



Gratitude In Action

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“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

WELCOME!

We are pleased to bring you the seventh issue *Gratitude in Action*. As promised, this issue is about “Public Information (PI): How to get the word out about your meetings,” in particular, How to Hold an Information Session.

As it says on page 97 of the Big Book of Alcoholics Anonymous “Helping others is the foundation stone of your recovery” This time we are focused on how FA meetings can share the message of recovery with the general public. We asked some of our members to share what they have done, and in this issue we’ll pass on their collective experience, strength and hope.

We are fortunate that FA has already developed many of the essential materials you’ll need such as the “Letter to the Health Care Professional” “Letter to the Clergy” and the Calendar Item documents that are available at www.fadocs.org. In addition we have an extensive and extremely useful **FA WSI Public Information (PI) Kit** that has all of the necessary information you might need to conduct a successful Information Session. We are looking forward to the new Public Information Kit which will be ready for distribution soon but in the mean time the current PI kit is available for download www.foodaddicts.org, or it can be ordered from the FA World Service Office.

In the book *Alcoholics Anonymous* Dr. Bob states, “I spend a great deal of time passing on what I learned to others who want and need it badly. I do it for four reasons:

1. Sense of duty.
2. It is a pleasure.

3. Because in so doing I am paying my debt to the man who took time to pass it on to me.

4. Because every time I do it I take out a little more insurance for myself against a possible slip.”

We hope that this newsletter will help your meetings to “pass it on” to those who are looking for recovery from the tyranny of food addiction.

*Yours in service,
Jamie M.,*

*Twelfth Step Committee Chair,
FA World Service Office (WSI) in
Malden at 781-321-9118 or
jmemorys@comcast.net*

FAQ’S: INFORMATION SESSIONS

What is an FA Information Session?

FA Information Sessions are special meetings that have a format designed to introduce FA to members of the general public, whether or not they are food addicts.

What is the purpose of an FA Information Session?

FA Information Sessions are a great way to do service, to reach food addicts who are still suffering, and to inform the public about the disease of food addiction and the recovery from it that is possible through FA. They are an opportunity to offer information about the program and to provide the newcomer with the tools he or she will need to get started.

When is a good time to hold an FA Information Session?

We all like doing service for our program, and helping our program to

grow. But your meeting needs to have reached a level of maturity before holding an Information Session. You should have several members with one year or more of abstinence, and several members available to sponsor. Discuss the idea with your local Intergroup or Chapter PI or Twelfth Step committee chair to decide if it’s the right time for this effort.

It is suggested that you hold an Information Session at least once a year. We also recommend that you allow several months in advance to adequately prepare for an Information Session.

What resources are available to help?

(Suggestions on how to organize, plan and implement a FA Information Session,)

The Food Addicts in Recovery Anonymous **Public Information Kit** has everything you will need to plan and implement an FA Information Session. It includes Public Information standards, suggestions for tasks to complete before, during, and after the Information Session (with a timeline and Task List), sample Announcement Brochures, letters to print and to the broadcast media. There is also a Public Information Meeting Format, and suggestions for recruitment of your speakers. Public Information Kits are available for \$3.00 each by sending a Literature Order Form to the FA World Service Office. They are also free online at www.fadocs.org (“WSI Public Information Kit”). Your intergroup or chapter may be able to help your local FA fellowship with identifying speakers with long-term abstinence,

and with funding to cover some of the cost of bringing them to your session. If you don't know which intergroup or chapter you belong to or who to call, contact the WSO at 781-321-9118 and ask for contact information.

How do we do it?

First, be sure to follow the FA Traditions in everything you do to plan and implement your Information Session. Traditions Ten (Food Addicts in Recovery Anonymous has no opinion on outside issues; hence the FA name ought never be drawn into public controversy), and 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) are especially important.

Examples of how these Traditions might be involved in an Information Session are included on page 7 of the PI Kit. If you need help interpreting the Traditions or applying them to your work, support is available for you. Page 7 of the PI Kit is useful or you may contact the WSI Public Information Committee Representative (pi@foodaddicts.org) or the WSI Traditions Committee chair for assistance.

MEMBERS SHARE THEIR EXPERIENCE, STRENGTH AND HOPE ABOUT INFORMATION SESSIONS

I had the privilege of going to Canada to be a speaker at an Information Session. I knew when I was asked that it was an important trip for me to take. As I was boarding the plane, I thought to myself, "The only reason I'm getting on this plane is because I was fat and miserable, now I'm not, and I'm going to tell people the good news about how they can have that joy

too." When I arrived, I was welcomed with enthusiasm and warmth by people who were complete strangers, and yet so very familiar. We were all food addicts hungry for recovery.

They had been working hard to get the word out about the Information Session including a full page article on FA that had been printed in the local paper. When it came time for the meeting, the room was filled with other food addicts from nearby areas, as well as people who had never heard of FA, but were looking for help. I felt so well used by God to be able to share my experience strength and hope, and let them know that there is a solution to our problem with food.

It was definitely a stretch for me to go so far for my recovery, but because I did, my joy, my gratitude and my freedom from my disease got so much stronger. I hear that the meetings in Canada are growing, but it was my own growth that impressed me about the experience.

– Adrienne P, San Francisco

Some suggestions from the Western Area Intergroup (WAI)

What worked well for us.

- ❖ Forming a Work Committee with members from the supporting meetings and the WAI PI Committee
- ❖ Creating a Budget and Expense Tracking Sheet (Excel documents)
- ❖ Creating a spreadsheet to record commitments for specific service positions (Microsoft Word document)
- ❖ Having conference calls with the Work Committee
- ❖ Announcing the Information Meeting at local meetings and WAI Intergroup
- ❖ Creating 40 Newcomer Packets

- ❖ Creating copies of the Information Session Announcement to give to members at meetings and at Intergroup the month before the event
- ❖ Creating labeled envelopes containing the 1) Letter to the Health Professional complete kit and 2) Letter to the Clergy available at the meetings for members to distribute
- ❖ Having a member in the public relations field who has access to the media send out the Event Calendar along with Public Service Announcements
- ❖ Having WAI Public Information Committee members follow up with the long list of media efforts. At least one front page newspaper feature was published before the event and the PSA heard on many radio stations.

Is this an effective means of outreach?

The Information Session made the front page of *Contra Costa Times* newspaper Feature section. Getting word of the event out to the media is a huge help because FA is a well-kept secret. The majority of the newcomers came with friends or family. Because of the event, the Oakland meeting had 16 newcomers.

Additional Comments

The PI Kit mentions that the Seventh Tradition "from the meeting" is to be used. The Oakland event was a large one, with a substantial hall rental fee. It was funded by at least two meetings in the area. We also applied to our intergroup for funding to cover literature.

We were asked by the panelist with longest-term abstinence to not use the "Ask-It basket" but rather to let the audience ask questions from their heart. We did, and they did.

Lucy R. Alameda, CA

FA Information Sessions in Maine

The Maine Chapter of FANEI has been holding Information Sessions in Maine for about 6-7 years and has found them a very effective way for attracting newcomers and reenergizing our fellowship. Our experience has taught us many lessons, as we continue to look for ways to reach all of the suffering food addicts that we know are still out there.

Many of the publicity tools we use come directly from the WSI Public Information Kit – public service announcements and calendar notices to local papers, cable TV stations, flyers and brochures, etc. In addition, we have used a mixture of creative strategies, for example:

- ❖ Mail packets to health care and counseling professionals. We have greatly reduced the number mailed, as personal contact with professionals who know our members seems to be much more effective; however, sometimes that is too small a number, so we continue to mail. The packets generally include an introductory letter based on the Letter to Healthcare Professionals from WSI, a brochure about the meeting itself, and our Maine Meeting Directory. The letter includes a phone contact for more information.
- ❖ Arrange for “Community Announcements” in the major metro paper two weeks before the session.
- ❖ Announce the Information Session on our Maine FA hotline two weeks prior.
- ❖ List the Information Session (and ongoing meetings) in hospital support group newsletters.

We recommend checking the paper once in a while to see if the meeting is being listed. Use Meeting Announcement Brochures to publicize Information Sessions. You can download this brochure, modify it on your PC, have it printed on professional paper, and display it throughout your community at places that have given you permission to do so

At the meeting, we ask members to wear nametags. We actively greet newcomers with a welcome packet that includes the brochures “Are You Having Trouble Controlling the Way You Eat?”, “To Our Families and Friends”, the Maine Meeting Directory and a local phone list.

A few years ago, we were blessed when the husband of one member arranged a TV news spot about FA. We worked closely with the NEI and WSI Public Information Committees to ensure we followed the Traditions during the interview of three of our members who used changed names, and blurred faces to protect their anonymity. Opening the session with the video of this interview has been a very powerful tool in setting the stage for our speakers.

We have had as many as 6-10 newcomers at a session. Many members use the opportunity to bring their families and friends to learn more about FA. We have also found our fellowship is strengthened by these meetings, the members doing service through organizing, helping to stuff envelopes, and bringing people has built a lot of camaraderie. And along with that, no matter how many – or few – newcomers show up that specific night, the positive, hopeful energy of the evening is spread in the community. We always see the meetings grow in the 2-3 months

after the Information session. In the past five years, our meetings have multiplied from 4 to 15, and these Information Sessions have been very important to the ways we are reaching more food addicts.

Patty R., Augusta, Maine

Suggestions For Publicizing Your Event

Pick up local paper and check to see whether they list support groups, meetings, etc. Find the contact information for the Calendar Section or call the paper to ask if they have a Calendar section. If they do, provide them with the details for your area’s meeting(s). Just calling the newspaper and asking how to submit a calendar item would probably be easiest. The hardest part was picking up the phone. God took care of the rest.

Susan M. San Francisco, CA

Suggestions for Speakers at an Information Session

Always remember to focus on the newcomer. Leave out fantasies and details when talking about the food, a simple reference to flour or sugar will do the trick. It is also a good idea to refrain from using FA type lingo or acronyms which the newcomer might not understand. Ask God for help and speak from your heart. You will be more successful in reaching the newcomer when you focus on food addiction and "what you used to be like, what happened and what you are like now" as a result of working the Twelve Steps.

Anne S., chair of the WSI PI Committee

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