

Gratitude in Action (GIA)

2st edition - 2019

What is GIA?

GIA is a quarterly email publication of the WSI 12th Step Committee. Its purpose is to inspire FA members to engage in service and to carry the message of FA recovery to those who still suffer from food addiction.

This issue of GIA identifies some general principles, identified over the years, for conducting outreach at health fairs. It describes individual FA member's experiences with this service, and highlights resources on the FA website that you can use to help you engage with the public in this way.

Personal Reflections... Why Do Service?

Being of service to others is a direct link to my own recovery and my abstinence in FA. There have been countless people in FA who have supported me and who have helped me along the way, when



I did not think it was possible for me to live without flour, sugar, and alcohol. I am extremely grateful for all the service provided to me throughout my time in FA. I would not be in FA today if it were not for the selfless service of others, and I know that I cannot keep what I have if I do not give it away willingly, with love and with a grateful heart!

Terri W., California

Spotlight on Service: Conducting Outreach at Health Fairs

Sharing our experience, strength, and hope at health fairs is one way that FA members can help reach potential newcomers, health professionals, and friends of people who may be suffering from food addiction and don't yet know about our program. Many organizations-- businesses, nonprofits, faith communities, colleges and universities, and associations-- host health fairs, mostly with the express purpose of helping people live healthier lives. Some of these are open to the public, and some target specific groups such as employees, students, and conference participants. Some are free, and some charge a fee, which, for larger conferences, can be quite expensive.

When you find an opportunity for FA to participate in a health fair, please contact the Public Information Committee of your Intergroup or Chapter (eaipi@foodaddicts.org , waipi@foodaddicts.org , mepi@foodaddicts.org), or contact WSI so they can support your efforts and keep track of outreach contacts (pi@foodaddicts.org).

Working at any health fair supports my recovery. Working with communities of color, in particular, allows me to share about what is killing us—heart disease, hypertension, diabetes—and to bring the message of hope to the still suffering food addict. Where they are, I have been. And in relapse, I could be back there again.

Linda Y., California

Suggestions for Health Fair Volunteers

(<https://www.foodaddicts.org/downloads/suggestions%20for%20health%20fair%20volunteers-2019-04-18.pdf>)

- **Be prompt and dress appropriately for the setting.** You may be providing someone’s first impression of FA.
- **Have two people standing behind the table.** Please **do not stand in front of the table** or around the area passing out tri-folds in a promotional way.
- Try to **make eye contact and offer tri-fold brochures** to those passing by. You can say something like: “Do you know anyone who might be struggling with food issues?”
- **Take your pictures** with you, but **don’t display them on the table.** Have them available to show anyone who might be interested.
- **Schedule three people per shift, if possible.** Have two people at the table at all times. Scheduling three people, especially during periods when fellows usually eat (lunch and dinner time), will enable everyone to eat away from the FA table.
- **Convey interest in the event and the other vendors.** Scheduling the third person also makes this possible. Visiting other vendors and talking with the event’s hosts may lead to follow-up opportunities. If they show interest, FA can sponsor racks of trifolds, provide other literature including the FA book, and make panel and/or slide presentations. Organizations can also post the FA website link as a resource on their website.
- Have sign-in sheets available to follow up with people who show interest (available at <https://www.foodaddicts.org/members/health-fairs>).

Keep these Traditions in mind as you deal with the public:



Tradition Three – The only requirement for FA membership is a desire to stop eating addictively. When talking with non-FA members, communicate that FA is for anyone who is addicted to food, not just those who are overweight. Food addiction manifests itself in many ways, not just obesity.

Tradition Five – Each group has but one primary purpose: to carry its message to the food addict who still suffers. We try to convey the message of recovery in everything we do.

Tradition Ten – Food Addicts in Recovery Anonymous has no opinion on outside issues; hence the FA name ought never be drawn into public controversy. We do not express opinions on

controversial issues (politics, other food programs, specific food plans, causes of obesity, etc.). We avoid terminology that conveys affiliation with any particular religion or other organization.

Tradition Eleven – Our public relations policy is based on attraction rather than promotion; we need always maintain personal anonymity at the level of press, radio, and films. We listen with warmth and interest, and we speak from our own experience, not presenting ourselves as experts or sharing our professional identities. We are not giving advice or trying to “sell” the program.

Tradition Twelve – Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our Traditions, ever reminding us to place principles before personalities. When speaking with groups, whether FA or non-FA groups, none of us represents FA as a whole. We are only sharing our own stories and experiences.

Working at health fairs is an opportunity to connect with my fellows, as we work together to get the word out to people who do not know about FA. Meeting struggling food addicts at health fairs reminds me that, but for the grace of God, there go I.

Andrea W., California

Protocol: One person manning the booth must have two years of abstinence, while others accompanying that person may have a minimum of 90 days of abstinence.

It's not always easy to give your time to be at these events, but it is one way many of us can give back and get the word out. Grab a friend and volunteer when you can—you will feel good afterwards.

Personal Reflections... Volunteering at Health Fairs

From Resistance to Grateful Service

The first time a health fair was announced in our FA meeting my thoughts were very negative. There was simply NO WAY I was going to even think about taking a day off to go volunteer at a health fair. My funky little attitude was to let the other FA members do it.

In the Spring of 2017 life became very difficult for my son, as he started to suffer from extreme emotional, psychological, and physical abuse at the hands of a family member. I was POWERLESS. I was terrified for my son and his emotional safety. Praying for my son and sitting quietly and trusting God was definitely very powerful. However, the most AMAZING things began to happen when in addition to my prayers I began paying attention to emails from something called "The Local Service Group" and different activities that FA members were planning. One of those activities was participating in an upcoming health fair. Somehow, I was willing to participate in the health fair, and I was EXCITED!!

It was so much fun to meet so many people who stopped by the table, and to have the opportunity to talk about FA. During my first health fair, I mainly listened to the more experienced FA member, in order to learn how to interact with visitors, and represent FA. In addition, during our time together between visitors at our table, I had the opportunity to really learn about FA. My fellow drew out the organizational chart for me, and explained the structure of our FA organization. Prior to this discussion, WAI and WSI were just letters. My FA fellow was orienting me and explaining the different



levels of service—specifically, service at the FA meetings and service above the level of the FA meeting. Somehow, instead of neurotically worrying about my son, I trusted that God was working something out, as I became active with the Local Service Group.

Next weekend, I will be participating in my third health fair as an FA member. This time, I will be the FA member with two years of continuous abstinence. It is by God’s Grace that my child is healing, and I am confident that God has wonderful plans for us all. Thank you God for FA!!

Anonymous

The Gift of Service with Fellow FA Members

In February, 2019, I helped staff an FA table with two other fellows, at Cedar Valley College's annual health fair in Lancaster, Texas. Their health fair was really well organized, with tables from a wide variety of vendors lined up along a hallway, where hundreds of students, faculty, and community-members of all ages walked through. From 10:00 am until 2:00 pm, we engaged with people from a variety of life stages who had questions about our program, or who wanted to have a conversation about health in general. Many people were interested for themselves, or indicated an interest for family members. We also had a few vendors come by and invite us to participate in upcoming events that they were sponsoring. We had a variety of literature on display, and handed out trifolds with information about FA, our meeting schedules, and contact phone numbers. I particularly appreciated hearing my fellows interacting with the people who approached the table. The three of us brought our varied experience, strength, and hope to the health fair, and as I listened to my



fellows I was encouraged and strengthened as well! I have not, as yet, seen any participants from the health fair attending any of the FA meetings I attend, but I do believe that participating in events where we can engage in conversations about our program, and offer resources that can be accessed if and when people are ready for them, is a valuable use of my time and a great opportunity for service.

Julie Z., Texas

A Couple of Hours Well Spent

The health fair bustled with health-services employees visiting booths from 11:00 am to 1:00 pm on their lunch hour. Signed cards made them eligible to win raffle prizes by learning about health care and nutrition options at the booths. For the first hour, three of us greeted and talked to at least 40 people, including a food scientist, therapists, some very supportive individuals who knew about FA, others who took a trifold but were careful not to make eye contact, still others who knew someone who could benefit from this program, and yet others who came by to learn about FA for themselves. As the clock struck noon, we took turns going to lunch, being escorted down a long hallway to the employee break room. By 12:50 we were all back at the health fair, and by 1:00 pm, had met and talked with 75 employees. My heart felt full as we cleared away our table and packed up the

posters. A couple of hours well-spent, paying it forward. I was grateful to feel the courage of my convictions and the hope that maybe one more person might find relief and recovery in FA.

Vicki R., California

Traditions Corner – Issues Related to FA Service at Health Fairs

Participating in health fairs can raise several questions related to our traditions. One question that the Traditions Committee deliberated on is whether paying a fee to participate in a health fair



would violate Tradition 6, which says that “An F.A. group ought never endorse, finance, or lend the F.A. name to any related facility or outside enterprise, lest problems of money, property, and prestige divert us from our primary purpose.”

The Traditions Review Committee (TRC) suggested that FA groups should always ascertain that the money is simply an entry fee and will not be used to promote a specific organization or cause. If so, the group would be operating in support of Tradition 6. In addition, the committee recommended that FA booths not be placed next to booths of weight loss groups whenever possible, as FA does not want to appear as a weight loss program.

A second question came up when an FA group was given the opportunity to present information about FA in front of a large group during a health fair. As part of the presentation, the organizers asked for “before and after” pictures to be projected on the screen. The TRC conferred by email and determined that this request was especially troublesome in light of Tradition 11 (relying on attraction rather than promotion, especially at the level of press, radio, and film) and Tradition 12 (protecting anonymity). Our tool of Anonymity provides helpful guidance here:

ANONYMITY: Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of our program. We are not afraid to admit our own addiction, but at the public level, we protect the program by concealing our full names and faces. Humility is essential for our recovery. No individual member should ever be seen as representing FA as a whole. Within the program, we reach out to help, but we do not gossip or reveal anyone’s membership in FA except our own. Each person’s story is theirs to reveal.

We must be especially careful to protect our own anonymity, and that of others, in addition to guarding against our egos when it comes to photographs. The TRC would strongly suggest that you not give the organizers pictures to project on a screen but rather rely on the attractiveness of the FA members who speak—that they demonstrate the difference

To get outside of myself for an hour-and-a-half of service supports my recovery. Service reminds me that FA is not a diet, but a way of life.

Susan M., California

of FA as providing recovery and not simply weight loss. Instead, you could send them the FA logo as a place holder, or a photo of one of our trifolds (*Are You Having Trouble Controlling the Way You Eat?*).

Highlight: Health Fair Resources on the FA Website

The Public Information Committee recently posted several new resources to support FA members who are carrying the message of recovery through health fairs, including useful forms for scheduling volunteers, confirming responsibilities, following up on information requests, and evaluating the event, all of which are accessible at <https://www.foodaddicts.org/members/health-fairs>.

This site also has helpful instructions for how to order, use, and display FA banners and tablecloths, including an instructional video on how to set up retractable displays, and a sample display set up for a large area (below).

Spanish 20 Questions

English 20 Questions

Hanging Banner Tablecloth

What is FA?

Generic FA



Words to Live By

“Our real purpose is to fit ourselves to be of maximum service to God and the people about us.”

Alcoholics Anonymous, page 77

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- Go to the FA homepage at www.foodaddicts.org
- Click "login" at the top of the right page
- Type in your email address and password
- Click on "Manage my email list preferences"
- Ensure Gratitude in Action is clicked as "Subscribe"



Share your experience!

Sharing experience, strength, and hope is essential to our recovery—and to Gratitude in Action (GIA). Your submissions can help inspire all of us to do service. In particular, we're looking for brief paragraphs on:



- How service in FA has enriched your life and strengthened your recovery
- Examples of experience with our highlighted position:
 - *Public Information Representative* – Publicizing meetings through print, radio, television, and the Internet

Please email your stories of experience publicizing meetings as a PI Representative to GIA@foodaddicts.org by **July 1**. Other submissions are welcome on a rolling basis. Please contact us at the email above to let us know your interest.