

Hi, my name is Joey S and I am an alcoholic. I have been incredibly blessed over the past several years as treatment chair and current DCM for District 7, to have the opportunity to take AA panel discussions into local treatment centers. My goal at one point was to try and meet every newcomer finding their way into Alcoholics Anonymous in Josephine County and Rogue River. As usual, my higher power had different plans and I found myself not losing touch with people but having to make contact in a completely different way.

Throughout all of the years of work I have done with newcomers in this area there has been a common theme that makes me very proud to be a member of Alcoholics Anonymous in this community. District 7 AA is known for being a very close knit recovery community and welcoming to newcomers. People come to treatment in Grants Pass and stay here because of the people and how welcome they are made to feel in our local meeting rooms. Being a smaller community we can go to five different meetings and still see some of the same faces which allows newcomers to make friends in the program very quickly. Also, people with many years of recovery who move here from different areas seem to have nothing but nice things to say about how AA Unity shines through here in the Rogue Valley.

In the September 1952 Grapevine Bill W. was quoted talking about Tradition 5. (Each group has but one primary purpose – to carry the message to alcoholic who still suffers) He stated "'Shoemaker, stick to thy last". . .better do one thing supremely well than many badly. That is the central theme of this Tradition. Around it our Society gathers in unity. The very life of our Fellowship requires the preservation of this principle."

When I read this I think about the many things that have been done right in this community. But, I cannot help but focus on something that we as a fellowship have done "Supremely Well" ... Making everyone who enters a meeting room feel like they belong here. That is why people come and stay.

One of my greatest fears is that the frustration, confusion, and anger that come along with these troubling times will create a division that distracts us from our primary purpose. And, that any division will make the recovery community here in the Rogue Valley seem less welcoming to newcomers and the alcoholic who still suffers. It would be tragic for this to happen in a community well known for its open armed embrace of those in need of help.

As will happen when passionate solution focused people share their feelings, outside issues do come up in the rooms. The danger lies in them becoming the topic instead of just being a part of it. Like many of you, I have tried to fall back on our traditions as a way to avoid this pitfall. I work every meeting at ways to share "The Why" I want to drink, and leave out "The What" makes me want to drink, but it gets more and more difficult each day.

In my time as an appointed and/or elected committee member of District 7 I have come to discover the difference between a business structure, and political structure. Alcoholics Anonymous at

the district, area, and national level are handled like a business, but the structure is upside down from normal businesses. The person at the top has the least amount of power and input. The members of AA are the ones who decide what happens and how it happens. In my opinion trying to define AA as a political organization is the same as trying to pigeonhole us as a religious organization. There are almost as many different political views expressed by our members as there are definitions of a higher power. And yet somehow for decades we have come together as a fellowship and just make things work for the better of AA throughout the world.

So, I am humbling myself by casting aside all of my own ideas about what may be right or wrong for District 7 as a whole. I am coming to you, the members of this Fellowship, and asking what can I do for you, and each individual group to help continue on the tradition of unity. To carry the message to the alcoholic who still suffers it seems necessary for us all to agree on at least the steps, principles, and traditions, and I would like to do anything that I can to make that a reality. However, it is absolutely not something that I even want to try and do on my own. I need input. Suggestions, ideas, strategies or even just opinions. All of these things can be put together and used to strengthen this program as a whole.

I am hoping to hear from each one of you and look forward to the exchange of ideas, experience, strength, and hope. The goal for the input I received is to use it to guide me and several other DCM's in Area 58 in collaborating on Panel discussions, trainings, forming committees, and service minded projects to help us follow the path of those who came before us, while breaking new ground and moving forward with the amazing opportunities to grow that have recently been revealed.

With respect and service,

Joey S

DCM District 7

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