



# 4 Thought

Volume 15, Issue 1—Spring 2017

Covering: Illinois [except the Chicagoland area], Iowa, Kansas, Missouri, Minnesota, Nebraska, North Dakota, South Dakota, Manitoba, Northwest Ontario, and Nunavut Territory, Canada.

The mission of Region 4 is to make OA known throughout the Region so that anyone with the desire to stop eating compulsively may find an OA group, and to provide support so that any OA member can have recovery from compulsive eating through the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions of Overeaters Anonymous.

## WORDS FROM OUR CHAIR

Greetings Region 4!

As I look back at the past 3 months, I see that I have been easing into my role as Region Chair. My retirement day is just a distant and pleasant memory, the holidays have ended – including my own special holiday – my birthday, which I celebrated with family and friend at my ‘Level 65’ birthday party and retirement celebration. I enjoyed myself immensely, but now it is time to move onto other things like preparing for Assembly in April followed closely by the World Service Business Conference in May. I hope all our Region 4 Reps and Delegates are as excited for these events as I am.

I must say that I am really starting to enjoy the ‘new view’ as the Region 4 Chair. I see things from a slightly different vantage point than previously. Before becoming the chair, I took in information and considered only whether I was interested in it or whether I needed it. Now I hear about events within our region and get super excited at the energy for recovery that I see. It’s really a lovely view.

Overeaters Anonymous has chosen Growth as the overall theme of our Strategic Operating Plan for the next 3 years. This year the sub-theme and focus, which you will see in Lifeline and other things coming out of World Service, is ‘Growing Unity.’ What an awesome topic. Our first tradition informs us of it, but despite our common desire for unity, it can so very easily be lost when a difference of opinion occurs. These differences can occur just about anywhere within our fellowship. We can disagree about how to run our meeting, about the importance of adhering to a specific tradition, about what food plan we ought to be using, or about how to work our program – among many other things. No matter where we are in our program or how much recovery we have, we can all use a reminder about this important tradition – and perhaps even – ideas for how to maintain it. For ideas, I invite you to check out OA’s new *Unity with Diversity* trifold available for free download on oa.org. The direct link is: <https://oa.org/files/pdf/UWD-trifold.pdf>



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For that reason, 'Growing Unity' will be the theme of our upcoming Assembly to be held April 21-22 in Wichita, Kansas. The Mid Continent Intergroup is working very hard to create an enjoyable experience for those of us at Assembly, as well as those members attending their annual Shara-thon. They would very much love to have visitors from other intergroups at their event. Below is the link to get more information about this event if you are interested in attending.

<http://oaregion4.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/SA2017-Flyer.pdf>

We are also gearing up for the Annual World Service Business Conference to be held May 1-6 in Albuquerque, NM. This is a very busy and fun event in which the delegates, region chairs, and trustees carry on the work of OA, along with the help of very, very many volunteers. If you would like to plan a vacation to Albuquerque and volunteer at this event, go [oa.org](http://oa.org), members, events, and World Service Business Conference to find out how.

To close, I would like to take this opportunity to invite you to contact me with any questions or concerns. You can email me at [chair@oaregion4.org](mailto:chair@oaregion4.org). I would be most happy to hear from you. Live conversations can also be arranged!



-Annette P-R, Region 4 Chair

## And From Our Region 4 Trustee:

Hey R4,

This month I will celebrate 17 years of abstinence. I am very pleased to be sharing that the program works for me in ways that I would never have understood or expected all those years ago, when my eating was out of control and I was afraid I would not survive relapse. Hope of a different way was all I had. I had experienced the miracle of recovery, but I had lost the commitment to myself somewhere along the way. I'd lost my connection with the basics of the program and the connection with a power greater than myself. I thought I could handle the food and everything else that made me uncomfortable in my life by using old techniques which had already been proved faulty. Somehow, I could admit I was defeated once again. I asked others to love and support me and then did the work necessary to let go of the food once more. Working the steps and staying the course day after day no matter what the circumstances has become a way of life that I would not trade for any "treat" that exists in the pantry. Thank those of you who have been an example to me that abstinence and recovery are possible, and of course to my Higher Power. For any of you who are still struggling with the disease the best suggestion I can make is "keep coming back". Be open to the suggestions of others, be brave and try a different approach. Even the slightest change each day will bring amazing results if we just continue to be open to our HP's will.

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Region 4 is busy planning our next assembly which is scheduled for April 21<sup>st</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup> in Wichita, KS. I know we already have quite a few reps signed up for attending, and am looking forward to the work we will be doing together over that weekend.

Then it will be on to World Service Business Conference to participate in the annual group conscience of OA. Thank you to all the groups and Intergroups that support their local delegates. Thanks to those Intergroups who took the time to complete the agenda questionnaire, so the WSBC has a better idea of the desires of all our members, not just those in attendance of the Conference.

A reminder to the Region 4 Intergroups that there is a required change to your bylaws (definition of a group) which you need to incorporate. I appreciate all of you who have been in contact and are working on getting this done in your area.

If you as individuals are not already signed up to receive the updates from the WSO, please consider adding your email to the growing list of members who have. WSO is here to support all of us and the email distribution is just one of the ways they keep us all informed of what's going on. If you do receive the information, take it to your meeting and share with others. There's even a service position call designated downloader for people who do this. An easy way to do service for you meeting.

The most current updates from WSO are the latest edition of A Step Ahead, and this year's edition of the Courier. The first is a Newsletter for our members that contains news about OA. The second is a newsletter that is intended to be sent to Health Care Professionals. Consider mailing or taking a copy to your local doctor to ensure they are informed about OA and what we have to offer.

An updated version of the Guidelines for Writing the History of Your Local OA Area have just been released. This Guideline gives ideas of ways to keep track of what's happened in OA over the years.

There is a new version of the Seventh Tradition pamphlet that helps us all understand the Seventh Tradition process better. It focuses on the contribution side of the traditions with reminders of the importance of why we need to be fully self-supporting and what to do with any extra funds we may accumulate. Remember we are all responsible for all levels of OA service and if the contributions from the members are sent forward, we all benefit from the services the other levels provide.

There is a PI Poster Contest which runs until March 31, 2017. Put together your most creative idea on how to attract new members to OA and then submit them for consideration. Specific information is available at [oa.org/files/pdf/PI-Poster-Contest-Flyer-v2.pdf](http://oa.org/files/pdf/PI-Poster-Contest-Flyer-v2.pdf).

Lastly, take a look at the new online version of Lifeline. This e-publication can be read on any device when you need a boost in your program or are dealing with temptation. There is a subscription fee of \$23.00, the same as for the printed version of Lifeline, but it is far more available to those of us who carry our phone in our pocket, so I believe it is well worth the price.

Have a lovely spring. See many of you soon, and those I won't see, I still hold you in my heart.

In Service,

- Cyndy L., Region 4 Trustee



## St. Louis Bi-State:

The St. Louis Bi-State Intergroup (IG) has had a number of vacancies in our service positions-for longer than a year in some cases. This can be very discouraging to both our Board of Trustees and the representatives gathered around the table, not to mention creating a fertile field for resentment on the part of those who DO step up to take a service role. In moments when I am not 100% spiritually fit, I have been known to whine inwardly: “Why aren’t others offering service? I am! It’s not fair!”

This started to look like my history of compulsive eating. Our Intergroup kept trying the same things-mainly asking for volunteers at each IG meeting and announcing the vacancies at recovery events and in our newsletter. Yet we kept getting the same results-mostly no new volunteers-although we did periodically see new IG representatives arrive from various home groups.

But last fall, we had a new thought while divided into work teams at an IG meeting. A member said, “What if we declared 2017, ‘The Year of Service Education?’” That had a nice ring to it, and several ideas emerged:

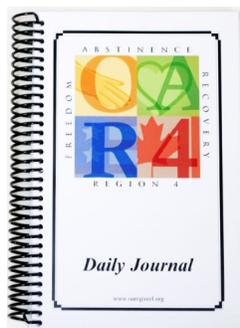
- We formed a team to go out and visit every home meeting, to share information about what IG does and which positions are open
- We decided to use an online survey tool to gather input from our members. We felt that we could offer programming to support recovery within our IG if we could just assess what problems are truly causing the reluctance to volunteer.

So for a few months, we have been gathering answers to these questions (with multiple choice answers for selection in the tool):

1. How did you first learn about OA?
2. How long have you been in program?
3. How long is your current abstinence?

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**Region 4 Daily Journals—Available For Purchase!**



Enjoy Region 4's  
Daily Journal

A place to write down your...

- Food
- Intent for the day
- Gratitudes
- Step 10 never looked so easy...

#### Ease of Use

- They are lightweight and great for travel
  - All of your writing can be in one location
  - Lays flat when opened
  - Coil binding keeps pages intact
  - Affordable—@\$12 —includes postage
- Go to [www.oaregion4.org](http://www.oaregion4.org) to order.

*When was the last time you checked out your meeting information at [oa.org](http://oa.org)? Please make sure it is current and if not, have your group secretary make the updates.*

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4. Do you have a sponsor?
5. Do you sponsor?
6. Do you have access to meeting in your locations and at times convenient to you and your schedule?
7. How important do you consider the following services from Intergroup?
8. Have you ever been an Intergroup Representative or offered other services to Intergroup?
9. If not, why not?
10. What would be a convenient Intergroup meeting time for you?

So far we are getting more answers from “old-timers” than anyone else. Perhaps that’s to be expected as they may feel a deep commitment, based on the length of time in the program. It’s also clear that most come to program through hearing about OA from a friend/acquaintance or health care professional— a reminder that we must “be the message.”

We will close the survey when we get to around 100 answers. Then we will discuss recovery events that are designed to meet the challenges uncovered by the survey. Given the number of respondents who have named difficulty sustaining abstinence, this is likely to be a topic for programming in 2017.

If you have experimented with online surveys, we’d be glad to hear what you learned. We are confident that A-Power-Greater-Than-Ourselves will guide us in the next steps we should take.

-St. Louis Bi-State IG Chair

### **OA Phone Meeting:**

## **Midwest Step and Tradition Study** Using the OA “12x12” Book

*Get connected with other OA’s from the Midwest and around the world! All are welcome to join us! Great way to start or end your week!*

- Sunday evenings
- 7 PM – 8 PM US Central Standard Time
- Phone Number: 605-562-3130
- Access code: 290492#



Contact Name & Phone Number: Bob 763-229-6196 CST  
Meeting # 55338. See [oa.org](http://oa.org) “Find a Meeting” feature for more info.

# Sponsors Needed!

For our Region 4 Sponsor List

All Formats

All Availabilities

All methods of sponsorship

Please consider adding your name to our list!

It is so easy to sign up – simply go to:

[http://oaregion4.org/?page\\_id=1315](http://oaregion4.org/?page_id=1315)

Then fill out and submit the form!

# **Together We Get Better!**

The opinions expressed here do not necessarily represent  
R4 or OA as a whole.

**Do You Have Something You'd Like To Share With Your Fellow OAs?  
Please Submit Articles or Information About Your Local OA Events!**

**4 Thought is a Quarterly Newsletter That Comes Out in  
March, June, September, and December.**

## **Our Calendar**

**April 21-22-** Region 4 Spring Assembly,

Spring Hill Suites by Marriott Airport, Wichita, Kansas

**May 13-**Newsletter articles due to [4thought@oaregion4.org](mailto:4thought@oaregion4.org)

**June 3-**Hills and Plains IG Super Saturday, Sioux Falls, South Dakota

**September 9-**Kansas Day Super Saturday, Emporia State University, Emporia, Kansas

**October 6-7-**Region 4 Fall Assembly, Valley City, North Dakota

Please submit your events for publication in the June 2017 issue.

Please contact the R4 Chair ([chair@oaregion4.org](mailto:chair@oaregion4.org)) or consult the web calendar to determine schedule conflicts and to register your events.

Thank you!

**I put my hand in yours because I care.**

## A Unity Intergroup Perspective this Month of OA Unity

Unity! It's the First Tradition and, I believe, the foundation for the remaining ones. But, how does this 'unity' described in Tradition One, (Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends upon OA unity), work for all of us.

Our intergroup, aptly named 'Unity' dealt with the problem of unity from the very beginning. In fact, it was formed to unify the fellowship in our area, moving from two to one unified intergroup. We consciously worked to find unity amongst the dissention that had formed between the groups representing differing ways of working the program. At the IG level, the issue was addressed head-on over a long period of time. A commitment was made to stay unified no matter what. Eventually, a formal statement was written called 'The Language of Unity', which basically states (in over-simplified terms) that there are *not* different 'types' of OA. We are all OA groups and that we simply work different formats. This commitment to unity has shown most brightly in the planning of events. We have tried to ensure that all formats are represented at those events. As a result, the message of recovery gets out loud and clear - without being blurred by whom the messenger is, or the format they use. It allows us to place principles before personalities.

It's easy to maintain unity within our groups - that is until some sort of conflict arises. Our meeting has dealt with a several conflicts over the years since I have been attending this meeting (nearly 29 years.) The biggest challenge we faced was in making the decision to stop using 'The Lord's Prayer' to close our meeting. Our size shrunk dramatically as a result of putting the needs of the whole group, including that of one young Jewish woman, ahead of the love that so many people had for this prayer. Many could not accept that group conscience. But those of us that remained never regretted that decision. We wanted (and still want) to be a meeting where everyone feels comfortable and welcome.

In another situation, we had a woman attending that had a 'difficult personality.' In this case, we did a Traditions Study first, trying to see what they could offer us. That helped for awhile, but eventually, a single event pushed the issue to the forefront of our meeting. We held a group conscience about the event, which she attended. We gave everyone a voice. Ultimately, without any real 'resolution' she made the decision to attend a different meeting. Occasionally she pops in at our meeting and the people now attending can make their own decisions about her without being affected by the history. And in spite of her personality which is sometimes still difficult, we also know that she has much to offer when she does come.

The third example I can use is the most recent. A member came in one day with a therapy dog. Another member was extremely allergic to dogs. Now there is a dilemma. All of us cared very deeply about how this came out because we wanted it to work for everyone. I contacted World Service via the internet for feedback and spoke to someone I know about the legalities. Another person did research on service dogs in general and therapy dogs specifically. We held a group conscience meeting which got a little tense at times. Interestingly, the person with the dog stated that she did not have to bring him and that she would leave him home. But our group felt good about ourselves - the love that we had shown for both these women as we tried so hard to honor both their needs, and that we had kept our commitment to finding unity.

I think the lesson in all these challenges and others that have come up, is to keep our focus on the traditions as the way to keep our unity. In one case, we studied all of them, and in the others, we focused on those traditions that seemed to apply.

I think the last question that arises is how to maintain unity within a group that does not use the traditions such as our work places and our families. Obviously we cannot control what the others in the group do, but we can try to negotiate these relationships using the traditions. We can speak about the needs of the group as a whole and offer suggestions that benefit the whole group and not just ourselves. We can recognize that we are not in charge of how the group works and in our own way, invite our Higher Power into the discussion - even if others are unaware.

We can determine what the group's primary purpose is and focus our attention on working towards that. We can leave gossip and office politics behind as we focus on our primary purpose for being there. We can effectively have no opinion on outside issues by not discussing them at the wrong times and in the wrong places. (Which ones are 'wrong' is between me and my Higher Power. I need to honor your autonomy by not determining what they are for you.) And perhaps most importantly, to the best of our ability, we can place principles before personalities as we try to resolve life's complex issues. -Anonymous

## MID-CONTINENT INTERGROUP NEW POSITIONS

Our IG group realized that in order for our OA groups to grow and give service there was a need to reach out to the community and health services to help them understand the OA program. The Wichita IG group usually has a booth during the Health Fair held at Wichita State University for the past couple of years and realized that if we could approach other health service areas in the public more people could receive information about the OA program.

In April 2016, the Intergroup approved the proposed changes to the bylaws. As a result, we now have two new board positions: Public Outreach Chair and Intergroup Communications Chair.

The Public Outreach Chair will coordinate/oversee:

- Public and professional outreach activities (for example, health fairs)
- Maintenance of the intergroup website (working with the current webmaster)

Phone hotline

The Intergroup Communications Chair will coordinate/oversee:

- The monthly newsletter (working with the current newsletter editor)
- Maintenance of the group contact list
- Maintenance of an e-mail contact list to forward e-mail updates from intergroup, Region 4, and the World Service Office

Maintenance of contact information for people who have attended past intergroup events (like Sharathon). This list will help us to send "save the date" reminders for upcoming events.

IG Communications Chair has been working on consolidating all the various lists of Mid-Continent Intergroup phone/email lists. She keeps a list of IG officer's emails and group contact emails. When information comes from WSO, Region IV or IG, she sends the email to the two different lists.

IG Communications Chair goal:

- Set up a free-conference call number that can be used by any of the OA meetings or IG meetings
- Write a guideline and list of suggestions for how conference call can enhance meetings (we set up a conference call when the weather was bad and members couldn't attend).

Public Outreach Chair is working the WSU health fair on March 8th. She has literature available for doctors' and therapists' offices. Public Outreach Chair has made contact with another treatment center in Wichita for alcoholics. They have agreed to display our literature.

Public Outreach Chair goal:

- Provide literature to viable contacts in Wichita who may come into contact with fellow OA sufferers.

Mid-Continent Intergroup goal is to add a WSBC rep next year. When this occurs we will have a total of three new positions.

Our intergroup has started to grow and we are excited at what the future will bring to us. The marvel of knowing that we can help a fellow OA person gives our program life. Reaching out our hand to help fellow OA members helps us keep our abstinence and sanity.

*-Connie, Wichita, KS*

## **We R4 Recovery: Carrying the Message Inside and Outside OA**

Carrying the message is a vital part of remaining abstinent. Only by going to meetings and having a sponsor and being a sponsor am I constantly reminded of where my disease took me and where it will take me again if I do not continue to use the tools of recovery.

Hearing other compulsive eaters is so helpful because they've done the same stupid stuff that I've done related to food. My home meeting frequently rocks with laughter as an OA shares his or her embarrassing stories of stealing food, hiding food, eating off the floor or out of trash cans, etc. It is such a relief to know I am not the only one, and it's even more of a relief to hear how A-Power-Greater-Than-Myself is restoring these beautiful human beings with whom I gather to spiritual, emotional, and physical health.

Interaction with newcomers is vital for the survival of OA. As Tradition One says, the survival of our fellowship depends on OA unity and seeking our common welfare, including that of the newcomer.

But reaching out to a suffering compulsive eater can also be to a member in relapse or a member not yet abstinent. Many attend OA for years before risking action toward abstinence. The invitation to "Keep coming back" lets each one know he or she is welcome, whether lost in food or long-term abstinent.

But those in relapse especially need to hear our welcome. There is no requirement for membership EXCEPT A DESIRE TO STOP EATING COMPULSIVELY. (Hallelujah! I'm in!)

How welcoming is your home group? How vigorously do you carry the message of hope and recovery? There's a good list of questions in the OA 12 and 12 on pages 149-150 that can provide a fruitful discussion at your next group conscience. By reflecting carefully on these questions together, we can make sure we create a welcoming and supportive atmosphere for still-suffering compulsive eaters - whether newcomers or old timers.

*-Anonymous, St. Louis Bi-State Area Intergroup*