew pretty fast though because everyone was generous and we were collecting well, so the money was building. I started by using my experience and setting up a set of books by hand in paper ledgers. I sat every weekend and did the books. After awhile I realized that the world had progressed and we were growing, so I asked for help to set up an electronic process and a computer savvy member put Quick Books on our computer and taught me how to use it. We had an accountant who did reports for filing our non-profit status, and he's still our accountant. I remember that all of the mail came to this house—the checks came to me and the literature and stuff came to the chair of the office committee on the third floor, and the information for the qualification tapes came to another member on the second floor. Our expenses were certainly low in those days!

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I have one funny memory. One day when I was making copies of the tapes to send out, my daughter and I were yelling at each other and it got copied onto the tape! I got a call from a friend who received that copy and we laughed like crazy! We'd never even heard of CD's back then. We've come such a long way in these ten years. I love this program.

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I vividly remember the day I volunteered to have the office in my house. I couldn't believe those words had come out of my mouth! I never said “no” to service, but I never volunteered either! I knew very little about computers or how to run an office, I am a nurse by trade, but I could organize well, and I had

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a computer in an extra room in my apartment, so it was perfect. My apartment was on the third floor of a house in Chelsea, MA, and there were three of us doing active service, one on each floor.

The first item on the agenda for the office committee was to create a meeting list. Thankfully, there were only 3 or 4 meetings to put on a piece of paper. God was good to me! The next thing was to get a phone line. We put that in my “office” as well. We were able to forward the calls to the homes of other office committee members so they could take messages or be a live person to talk to that brand newcomer looking for a meeting! FA was all about service at the time. How could we use as many people to meet FA for the first time? We focused a lot of time on trying to have a live person to answer the phone as much as possible. We created quite a schedule for adhering to the office’s hours. As FA members kept starting new meetings, and new literature was created, the demands grew on the little office.

FA just kept growing, and clearly it needed more space and a central place so FA members could do service. We found an office space and furnished it with a desk, computer, file cabinet, phone and a set of shelves and a serenity prayer poster, and began to have people volunteer their time to answer phones, fill literature orders and mail them, answer e-mails and phone messages. We made so many mistakes, but we worked out a lot of kinks during that time.

There was so much work going on in the other committees that our focus was now to make the office the central place where all of the literature, public information and meeting starter kits, tapes, Archives, etc. could be kept. The office was to be the main place any FA member could go to get what they needed, and a place a newcomer could call to inquire about FA. I remember the guiding principle in my head at the time was “you guys (all of the committees) do the work, send us the product, and we will find a home for it in the office, and a way to get it out to who ever needs it.”

Within the office committee we did our best to keep it simple, and organize an infrastructure that was so user friendly that any office committee member could come in and find their way around the office. That didn’t always happen. It was constant updating of the meeting directory and our infamous database, and the website. God helped us big time when FA organized for our first conference. It got too much for the volunteers and we needed an employee, and it was time to have someone who knew more about business management, my job was done. As I write this I can’t believe how much went on during that time. There was always someone who knew what to do or where to go, I learned so much. What a growth experience it was. Thank you, God!

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Thinking about how we have grown—here are some “then and now” highlights. Our original office began as one filing cabinet in a member’s home. Our initial recorded qualifications were made and duplicated on one member’s boom box. Our meetings were primarily in one state with only a smattering of other locations. Our one Intergroup and General Service Organization were one and the same. Our magazine was a two-sided piece of letter-sized paper. We had no presence on the worldwide web. Was there a worldwide web?

Today our office is in an Office Park with paid employees. A newcomer can reach someone there by telephone over 20 hours per week. We have over 400 meetings worldwide. A newcomer can find us in thirty-five states and six countries. We have three intergroups, five chapters, and a world service organization with thirteen board members and many highly devoted committee members. A newcomer

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can find us at health fairs in communities big and small, and the link to our home page pops up quickly anytime someone desperate for help Google's, "food addiction." We have a book of over forty stories nearly ready for publication. We have clear bylaws that guide our service. We have a magazine subscribed to by over 1,000 individuals. We have on-line ordering. We have a phone-list, and an e-letter specifically designed to help reach those in outlying areas. We are on the move!

I remember writing the literature. We needed everything! We started by creating a format and instructions about how to set-up a meeting, as that was one of the things that we wanted to be sure went right in the growth of the new organization. Then we tackled the pamphlets. First "Before You Take that Bite" and "Food Addiction: There is a Solution" then "Anorexic? Bulimic? There is Hope" and "Food Addiction: Stories of Men in Recovery." Then we wrote a tools pamphlet that became "Living Abstinently- A Guide For Sponsors." Of course, now that is being replaced by the new Sponsorship Pamphlet that we will be reviewing at the years Business Convention. Three of us wrote everything sitting together in a hospital cafeteria in Everett, MA working from drafts that were written by a member who was on sabbatical that year—talk about a miracle! Some winter Saturdays we never saw daylight. It was grueling, but worth every moment as each new piece of literature was passed by the membership, printed, and at last, displayed on literature tables at meetings. Sometimes service isn't pleasant or convenient, but it always leaves you with the best darned glow!

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I was living in Ann Arbor, Michigan at the time, where we were extremely dependent on the much larger OA fellowship (I was the first "90 day" member in Ann Arbor and had just a few sponsees at the time). When I attended the OA Ann Arbor Intergroup meeting to tell them of our intention to "break off" and form FA, the stronger OA members were so angry with me. Their view was that I was diffusing the strong recovery in the area by making separate meetings, when they felt we would all be stronger in greater numbers in OA. I lost several friends at that meeting that night. But I happily moved on, trusting that the recovery in the newly formed FA was much more powerful to combat my disease than any other. In a short time, we had three FA meetings and many FA members in Ann Arbor.

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Ten years later and look how much has happened! I was very involved with the early beginning of this program, so I am well aware of our small but steady beginnings, and the time and thought that were put into building this program. I am inspired and impressed by the enormous numbers of people hours that have been expended in hard work over the last ten years. Presently I work in a busy walk-in medical clinic. I asked the FA office for some literature to display in the clinic, and I am happy to report that the process of getting literature was seamless, (which by the way, has all been taken, so it's time to re-request some more!) and the literature itself is attractive and to the point. How fortunate we are to be a part of a program that offers real hope for the newcomer food addict.

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I remember being so excited sitting in that living room discussing the possibility of leaving OA and forming FA so we could be honest about who we really are as recovering food addicts, and finally have a unified definition of abstinence; the same one that is being read at every FA meeting around the globe! I will never forget the enthusiasm and the incredible amount of hard work so many people did to make this happen. Prior to FA, I had been sponsoring people in other states and I never knew what they would be hearing at their home meetings, so it was tremendously satisfying to trust in the unity of our new

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program. But it wasn't always easy, especially when I had to leave my existing meetings to the folks who didn't want to make the change and start new ones... but this is a "we" program so I was never alone, and even when there wasn't someone right there with me, there always was a helpful old-timer's support on the phone. I was so grateful that I could finally stop working to convince the other people at my business meetings of the importance of a unified definition of abstinence or of the need for 90 days of abstinence to share! Thank God for FA!!!

For a fuller understanding of why and how FA got started, you can listen to the "History of FA" a talk from the first convention.

Order it on: <http://foodaddicts.org/cds.html>

## ***My How We have Grown!!***

You can get a very detailed account of how we've grown by checking out the **2008 FA Census** on [www.foodaddicts.org](http://www.foodaddicts.org) and pretty soon, we'll have the 2009 figures. In the meantime, here are some highlights comparing 2008 with 2001 when we took the first official census...

- ***FA total worldwide membership was 3,636; in 2001, it was 958.***
- ***410 FA meetings were currently being held worldwide; in 2001 there were 122.***
- ***FA worldwide membership has grown at over 20% per year.***
- ***FA meetings are held in 6 countries. In 2008, 93% of our members were in the US and 7% are in Australia, Canada, Germany, New Zealand or UK. In 2001, there were FA meetings in 3 countries.***
- ***In 2008, meetings were held in 34 US states; in 2001 FA was only in 16 states.***
- ***The average meeting size was 19 members.***
- ***There were 70 "FA Loners" (members actively working the FA program who do not access an FA meeting).***

**Reminder to respond to the 2009 census:** very important—The WSI or Intergroup contact for each meeting needs to input the number of people at that meeting and the number of meetings each person attends onto the website for the 2009 Census. Follow the detailed instructions in the "Members/For Members" section. This must be done before the Business Convention in May. If you have any questions you can contact the FA Office at [office@foodaddicts.org](mailto:office@foodaddicts.org).

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## *How is FA Organized?*

There is an excellent FA organizational chart that was prepared by the Chapter Support Committee. It is available at [www.foodaddicts.org](http://www.foodaddicts.org), under “Members/For Members” / World Service Inc. / Documents / Organizational Chart. Basically, there is a fellowship of members who are served by meetings. The meetings are helped by the closest chapter or intergroup. The chapters and intergroups are supported by a committee of the WSI. And the WSI is made up of members of the fellowship who are supported by their local meetings.

## *Chapter and Intergroup Support Committee (CISC)*

Almost immediately after FA incorporated, outlying pockets of meetings began to band together for organizational purposes. Some of the groups started out thinking they were forming intergroups. The group in South Florida called themselves the South Florida Intergroup while the group in North Carolina actually did follow through with all the legalities and became Unity Intergroup. Once the intricacies of the legal process and the cost of becoming an intergroup were understood, most of these groups chose to become satellites of a larger intergroup, namely New England Intergroup (NEI). Chapters were then born in places like Maine, New York, Florida, and Washington, D.C. In order to support these fledgling chapters, NEI formed a Chapter Support Committee. That committee developed a Forum for supporting the chapters and invited chapter representatives to Boston as an annual event. This effort was successful. As chapters became more viable, WSI (formerly GSO—General Service Office) recognized the need to support them and formed the Chapter Support Committee. Within two years the committee changed to the “Chapter and Intergroup Support Committee,” which brought NEI, the Western Area Intergroup (WAI) and Unity Intergroup (UI) under its umbrella. The basic intentions of CISC are to help chapters and intergroups (which in turn help meetings, which in turn reach the newcomers), and to help groups develop chapters and eventually, intergroups. The activities of the committee evolved over time, responding to the needs of outlying communities of FA.

One of the first efforts of the committee was the development of the Best Practices Newsletter. The goal of the newsletter was to have chapters and intergroups share ideas of what worked for them. The newsletter was successful and became helpful for meetings, chapters, and intergroups. The newsletter has always been well received. Today Best Practices will become a section of the *Gratitude in Action* Newsletter, and share in a much wider distribution than before.

With the success of the NEI Chapter Forum, this committee decided to emulate their forum for the Business Convention, and the Chapter Forum was presented for the first time four years ago. NEI kindly allowed the name to pass to this WSI committee, and NEI renamed their annual event the “Chapter Support Weekend.” Just before the first Forum at the Business Convention, the committee realized that a lot of people who would be attending the breakout session on “Forming a Chapter” were from areas that weren’t really ready to begin a chapter. Changes were made in order to address activities the existing chapters did before forming, like creating a local phone and meeting list; these became known as “pre-chapter activities.” The breakout session on “Forming a Chapter” was packed, and people from all over the world were interested in this pre-chapter information. Their interest and questions made it apparent there was a great need to support people in pre-chapter areas, which led the committee to give more time and attention to these outlying areas where chapters were a goal, but not yet a reality. The Chapter Forum, now “the Chapter and Intergroup Forum” has continued to evolve in light of the interests and needs of *(continued on page 8)*

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the fellowship. For example, this year, for the first time, the Forum will be presented at the Fellowship Convention as well as the Business Convention.

It should be mentioned that even before sanctioning the formation of this committee for the support of chapters, WSI (then known as GSO) went forward with producing the first Chapter Manual. They called upon representatives from the fledgling chapters, the NEI Chapter Support Chair, and others—36 people in all. They achieved an amazing piece of literature that spelled out in clear and concise language how chapters should function and information on how to start a chapter. The manual was revised in 2005 to reflect changes in FA itself and to incorporate suggestions from chapters. The original manual was presented at the first NEI Chapter Forum and was the reference for this committee as it began its activities. The members of this committee, except for the chair, really did not participate in the writing of the manual, but have relied on it as an indispensable guide.

One of the most rewarding activities of this committee has been to see and participate in the development of the Michigan Chapter in 2007. Individuals from different areas of Michigan were active members of this committee for two full years before taking the plunge and starting their own chapter. For two years, they shared the ups and downs with people who were working in active chapters or people whose chapters were folding (yes, some have had to disband). They studied the Chapter Manual and they took the steps to form their own chapter. They have a strong and viable chapter and did not have to muddle their way through as much as early chapters did because of the support of this committee. And it should be pointed out: they were here for the support; their participation for two years prior to forming their chapter was important to its current success.

Today this committee is supporting pre-chapter activities in places like Ohio and Australia and the United Kingdom. Food Addicts in Recovery Anonymous is growing rapidly, and this committee is here to help this growth—to provide information through the Forums, the Best Practices, the Chapter Manual and conference call discussions that interested pre-chapter groups, as well as intergroups and chapters, can be involved with. This committee has become a source for information about the grass roots of FA—a conduit for what is going on in the small fellowships around the world. Hopefully CISC will continue to fulfill its basic purpose of helping chapters, intergroups and pre-chapter groups strengthen their local FA meetings, the front line for reaching the newcomers.

**For more information on CISC, go to:**  
[intergroupandchaptersupport@foodaddicts.org](mailto:intergroupandchaptersupport@foodaddicts.org)

## *Intergroup News*

### **New England Intergroup (NEI)**

NEI has approximately 217 meetings in 4 Countries: the US, Canada, England, Germany and within the US, 20 states and the District of Columbia: DC, DE, FL, GA, IL, MA, ME, MD, MI, NC, NH, NJ, NY, OH, PA, RI, TN, VA, VT, WI, WV.

Because FA started in New England, originally there was only one body. Then after the first convention, NEI separated from WSI and became the first intergroup. It is the only intergroup with chapters, and there are four of them. It sends out monthly reports, which informs our fellowship of service opportunities and available resources. It's the primary way NEI communicates with its chapters and meetings.

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They have a Chapter Support Day once a year to strengthen its relationship with its chapters and outlying areas. Historically this has taken place in November. Typically people on the Chapter Support Committee develop topics to discuss with input from their Chapters and with the Chapters' help find speakers and coordinate the event. NEI and its Chapters learn from each other. WSI holds conference calls with Chapters and Intergroup Chairs, and with Chapter members. NEI's Chair and the Chapter Support Committee's Chair participate on those calls. Although Chapters follow NEI's bylaws, they are self-sufficient and will someday grow into Intergroups. NEI nurtures their growth by having a committee that acts kind of like an ombudsman to the Chapters.

NEI regularly holds meetings on the second Sunday morning of each month, except when there's a holiday, like Mother's Day, and they are always held at the VA Hospital in West Roxbury. Meeting dates are voted on in December of each year for the following year. They are posted on the website. NEI supports an office and a secretary, who maintains the database by inputting meeting changes and answers the phone.

NEI committees include Twelfth Step, Public Information (PI), and Teens and Twenties; they do a lot of outreach in the southern New England region. The PI committee has monthly conference calls for meeting PI reps from all over, including England and Germany, to help the meetings get the word out. They encouraged the concept of a having a PI blitz, where several individual meetings in an area/region would hold their PI sessions around the same time, thereby benefitting by being able to advertise together. The Teens and Twenties Committee members sit in on those calls. The Convention Resource Committee (CRC) coordinates assistance for out-of-towners to the Convention by connecting people with names of people who can provide lodging and rides to and from the airport. CRC also handles the financial aid requests from voting members. The process of approving financial aid is a blind one, only the Chair of CRC and the Treasurer of NEI know who actually is receiving funds. WSI formed a sub-committee to develop the criteria for financial aid and now suggests that members should request financial aid from their intergroups, rather than their meetings in order to prevent personalities taking over the process.

NEI's mission for this past year was to foster the concept of healthy meetings. We focused on this in everything we did. One thing was to put one meeting health question/idea into each NEI Report, so meetings could read it out loud and discuss it in their business meeting, a sort of meeting inventory. For more information on NEI, please go to: [http://foodaddicts.org/member/EAI%20\(NEI\).html](http://foodaddicts.org/member/EAI%20(NEI).html)

### **Western Area Intergroup (WAI)**

The FA program got started in California in 1996 when one member moved there from Florida and another moved from Massachusetts to the South Bay in Northern California. In April 1996 they started the first meeting of this format (90 day OA) in Cupertino with about 10 members. By July there were 2 or 3 meetings doing the 90-day OA format and an AWOL that had started in May. There were about 20–30 members. People came from other areas (San Francisco, East Bay). In September of 1997 there was an estimated 65 members listed on the phone sheet. In summer of 1998, FA was started and the CA meetings switched to FA or formed new FA meetings. Initially, there were about 5 FA meetings in CA. Other members moved to various parts of California and started meetings there. Some of the original members that had previously traveled far distances to the South Bay were now forming meetings in their own areas.

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By fall 1998 there were 9 FA meetings in California, 3 in the South bay, 3 in San Francisco, 1 in Morgan Hill, 1 in Orinda and 1 in Gualala. Shortly after meetings were started in the North Bay (Marin County). There were also 2 AWOLS existing in San Francisco and the South Bay.

The Western Area Intergroup (WAI) started forming in fall of 2000 with most members participating in reviewing and approving the Bylaws. This process was completed in spring 2001, and there were 37 FA meetings counted that June. WAI completed the non-profit incorporation in 2003.

In March 2003, FA required all meetings to begin registering through the intergroups. WAI had 50 meetings listed in a Northern California Meeting Directory and we developed an additional directory, WAI Outlying FA Meeting Directory. This directory included 7 meetings. In December 2003, WAI combined our WAI Northern California FA Meeting Directory and our WAI Outlying FA Meeting Directory into one directory. Combining the two directories has simplified the revision process and helped to unify all the meetings registering with WAI. The WAI directory has gone from a single sheet to a folder type, to a booklet.

In 2007 there were now 144 meetings listed in the WAI Meeting Directory.

By beginning of 2009, there are ~170 meetings that are part of WAI including 12 states in the US and 3 additional countries (Canada, Australia, and New Zealand). There are about 350 members in attendance at each monthly intergroup meeting. To date, California has 115 meetings with over 1,375 members, which makes up about one third of the FA fellowship as a whole. For more information on WAI, please click on: <http://www.foodaddicts.org/member/Western%20Area%20Intergroup.html>

## **Unity, North Carolina**

This was first called the Charlotte Intergroup in 1999; it formed only one year after NEI! Then in 2002 the name was changed to Unity Intergroup. Unity Intergroup provides service to those meetings in Charlotte, NC and surrounding areas. This fellowship is growing every month and has over 17 meetings in the area. The PI committee is reaching out to the food addict who still suffers by sponsoring racks with FA information in the community and expanding its reach to area colleges and doctor's offices. The Twelfth Step committee has been working with local meetings by bringing more of the fellowship to meetings that have a smaller attendance as well as taking meetings to those whose health will not allow them to get out to attend a meeting. As the area fellowship grows, so does our need for information sharing and service. Unity Intergroup is committed to continue to provide this service to the food addict who still suffers.

## **Chapter News**

### **Maine**

The Maine Chapter officially started on February 28<sup>th</sup> 2002. Prior to that date, the group met to organize PI meetings. The chapter originally consisted of a PI committee, Office committee and a Teens and Twenties committee. Currently, there are Office and PI committees as there were not enough people to include Teens and Twenties. In the fall of 2008, the average was 10 people attending. Now the average has grown to 15–20 people. The chapter meetings are held on the Third Sunday of the month. The board meets at 8:30 followed by the committee meetings from 9:30–10:30; the full body meets from 10:30–11:30. When the committees meet they meet together, i.e. Office will take 20–30 minutes and the PI will

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take the remainder of the time. The group is considering including meetings from other states such as New Hampshire.

That first meeting in February 2002 took place in the kitchen before the Thursday night Westbrook meeting. There were people from the 4 or 5 meetings trying to coordinate a P.I. for the area. All members went to Thursday night meeting anyway, so it seemed like a good place to start. In March 2002 the group voted to devote the third Thursday of the month for Chapter meetings. It was difficult for people to get dinner eaten and business conducted before the FA meeting started so a change of venue became necessary. In April 2003, the group voted to have the meetings take place on Sunday mornings; they decided on a two-month trial period and have never looked back.

In an effort to engage more of the fellowship and to serve as a resource for the 17 meetings in the state, the Maine Chapter held the first “Maine Meeting Support Day” on March 30, 2008. There were over 60 people attending, representing every meeting in the state. It was very well received and there has been growth in the number of people participating.

Today, the Chapter meetings average about 15–20 people coming every Sunday. Several people stay after the chapter meetings to share a fellowship lunch. Every committee chair is filled. On April 19 the Chapter held its second Meeting Support Day, which was very exciting and uplifting for FA members. Nearly 60 people attended the chapter meeting at the start, and over 85 attended the full day. Two panels of experienced members addressed putting Tools in Action (how our tools help us strengthen our individual recovery and our meetings), and Meeting Tools (how to help newcomers and strengthen our recovery). The closing session offered opportunities for more questions and sharing of experience from FA members participating. Evaluations have been overwhelmingly positive, with many members noting that they feel more dedicated to doing service and participating in the work of the Chapter.

## **Florida**

The state of Florida has two chapters because it is so spread out, the Central Florida and South Florida Chapters, and they are part of New England Intergroup.

## **Central Florida**

Central Florida has six meetings now, but it only had three meetings when it started seven years ago. They had seven meetings, but had to close one. They usually have about thirty to forty people at two of their meetings, and fifteen in the others. There are about fifty in their chapter membership. At one time they tried having a central phone list, but it didn't work too well and now each meeting has its own. They have chapter meetings now once every other month originally they had them quarterly, but it wasn't enough to stay connected. We have our chapter meetings at 9:10 AM on Saturdays for ½ hour. There are about a dozen committed people at these meetings. We are focusing on communicating with meetings and helping one another. Passing on the information that has been developed by WSI and NEI and Best Practices. Suggestions from the selections, “Organization of FA at a Glance” and the “Meeting Checklist” that are available in the “For Members” section of the website have been useful. The Chapter is making notebooks of this information for each of the meetings. (Good secretarial practices/information.) The Chapter sends monthly public service announcements out faithfully that include all of the meetings, the consistency works. For more information, please go to: [c.floffic@foodaddicts.org](mailto:c.floffic@foodaddicts.org)

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## The South Florida Chapter

Our little chapter actually began, or so we thought, as an intergroup. We began meeting informally as soon as FA was formed—for organizing activities, such as a unified phone list, a telephone hot line and information sessions; we actually met in someone’s living room, took care of business and then went out to dinner! In 2002 we decided to become more business-like and form an intergroup. There were four of us, out of the entire fellowship (which was about 6 meetings at the time), who had over two years of abstinence, so we made up the board. We had two active committees—the Business Committee and the Public Information Committee. Somehow word got to us that we would be a chapter, so we began calling ourselves a chapter. Our first meeting was January 5, 2002. Today, 7 years later, we are still functioning. We now have three committees, having added a By-Laws Committee; we also have a Chapter Liaison and a Meeting Liaison. We have 19 meetings registered with the chapter, and these meetings cover both the east and west coast of south Florida. We average around 8 to 12 people, and we meet for an hour and a half the first Saturday of each month. As a chapter we organize and support Information Sessions and Health Fairs, maintain a meeting list and a hot line, and support our meetings in any way possible. At each chapter meeting we try to have an activity, such as preparing Starter Packets and Letters to the Professionals for the meetings. Recently we have been invited into the public schools, so that may well become a new avenue of outreach for us. We feel we have had steady growth during the 7 years we have been in existence. For more information, please go to: [s.foffice@foodaddicts.org](mailto:s.foffice@foodaddicts.org)

## Michigan

In early spring of 1995 a member of 90-day OA in Boston, moved to Kalamazoo, MI and began to attend OA meetings. She brought with her a program with a definition of abstinence that we still use today and, most importantly, she called herself a food addict. As she tried to explain her abstinence and food addiction at OA meetings, she met with hostility. By May of '95, she opened a 90-day OA meeting in Kalamazoo. There were about 3–7 people who met once a week and learned about how this program was practiced in Boston. We were given lists of people (5 pages worth) mainly from Boston and surrounding areas, but also from Florida, Georgia, and New Hampshire. We were to call three people a day plus write 2 postcards a day. What an adventure, especially when we were still paying for long distance calls by distance. Monthly phone bills of \$200–250 were common, but they were offset by curtailing the insane costs of snack foods and rampant eating out. One of our members was spending a minimum of \$75 a week in restaurants back in 1995; phone calls turned out to be cheaper.

Soon, someone moved to Ann Arbor from Indiana and opened a Chelsea-type 90-day OA meeting there. In 1998, when the vote was taken to either remain in 90-day OA or join FA, we had 2 meetings in Kalamazoo and one in Ann Arbor; all meetings voted to join FA. What a thrill it was to see the outcome of our voting. Soon someone moved from Florida to the Detroit suburbs and meetings opened in that area; someone attending meetings in Ann Arbor opened meetings in the Saginaw/Flint area; folks in Grand Rapids who were traveling over an hour to Kalamazoo opened meetings where they lived; someone else learned about the FA program through relatives in other areas of the state and soon meetings opened in the Traverse City Area.

In early 2000, one region explored forming a chapter for its specific geographic area; it hoped to coordinate all its meetings but the task seemed formidable. What resulted, instead, was something dubbed the “area group,” consisting of a secretary, a literature person and a treasurer. It collected money from all the meetings, bought literature for all the groups, developed phone lists, put aside money to pay

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for out-of-town speakers for information sessions and sent off any excess money to GSO. Several of these groups arose. Today these would be called “pre-chapter activities.”

In March 2007, we began the process of forming a Chapter, one of 5 in NEI, so we’re now 2 years old. Our focus in our first full year of functioning was directed toward setting up the chapter “basics” choosing board members, establishing a state-wide 800#, securing a post office box, developing a budget, etc.

Today we have thirty-five registered meetings in Michigan with an average of ten to fifteen people at each meeting, a far cry from just ten years ago when we had 3 meetings. We have chapter meetings once a month with roughly fifteen people attending. All of our Chapter service positions are filled and we are focusing this year on bringing the message to newcomers by attending health fairs in different areas of the state. We have such great workers who do such great service—we’re going to make it! For more information on the Michigan Chapter, please go to: [MIoffice@foodaddicts.org](mailto:MIoffice@foodaddicts.org)

## **Upstate New York**

In September 2008, the Upstate New York Chapter of FA/NEI decided to shut down its chapter and return to pre-chapter status. The Upstate New York Chapter was formed in the summer of 2002 in an effort to unite the FA meetings north of New York City. Our chapter was centrally located in Ithaca and spread as far east as Albany and as far west as Rochester, a three hour spread. Like other chapters, we provided the FA meetings in Upstate New York resources for meetings and outreach to newcomers. We created a chapter meeting and phone list, assisted groups with Public Information meetings, and provided advice and assistance to help maintain healthy meetings. We participated in the Chapter and Intergroup Support Committee and represented our meetings at the Business Convention every year.

*So, what happened?*

We found that we could not sustain our chapter over its broad geographical reach. It became clear to us that the individual areas of our chapters were taking care of themselves, creating their own phone and meeting lists, newcomer and medical professional packets. Public information outreach was also done by individual area, but little to no assistance from the chapter was required. Our largest growing area, Rochester, did not seem to need the Public Information sessions other areas had used and found successful. Our other FA areas by contrast contracted; we turned our focus to maintaining our abstinence and keeping our meetings open.

Ultimately, in the fall of 2008 we still did not have enough FA members with sufficient abstinence to fill our Executive Board. Attendance at chapter meetings decreased to just a few regular attendees. After much soul searching, we decided to close our chapter and to focus our attention on developing stronger local meetings and statewide connections. Some of us travel from Central New York to Western New York for meetings and AWOLs. We maintain our 1-800 number for food addicts in the Upstate New York area, and we continue to fund public information efforts when funds are needed.

Many of us have remained involved at the NEI and WSI level, so that we can stay current with the latest efforts of other pre-chapter communities to build a foundation for a strong chapter. We imagine that in a few years, another New York chapter will open. We look forward to that day and the opportunity to do the service that chapter will require.

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## *News from the World Service Board*

Ever since the first convention when WSI and NEI separated there has been a board of directors for FA, which is called the World Service Board, WSB. Besides the four officers, chair, vice-chair, secretary and treasurer, its members represent the various WSI committees, including: Public Information, Twelfth Step, Twelve Traditions, Bylaws, Convention Planning, Office, Literature, Chapter and Intergroup Support, and Magazine. You can get all of the details on these committees by going to [www.foodaddicts.org](http://www.foodaddicts.org) under “Members/For Members”, then “World Service Inc Documents” to the “Governing Documents”.

Back in the old days the board was all from the Boston area and they met in a conference room before the “intergroup” or general meeting. Committees met then too in various niches around the hospital and several in the large room where the meeting was held. When the WSB was created at the first convention, things had to change because members of the new board were from all over America. So, since that time, meetings have been held by a new advance; the conference call.

Being on the WSB is a serious commitment. The board holds conference calls every month and reviews reams of material in between. They deal with issues that affect the whole fellowship of FA. The WSB is responsible for the World Service office, FA’s web presence, all of its literature, the qualification CDs, outreach to people on the frontier, support for the development of meetings in languages other than English, and a range of efforts to support the strength of individuals and meetings.

## *Some WSI Committee News*

### **The Literature Committee**

The Literature Committee has produced drafts of two new pieces of literature, a new pamphlet on Sponsorship and the FA Book. These are available for review on [www.foodaddicts.org](http://www.foodaddicts.org) in the “Members/For Members”, under “Literature.” They will be discussed at the business convention.

### *theconnection*

Published and distributed monthly, *theconnection* is the international journal of Food Addicts in Recovery Anonymous. Written, edited, designed, and illustrated by FA members, the magazine is a lifeline connecting food addicts in recovery all over the world. *theconnection*’s purpose is to communicate the experience, strength, and hope to be found in living the FA way of life. Its writings reflect the broad spectrum of current FA experience, and focus on recovery and unity.



### **The Twelfth Step Committee**

Four Twelfth Step sub-committees have produced useful work, the Language Sub-committee developed a phone list of members who speak various languages, and has worked with the Literature Committee to translate the FA format and some literature into Spanish. There are now two Spanish Speaking meetings in California! The Accessibility Sub-committee has created guidelines for meetings to help make them more accessible to physically challenged members. The Frontier Sub-committee’s work is highlighted in a section below entitled On the FA Frontier. And the Communication Sub-committee brings you this issue of *Gratitude in Action*!

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## PI Committee

Watch for the Fact File and FA at a Glance on the website. They will be on the Media Page and are documents that are packed with information about FA. The 2009 Census is near completion and that will also tell us a lot about our fellowship. Thanks for everyone's assistance in gathering all these statistics. We are revising the Public Information Kit that is a wonderful tool to help us in all our PI work. Contact us at [pi@foodaddicts.org](mailto:pi@foodaddicts.org) if you have any suggestions. [Mediawatch@foodaddicts.org](mailto:Mediawatch@foodaddicts.org) running smoothly informing magazines, radios, newspapers and television about our organization—with the help of you telling us who could be informed. [Weblinks@foodaddicts.org](mailto:Weblinks@foodaddicts.org) is a way to link FA up with any organization that has a website—let us know who might want FA's website linked to their website.

### *Business and Fellowship Conventions*

FA has held eight conventions in its ten years. If you can imagine the giant job that has been for the dedicated people who volunteer for the Convention Committee, that's nothing short of a miracle.

FA held the first national Business Convention in Manchester, New Hampshire in 2001, attendance was somewhere around 300 members, with people from around the US as well as a small few from abroad. It was at that convention that we officially established ourselves as a worldwide organization and determined that the GSO would need to operate as the central organization, separate now from the local intergroup, NEI. It was a tremendously exciting experience to watch as FA transformed from a local group with a handful of members outside of Boston, into an organization with substantial numbers, a broad reach, and a presence in the world. There were tears and a palpable feeling of gratitude and awe in the room when each state and country was called out and the members who were there stood up to great cheering. There were four annual business conventions held in Manchester, NH and there have been four more in Danvers, MA, where it will be held again this year. The numbers of attendees have steadily increased and each year brings new motions and organizational business to be discussed. It is always inspiring and encouraging seeing the way we resolve our differences and are able to work together for the greater good, and then, we dance! Clearly the fellowship is thriving as a result. **This year's Annual Business Convention is coming up soon from May 29–31, 2009, in Danvers, MA. See [www.foodaddicts.org](http://www.foodaddicts.org) for details.**

Then in October of 2007, FA held its first Fellowship Convention on the other American coast, in San Diego, California. The purpose of having another gathering was to leave all business aside and come together in a celebration of recovery. The focus of the meetings was on sharing common experiences that support our daily abstinence. There were approximately 700 food addicts gathered together for the largest recorded FA meeting thus far; it was standing room only! **The second Fellowship Convention is being held October 16–18, 2009 at The Santa Clara (California) Marriott. Reservations are available by phone at 408-988-1500.** We are expecting around 800 members to attend, but certainly all and more are very welcome. Hope to see everyone soon!

## *The Forum*

### **History of the Chapter-Intergroup Forum, 2006 to Present**

The Chapter Forum, as it was first called, grew out of annual weekends that the New England Intergroup sponsored for chapters. The intergroup invited participants from its affiliated chapters to Boston once a year and offered support and opportunity for sharing concerns. This always coincided with the intergroup meeting, and chapter participants had the opportunity of observing the board meeting,

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committee meetings and the general meeting. In addition, a special presentation was given in the afternoon with sharing from the World Service Board Chair and open sharing and discussion from the audience. It was at one of these weekends that the first edition of the Chapter Manual was presented.

In 2006 the World Service Chapter Support Committee (now the WSI Chapter and Intergroup Support Committee—CISC) presented the first Forum at the business conference. Its goal was to share the experience of FA members in “organizing to reach the newcomer.” Its purpose was to prevent the need of FA members constantly “reinventing” methods that were proven to work. It was set up for the Friday afternoon before the conference, when people would be arriving for the weekend. The format included an opening session with an address from the World Service Chair, six breakout sessions and a closing session in which the various sessions were summarized. The breakout sessions, on specific topics, consisted of a panel of four recovering food addicts with experience in service, giving short presentations and answering a few questions. The topics were on a variety of issues pertinent to growing areas—how to start a chapter, how to conduct meetings, how to handle finances, public information, etc. The Forum was a success, and the enthusiasm was wonderful.

The next Forum was significant. Although it followed the previous format, the 2007 Forum brought to light some new direction for both the Forum and the committee:

- Participants definitely wanted to be able to attend more than one session.
- Participants wanted more of an opportunity to ask questions and share their own experiences.
- The speakers of the forum wanted to insure that their participation did not label them as “experts” and actually wanted more audience involvement.
- And the enthusiastic interest in “Starting a Chapter” revealed the need to support pre-chapter activities in out-lying areas.

The CISC responded by focusing some of its activities on the pre-chapter needs of out-lying meetings, such as Ohio, England and Australia. The Forum Committee responded by revamping the 2008 Forum and a statement was prepared to be read at each breakout session:

### **Breakout Group Definition Statement**

*“What are the breakout groups about? This is not a workshop. It is not training. We are not teaching, not persuading. We are not experts. What are we doing? Sharing our experience, what has worked for us. We are being informational, not instructional. Hopefully, what we share will help you as it has helped us. Keep in mind, we’re all a group of recovering food addicts. We hope you will listen, feel free to ask questions, and share your own insights.”*

The basic format remained the same—opening, breakouts and a closing. But two tiers of breakouts were provided, allowing people to attend two sessions. Some of the breakouts were repeated twice, and a new one called “The FA Solution” was added. The format of the breakout sessions was changed to allow for questions and comments, and the ending session allowed participants to approach a microphone and voice their comments regarding their experiences and observations.

This year, 2009, the Forum format will basically stay the same, but the exciting news is that it will be presented at both the Business Convention and the Fellowship Convention! The *2008 Chapter & IG Forum Report* is available under “Members/For Members”, of the FA website, <http://www.foodaddicts.org/chapter.html>.

## ***The FA Website***

In the beginning there wasn't even a computer, and now we're an electronic marvel!! Have you spent any time on the FA website? (home page: <http://www.foodaddicts.org>) You'd be amazed at what's available there to help everyone. There's information for the newcomer listing where meetings are, contact people to call for meeting information, and links to maps at (<http://foodaddicts.org/meetings.php>), and if you aren't even a newcomer yet, there are stories of people in FA right on the home page. (And these are changed frequently.) There's information for meetings, which includes detailed documents such as "Meeting Guidelines" and the "Meeting Format" in the "Members/For Members," "FA Meeting Information" section. There's a place for interested members of the media to go to, to check the FA census information and other articles on FA. (<http://foodaddicts.org/pressinfo.html>) You can even watch a video of the FA segment on the Today Show. (<http://today.msnbc.msn.com/id/26184891/vp/27485190#27485190>) Or you can order literature or CD's for your meeting or yourself. (<http://foodaddicts.org/literature.html>)

Here's an overview of what resources are available to you online through the tabs on the home page...

- "Who, me?" Gives the 20 questions to help newcomers decide whether or not they might be a food addict.
- "Pamphlets" offer a brief summary of the pamphlets that are available to purchase.
- "Meetings" has a complete list of all FA meetings everywhere listed by state and country with contact information, meeting times and places, maps, as well as a link with information if there is no meeting in your area.
- "Media" offers links to media clips on FA, including a video of a "mock" FA meeting, and contact information for the FA Public Information Coordinator to receive a press kit or be able to interview an FA member or officer.
- "Members" is where you can order Literature or CDs and get information on *theconnection*.
- To have access to MEMBER information and literature, you'll need to log in. Just follow directions and you will see the following links...
  - Order Subscription | Literature | Speaker CDs | Donations to World Service | Magazine
  - Register for Business Convention | Fellowship Convention | World Service Inc. Documents
  - WSI Committee Info | FA Meeting Guidelines and Formats | Intergroup and Chapter Info
  - Meeting Census and Meeting Change Form

### **But wait, there's more!**

If you want to access a myriad of documents (all of those documents which used to be located on a section titled "fadocs")... just go to the "Member" tab on the home page—a pull down menu will appear. The last tab on the menu reads "For Members." Click on this and it will ask for authentication. (The direct link is: <http://foodaddicts.org/members/index.html#>) Type in the Username: "fadocs" and password: "fadocs" (these are the same for all of us) and you'll see a screen with LOTS of links to a repository for documents. It is updated often, so be sure to check it regularly. This is a real treasure trove of useful information from the governing documents of FA, to drafts of the upcoming book and new sponsorship pamphlet for member review. For meetings there's a section on "Meeting Guidelines" and PI Kit to help you run your meetings more effectively, and for everyone there are copies of past newsletters to read. (<http://www.foodaddicts.org/member/FAPublicInformationKit.html>) Why not bookmark the website in your internet browser or create a shortcut and put it on your desktop for quick and easy access!

## ***The Best Practices Newsletter***

The "Best Practices" newsletter emerged seven years ago from the *NEI Chapter Support Committee*. Four years ago, the publishing of this newsletter moved to the *WSI Chapter Committee* that is now the *Chapter and Intergroup Support Committee* (CISC). The original and on-going intent is to synthesize and circulate those practices FA members have found most effective in organizing to carry the message to the newcomer. These practices (as in "Best Practices") have arisen from group, chapter and intergroup experiences and are reported in an effort to help local groups grow and maintain their focus in carrying the message to the suffering food addict. The CISC understands that without effective meetings, chapters and intergroups cannot be effective. The newsletter, still a function of the CISC, will now become a regular contribution to *Gratitude in Action*.

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## ***Best Practices Newsletter***

This month's issue of "Best Practices" reflects the CISC's commitment in helping chapters and intergroups address questions coming from their participating meetings. These five questions are a sampling of the many questions occasionally brought for discussion and input at our monthly CISC conference call. The responses provided here are not the answers of experts, but of FA members on the committee who have had some experience in service at the group, chapter and intergroup level. These offerings are a synthesis of their collective experience, and reflective of the types of questions that come to Chapters and Intergroups.

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### ***Frequently Asked Questions Brought to Chapters and Intergroups***

#### ***How should we handle people who interrupt speakers with requests for information? (such as, "Give us your stats!")***

We think that the best place to address this is at the business meeting. The group could decide whether or not to add something to the format, such as suggesting that people not "participate" in the speaker's qualification. Another point of discussion could be the value of sharing your "stats" for the newcomer. Newcomers want their hope in concrete numbers, and it helps when speakers lead off their stories with their "numbers". Those who attend the business meeting could then set the example at the meetings by sharing their information (and encourage their sponsees to do the same). Sometimes it takes time for us to learn to listen respectfully to our speakers, just as it takes time to learn how to qualify effectively.

#### ***Am I breaking someone's anonymity if I name him/her in my sharing? (For example, can I name the specific person who brought me into FA or my sponsor?)***

Many of us have been brought into FA by a person who attends our meetings or who is well known in our fellowship. Our gratitude for the service these people have done for us is often so great we want to acknowledge them publicly. However fine our intentions, it's good to remember the 12<sup>th</sup> Tradition on this point: *Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our Traditions, ever reminding us to place principles before personalities.* When we share about how we have been helped in our recovery, it is the actions others took on our behalf that matters most, not their names. Although we are grateful for the service someone may have done for us, we need to respect their anonymity for the good of the person and the meeting.

#### ***Is it appropriate for me to name my specific higher power when I am sharing? What should I do if many people in my group make frequent references to a specific higher power?***

As a group, we attempt to create an atmosphere that is the most welcoming to newcomers *and best reflects the non-religious tradition of FA.* Our 1<sup>st</sup> tradition tells us "our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends on FA unity." We think that the business meeting would be a good place to discuss this, focusing on how to address the question of a Higher Power in sharing without inadvertently promoting a specific religion. Our sharing should be reflective of FA traditions and keep the newcomer in mind.

#### ***Why do we sit in lecture style seating? Why can't we sit in the round?***

We sit lecture style because it encourages us to concentrate on the fact that we are food addicts who must focus on our individual recovery, not on each other. When we sit in the round, it is a lot easier to become distracted by what is happening around us and to take the focus off ourselves. Additionally, if we sit in the round, there is no natural front of the room; therefore, our focus is not necessarily directed at the person standing to speak. Coming to the front of the room to speak, share, or read is a key feature for FA meetings. We express our humility by facing the group in our physical recovery, stating our names, and admitting, "I'm a food addict." Making this admission from the front of the room reinforces for us and for others the importance of admitting our powerlessness over our disease. When the entire group shares in the experience by focusing on the speaker, we show our support for each other.

#### ***How should we handle people passing out recipes in meetings?***

This is another point for a business meeting discussion. What message are we giving the newcomer? In our informal conversations before, during breaks, and after the meetings—how do we demonstrate that recovery, not food, is our primary focus? Answers probably won't include passing out recipes! While we may need some help learning how to prepare food abstinently, most of us feel those conversations are best done with our sponsors.

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## *On the FA Frontier*

First there was Boston! Then, during the 1990's, members who attended meetings in Boston also began to start meetings in their hometowns in New Hampshire, Rhode Island and other areas of Massachusetts. Others who moved away from Boston began meetings all over the country in Michigan, Florida, California, North Carolina, New York, and other areas too numerous to mention here. As these meetings took hold and grew their members moved away and started meetings in other places. Some members moved to other countries and brought meetings with them; folks from other countries found program while living in the United States and brought it back with them when they returned home.

Through it all, the basis of recovery still lies in getting a sponsor and reaching out to other food addicts to break our habit of isolating. It doesn't matter if a food addict lives in Massachusetts or Montana, Nairobi or New York, Sacramento or Sydney, whether we are 1 member with no meetings or 250 members with 10 meetings, the nature of food addicts is to isolate.

To address these ongoing issues of isolation by members with few or no meetings, in 2006 a subcommittee of the WSI Twelfth Step Committee was formed. Originally called the "Outliers' Subcommittee" and now called the "Frontier Sub-committee". Today, the committee consists of 9 members from both Frontier and more populated areas. We meet quarterly to help bring the message to Frontier members. This group publishes a Frontier Phone List and a Frontier Sponsor List to provide a means by which our members on the frontier can reach out to others in their situation (in addition to those who live in more FA-populated areas) and to find sponsors when they have none in their area. Email [faoutlyinglist@gmail.com](mailto:faoutlyinglist@gmail.com) or call (510) 666-1251 for more information about the Frontier Phone List, and [sponsorlist@foodaddicts.org](mailto:sponsorlist@foodaddicts.org) or (781) 932-6300 for the Frontier Sponsor List. To get your own copies of these lists, email [frontierlist@foodaddicts.org](mailto:frontierlist@foodaddicts.org) and/or [sponsorlist@foodaddicts.org](mailto:sponsorlist@foodaddicts.org).

In 1997, the Frontier Subcommittee started an e-letter for folks living on the frontier, appropriately called "On the FA Frontier." Today, we have migrated to *Gratitude in Action* and will continue our contact with members on the frontier by a column in this new e-letter. For copies of our first two e-letters, dealing with phone calls and meetings, please access the following websites:

[http://www.foodaddicts.org/member/gso/frontier/On\\_the\\_FA\\_Frontier\\_3\\_5\\_07.doc](http://www.foodaddicts.org/member/gso/frontier/On_the_FA_Frontier_3_5_07.doc) (phone calls)

[http://www.foodaddicts.org/member/gso/frontier/On\\_the\\_FA\\_Frontier\\_9\\_23\\_07.doc](http://www.foodaddicts.org/member/gso/frontier/On_the_FA_Frontier_9_23_07.doc) (meetings)

You may also access these documents by going to [www.foodaddicts.org](http://www.foodaddicts.org). You will find them under "Members/For Members" and by using the username "fadocs" and the password "fadocs" you can find them in the section "Twelfth Step," then "Twelfth Step Projects and Newsletters."

For the next *Gratitude in Action* newsletter, *On the Frontier* will be reappearing with an article especially for folks on the frontier. We would like to have stories of service work from those of you in isolated areas. Please send your stories and ideas to: [OnTheFAFrontier@comcast.net](mailto:OnTheFAFrontier@comcast.net).

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## *Great Moments in Service*

*Service is how FA grew from 35 members to 3800 members in just ten years. These stories are being shared by members who have used the Tool of Service to their benefit. If you have a story to pass on, send it to [GratitudeinAction@comcast.net](mailto:GratitudeinAction@comcast.net).*

### **Sponsoring is One Way to do Service**

One Service that I do is sponsor people. This keeps me on my toes. It really helps me to remember what has been passed on to me. I sometimes find that I can relate to what my sponsees are talking about in their calls and so what I suggest to them, I can use too and I can practice what I preach. Sponsoring also helps me to build a relationship with somebody and to stay connected even though we may be different in relation to age, sex, history, upbringing, etc. I try to “look for the similarities and not the differences.” Food addiction and the solution to it are what bind me to my sponsees. It is exciting to see people change as they get well. And as a sponsor, I have to keep showing up no matter what and that is not always easy for me. When I was actively eating if someone upset me, I would run the other way and not want to have contact with that person ever again. Sponsoring means someone may upset me or say something that does not feel good, but I still show up, same time and same place. I guess I am learning to be there for someone else and not be so self-centered. Finally, my sponsor reminds me of abstinence, gratitude and service. So I guess I am grateful that I am abstinent so I can be available for sponsoring, which keeps me abstinent, and so on!

*A member from Sydney, Australia*

### **Service in FA**

One time I received a phone call from a woman in my town who had seen a tiny public service announcement in the local weekly paper. We talked for forty-five minutes and that week she came to her first meeting. Another time a woman called because she saw on our website that there was a meeting in the town next door to hers. She had first heard about FA in Israel and was thrilled that since moving, there was now so much support available nearby. We spoke for a half-hour and that week she came to a meeting. And yet, another woman learned about program from a family member and called because she herself had once lost 75 pounds, but it was quickly coming back on. She spoke of being desperate and that she was terrified to do FA, but knew in her heart that this was her only answer.

Moments like these and countless others, each feel like a gift from G-d—an opportunity to pass on what was so freely given to me—again, hope. On the phone, I simply shared my experience, “Yes, there is life without flour and sugar! Yes, it is possible to go to several meetings each week. And, most importantly, yes, my life is SO much better. I had to let go and surrender to the fact that my way wasn’t working—that my way kept me miserable. In FA I found a way out. Food addiction is a real disease, there is no cure, but there is a solution to be practiced just one day at a time.”

Sharing hope with these women gave me the desire to want to give more. I made sure to purposefully introduce myself and welcome the first newcomer when she arrived at the meeting. I took on the second newcomer as a sponsee even though it meant getting up even earlier. As for the third woman, I offered to pick her up and drive her to her first meeting because she dreaded the idea of walking in alone.

The 24-hour-a-day book says, “A life of service is the finest life we can live. We are here on earth to serve others. That is the beginning and the end of our real worth.” These little opportunities to do service make me feel worthy and ensure that I will be able to keep getting well and stay well, and help others to get well and stay well.

*A member from MA*

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## **I am part of FA, one among many**

In October of 1996, I got my 90 days. My sponsor gently encouraged me, or rather strongly suggested, or rather insisted, that I begin attending Intergroup. I was furious. I was already going to four meetings per week, making what seemed like hundreds of phone calls per day, and showing up to have the occasional meal with fellowship. “No way,” I thought. Nope. Uh-uh. Am not going.

No thank you. Maybe another time. “Keep an open-mind,” said she. “Ugh! Fine. I’ll be there.” I went begrudgingly and complained about it each time. I went the next month, and the next, and so on. In October of 1997, I went one time and nobody was there. I was confused and annoyed, especially since I had been out late and would have given anything to sleep in. I waited and wondered. And then I realized—“Oh good heavens, not only do I not want to be here this morning, but I am here an hour early!” It was daylight savings time and I had forgotten to turn my clocks back! I just laughed at myself, shook my head, and waited in the parking lot until 9:30.

What I am here to share is that things changed—completely. With the ongoing encouragement of my sponsor and my fellowship, with newfound gratitude and acceptance, I became a little more willing with each passing month. I began to get involved. Really involved. And I began to like it.

I had some trepidation. In 1998, the Chair at the time asked me to step up to Chair the then, Newsletter committee. I felt overwhelmed at the idea and said I would try it for three months. Two years later I was still an active member of the NEI board, and doing the layout, editing, and printing of our newsletter from my home computer. That service really began to change my life. I saw the blessings that came with the tasks at hand. I got to read and reread everyone else’s experiences while I worked them into the layout. It was so fulfilling. I felt useful. I wanted to do more. I wanted to keep giving back.

So, I got more involved. I helped on the NEI Literature committee and the Young People’s Committee, I chaired the Office committee for a couple of years, and I served as Chairperson of NEI for two terms as well.

I was not always graceful in my doings. I made lots of mistakes and sometimes needed to hear feedback that was not always easy to take. I felt frustrated at times. IG decreased in attendance during my two terms, and committees were struggling with finding people to do service. But nonetheless, the service that was being done, was working— we were all staying abstinent and our communities were growing. Sometimes quickly, sometimes slowly, but we were growing nonetheless. Newcomers were making their way to the halls of FA and getting well, largely in part because of the efforts of the Intergroup and the Chapters. And of course that growth is still happening today, because each of us has been willing to continue to show up and help spread the message of recovery.

There’s a page in the *Twenty-four Hours A Day* book that speaks to me and gives me an extra dose of encouragement to keep doing what we are all doing, to keep giving back, to keep trying, to keep being willing, to keep being useful:

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*This is May 30<sup>th</sup>'s Thought for the Day, adapted for FA: "I am part of FA, one among many, but I am one. I need the FA principles for the buried life within me. FA may be human in its organization, but it is divine in its purpose. The purpose is to point me towards God and a better life. Participating in the privilege of the movement, I shall share in the responsibilities, taking it upon myself to carry my fair share of the load, not grudgingly, but joyfully. To the extent that I fail in my responsibilities, FA fails. To the extent that I succeed, FA succeeds."*

*A member*

### **Even though I balked**

Getting involved with different areas of service has helped me grow stronger and stronger. Luckily I had a sponsor who instilled the importance of service in me early on. I began with being the greeter at one of my committed meetings, as I became eligible, I took over the literature position, and then became the representative to our Maine Chapter

However I wasn't willing to give up one Sunday morning a month to go to the chapter meeting, so I never went for the first 6 months that I held that position. One morning my sponsor asked me if I was enjoying the chapter meetings, and of course I had to tell her I hadn't been to any yet because my Sundays were the only day that I had to spend time with my husband. Her reply changed my view of how important service is. She said, "I don't sponsor people who don't go to their chapter meetings." She didn't need to say anything else. Her words helped me realize the importance of going to those meetings, and since I didn't want to lose her as a sponsor, I went the next month. And, my program feels so much stronger because of doing service at that level. Just being part of a group of people with strong recovery made a big difference. Now I'm in contact with people from all over the globe and sometimes it feels as if we are pioneers. I've done several jobs now for which I had no prior experience, including using computers! That would have terrified me before I joined FA. Thankfully, there have always been caring people a phone call away to guide me just like there have been in my food program and the 12 Steps.

*A member from ME*

### **"We do service by staying abstinent, giving us freedom from compulsion and obsession with food to allow us to be available to others."**

This tool reminds me that abstinence is not my personal gift; I was delivered from the prison of addiction in order to be of use to others. Abstinence is service to the many others around me, from my family and acquaintances to other recovering food addicts. This keeps me mindful that isolation and separateness are the states of mind that come from compulsive and obsessive thoughts. How close is the first bite then? Even when alone, I remain available to others, by phone and spirit, strengthening the chain of those in fellowship with me for one more day.

*A member*

### **SHARING AT MEETINGS**

When sharing at a meeting, I've been taught to share for the newcomer. Sharing my gratitude for how great my life is today as the result of working this program is all very well and good, however, if there is a newcomer in the room what they see is a normal-sized, healthy looking person who sounds like they've got their act together. And they are not going to relate.

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That person is sitting in the back of the room feeling miserable and scared—fat and bloated, and/or achy and nauseated from throwing up, or weak from being anorexic. I'm pretty sure that what they want to hear from me is what my life was like when I was eating. I know that I wanted to hear how far down the scale (or up the scale) did you go? Was your self-esteem as crummy as mine? Were your relationships in shambles? I needed to relate to your pain, and only then did I want to know what happened to change you into that attractive package at the front of the room. In other words—I try to remember to follow the suggestion in the format to share what it was like, what happened, and what it's like now. Experience, strength and hope.

*A member from VT*

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Recently, I noticed the lengths that people were going to in order to avoid mentioning specific foods by name when they were sharing. It reminded me of a game that I have played over the years, where one person describes the object and everyone else has to guess it. For example—it has four legs, a back and a seat...yes; you guessed it—a chair. Well, people were doing that with food in so much detail that I found it worse than when someone used a simple generic food name e.g. fruit. Those fancy descriptions, food pictures, were painted in my head and I could feel myself beginning to salivate in the meetings. If this was how it was for me after having been abstinent for four years, how must it be for the newcomer? So I brought it up at the business meetings of my committed groups.

I was grateful that I did, because rather than people thinking that I was being a little picky and difficult, the groups made some significant and important changes. We went back to basics and discussed the importance of sharing for the newcomer. We discussed the reasons why we do not mention specific foods—not as an excuse to paint verbal pictures, but rather to avoid newcomers thinking about those foods during a meeting. In one meeting we wrote into our meeting guidelines a note to remind sharers that they are sharing for the newcomer and not to mention specific foods with details.

Since we changed things, I really notice a difference in the sharing. Most importantly though, after one of the business meetings, a newcomer (who had stayed for it) came up and thanked me for bringing up the subject—she said that on more than one occasion she had wanted to binge on the back of someone describing a specific food. Thank you God that this has changed in our meetings and that once again we are passing the message in a clean and abstinent way.

*A member from England*

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## *Want more Gratitude in Action?*

### *Want to get on the mailing list to receive *Gratitude in Action (GIA)*?*

GIA will be emailed to WSI, Intergroup, and Chapter contacts in a form that can be printed and distributed at meetings, but the objective is to save trees and make it primarily an electronic newsletter. It will be emailed to all FA members currently listed in the office database (people who have an online account). If you do not have a personal login, set up an online account using "My Login" at [www.foodaddicts.org](http://www.foodaddicts.org), click on "My Login" near the top right corner of the homepage, choose "first time user," and follow the screen instructions. If you have questions email the FA office at [fa@foodaddicts.org](mailto:fa@foodaddicts.org).

### *Join The *Gratitude in Action* Team*

If you are a writer, have experience with newsletters (writing, editing, layout, etc.) and have 4 years or more of abstinence, please be in touch with us at: [GratitudeinAction@Comcast.net](mailto:GratitudeinAction@Comcast.net).

### *The Next Issue of *Gratitude in Action**

In "Working with Others," *The Big Book* makes it clear that we have to pass our program on to other food addicts in order to keep the miracle of abstinence that we have been given for ourselves. The next issue of *Gratitude in Action* will focus on "How to Make a Twelfth Step Contact." We will explore this hard task and hopefully come up with some good suggestions and stories for "Great Moments in Service." Think about it.... You're at the gym and the person in the locker next to you is struggling with tying her shoes because she's so overweight. How do you start a conversation that might bring her into program? Please send your thoughts, insights, suggestions to: [GratitudeinAction@Comcast.net](mailto:GratitudeinAction@Comcast.net).