

WSI 12th Step Committee Frontier Support Call

Sunday, February 21, 2016

11:30 AM – 12:30 PM (Pacific Standard Time)

The World Service Inc. 12th Step Committee hosted its second Frontier Support Conference Call on February 21, 2016. The purpose of the Support Call was to provide support for members living on the frontier (by definition, those members living 100 miles/160 kilometers from the nearest FA meeting) by addressing several issues that were raised at the 2015 World Service Business Convention. Three FA members were invited to share their experience, strength, and hope regarding the topic of *Service & Living on the Frontier/Why it is important to recovery/Getting Involved in Service*. In addition, several ways to be of service were announced throughout the call. Time was also provided for questions.

The following notes were taken from the sharing of the three FA members who were invited to be on the call:

Dave I.

- I live in Calgary, Canada. I came into program in December, 1996. When I started, there was only one other person in the program in Canada.
- I first started going to AA meetings to learn from the people there. I told people there that I just wanted to sit and listen; I wanted to make sure that it was okay. After a while, I developed a relationship with people in AA and they became most supportive in my recovery.
- I ordered the FA recordings (cassettes) and called those who recorded them. I then got referrals to other people in the program.
- Another FA member and I started a meeting halfway between the two of us in a town where there were no other FA members. We met there to have some fellowship. We read the meeting format, listened to the FA cassettes, and shared our experience with each other.
- I am grateful that there were no phone meetings. It forced me to get out of the house and face-to-face with others who were committed to their recovery. I needed to be able to look people in the eyes in order to get well.
- We did service by providing public information about FA. We ran off posters. We got on the press. We called our local newspapers. We did a talk show on radio. We got lots of guidance from those who had walked before us and were instructed how to follow the Traditions.
- Once we started to get people to join us, we got meetings going in our own cities. We continued playing cassettes to hear from original members.
- The meetings eventually got going.
- I just kept showing up. Sometimes, I would be the only person in a meeting, but I would still go through the meeting format and listen to the cassettes.
- Eventually, we got a fellowship going. Getting out of the house and beyond my isolation, and passing on the program to others has absolutely changed my life.
- I also made it a point to save up and get to Boston once a year (to attend the FA Business Convention). It is good to know that I am not alone, that I am part of a growing fellowship beyond my own little group. During these trips I would stay with the people who had been in the program for many years and watch how they worked the tools and disciplines on a day-to-day basis. I went to meetings and started to do service at the World Service level. Compared to the isolation, addiction, and self-pity, this was a new way of life.
- There are so many resources available these days. We now have three strong meetings in our city.

Reni K.

- I have been in FA for 14 years. I lived in San Diego, California, U.S., for my first 4 years in the program. There were no meetings in San Diego.
- There are so many things that helped my recovery.
- I stayed plugged into the fellowship at large. I got connected with members who had long-term recovery in well-established areas. My sponsor helped connect me to them to get started.
- I got into a phone AWOL after 4 months. Other members in the phone AWOL related to "frontier" life.

- I went to AA meetings and related well to people in AA.
- Once per month, I started going on long drives to other cities to get to an FA meeting and be with a fellowship.
- Four times per year, I'd drive way up to northern California to attend the Western Area Intergroup (WAI) meetings and I did service for the intergroup. At intergroup, I saw the importance of doing service.
- I found other ways to do service, including joining the Public Information Committee and doing service in the San Diego/Orange County/ Los Angeles area.
- In the Public Information Committee, we had calls once a month, and I was able to help plan and do service at health fairs to get the word out about FA.
- Sponsoring people was very important – I always tried to have a mix of people and tried to ensure that one of them was always in a frontier area.
- I kept an open mind, reacted to any opportunity that presented itself, and listened to my sponsor's suggestions.
- I went to the FA Business Convention out in Boston, Massachusetts.
- We do have meetings here now.
- I am very grateful that there is an emphasis to support those on the frontier.

Diana R.

- I live in Toronto, Canada now, but when I first came into FA in 2005, I was living in England. I wasn't ready to work FA as I do now, and I left the program.
- I moved to Montreal, Canada, realized I needed FA, and decided to come back to the program. There were no meetings in Montreal.
- I worked the program for 5 years without any FA meetings near me.
- I had a language barrier as well. I couldn't really understand the conversations that people had with me, but I kept calling them.
- The phone was my savior. I had to walk to pay phones in the winter (Canadian winter!) but I kept trying even though people had a hard time understanding me and vice versa. I was learning English, and quickly improved by practicing in my calls (another benefit of FA). I did connect with some people who spoke Spanish.
- FA trained me to work on my fear. I was afraid of so many things, but I was encouraged to use the tools of this program to address it, and to feel the fear and do "it" anyway.
- I got into service. I went to visit people who live in Boston and Toronto and stayed with them on long weekends and/or school breaks. I made the time whenever I had time available and sometimes had to make the time to get there.
- I got involved in service on the 12th Step Committee and participated in monthly conference calls for the 12th Step Committee.
- I started going to the FA Business Convention, which I've gone to every single year. I didn't enjoy it at first because I didn't understand the language and wasn't used to having all these people with recovery around me, but again, I did it anyway. Now I enjoy it a lot.
- I went to AA meetings during my first 5 years in program when I didn't have any FA meetings to attend. Going to AA meetings was not only about me. I got to share with others that food addiction was real and that there was a solution. People who go to AA meetings are aware that addiction wears many faces – not just alcohol. AA people were very supportive.
- As a student, I didn't have a lot of money, but I made sure that I had a subscription to the FA magazine, *connection*. I was doing service and I was also getting exposed to great material.
- I signed up to be on the Long Distance Sponsor List (now called the Frontier Sponsor List). I learn about myself more by sponsoring other people.
- I am very grateful that I was given the opportunity to find FA and that I'm here. It's amazing.

Service Announcements Made During Support Call Re 'Ways You Can Do Service While on the Frontier':

1. Any one of us can be of service by getting the word out about FA. Here are 3 simple suggestions:
 - (1) Post a tri-fold in your local community. Type the word 'trifold' in the search field of the FA website to obtain them.

- (2) Share what you are doing with your healthcare provider or faith community leader. Use the Letter to the Healthcare Provider or Letter to the Faith Community Leader provided in the Public Information kit on the FA website. Type 'PI Kit' in the search field of the FA website to locate them.
- (3) Donate a copy of the FA Book to your local library.
2. Make sure you are signed up to be on the Frontier Phone List. You will then receive information updates via email and a monthly E-Communication written specifically for frontier members. You will be able to receive calls from other members. You will be able to call others on the list. You will receive the same email announcements that are sent out by the FA World Service Office to WSI Contacts for meetings. If you live in an area that is affiliated with the Western Area Intergroup (WAI), you will receive via email the monthly Intergroup Summary.
3. Practice sharing your story by writing for *connection* magazine, and keep writing, regardless of whether your submissions get published. The writing helps! Share your experience, strength and hope.
4. Do service and help on FA committees, such as the WSI *connection* Committee, WSI Public Information Committee, and the WSI Service Group Support Committee. To find out how to get involved, send an email to: connection@foodaddicts.org, pi@foodaddicts.org, or SGSC@foodaddicts.org.
5. The Gratitude in Action (GIA) newsletter is all about service and is also available to you. It is distributed via email. There is no cost. All you need to do is set up your own personal profile on the FA website. The next issue of GIA will be coming out in April.
6. If you live outside of the U.S., but want to call and receive calls from members in the U.S., consider setting up a U.S. phone number. Some members have found this to be very helpful and effective in receiving return calls. If you need assistance in how to do so, contact Anna B. @ 510-529-0588. Call at any time. She will connect you with a member who can assist you.
7. It has been 5 years since FA did a survey on our fellowship. FA gathered very critical information from the survey to determine what information it needs to better help our members and to communicate the message of FA recovery to the still suffering food addict. If you have a profile, you will be prompted to do the survey. If you don't yet have a profile, you will still be able to take the survey by going to the FA website and clicking on the "SURVEY" button there. It will only take about 15 minutes. We had 90% participation in the last survey and our goal is 100% this time. Please be sure to take the survey and encourage your fellows to do so as well. "Doing the survey is doing service". We would love it if we heard from every single member on the FA Frontier.

If you have any questions regarding the service announcements above, please contact the WSI 12th Step Committee at 12thstep@foodaddicts.org.

Open to questions from participants

Q1 – I live in an area with only one other FA fellow and we started a meeting about a year ago. We haven't been able to have people come and stick. When is it appropriate to open a second meeting?

- Dave: Of course, this is really a matter between the two of you, your sponsors, and God. Personally, before we moved on to starting a second meeting in Canada, we had about 10 people; the group conscience moved us in that direction. It took us about five years before we started a second meeting. It took a long time before people stuck. It takes lots of patience.
- Reni: Be aware of burnout. We started a meeting with 6 people but soon it whittled down to only a couple of us who remained abstinent and able to do service. Guard your own recovery.

Q2 – I'm interested in hearing about participation in AA meetings. It took a lot of courage for me to go to an AA meeting. The one near me is a closed meeting. People are not welcome to attend closed meetings and it can be hard on newcomers.

- Dave: You'll want to be very respectful of AA and their members. Closed AA meetings are for alcoholics only, so open meetings are always preferable. If closed meetings are all that are available, I would go early and speak to the person leading the group. Tell them that you come from another program, but that abstinence from alcohol is a part of your recovery. When I went to AA meetings I said I just wanted to learn from them about how they got sober and stayed sober. Over time, people got comfortable with me as we got to know each other. I've always been accepted and appreciated by AA members.

- Diana: I mostly went to open AA meetings, but I also went to closed meetings. I still go to AA meetings when I go back to my home in South America. I introduce myself as 'an addict' because the bottom line is I am an addict and I need recovery. I don't usually speak at first few meetings. Eventually, I do speak once people know me and vice versa. If I'm asked to share, I share on a very high level only relative to addiction.

Q3 –I'm interested to know if we can automate the process of getting on the frontier list as opposed to the current process.

- Stella: Some ideas are being discussed.