

Overeaters Anonymous

Santa Cruz County Intergroup

The Stepping Stone

Fall 2014

Volume 4, Number 2

Overeaters Anonymous is a fellowship of individuals who, through shared experience, strength, and hope, are recovering from compulsive overeating. We welcome everyone who wants to stop eating compulsively. There are no dues or fees for members; we are self-supporting through our own contributions, neither soliciting nor accepting outside donations. OA is not affiliated with any public or private organization, political movement, ideology or religious doctrine; we take no position on outside issues. Our primary purpose is to abstain from compulsive overeating and to carry the message of recovery to those who still suffer.

**For More Information About Overeaters Anonymous and its Program of Recovery,
Visit santacruzaoa.org or Call Our Hotline, 831-429-7906**



RETREAT IN THE REDWOODS

"It felt like something important and wonderful was about to happen." This is how Anne described her experience on Friday night at the annual OA Redwoods Retreat. As people arrived and began setting up their tents and preparing their dinners over the fire, anticipation was in the air. For the returning campers, it was great to be back in the peaceful and beautiful redwood setting where we gather each year for fellowship, sharing, growing and healing. For the newcomers to OA, it was a chance to really focus on and deepen our recovery. For everyone, it was a special treat to be out in the quiet woods, so near yet so far from civilization, free for two whole days from cell phones, computers, TV, work, family, and the demands of the everyday world.

Several participants mentioned their appreciation that the theme of this year's retreat was Abstinence. "I wanted to go because the retreat was focused on abstinence, and I need help," said Leslie. "I knew that being with a group of people who were all there to learn about abstinence would be a way to get back on track."

What is Abstinence? One valuable aspect of the weekend was getting clear about what abstinence is, and what it is not. We were reminded that abstinence is not any particular food plan or schedule of meals. *Abstinence is refraining from compulsive eating*, and how that is achieved might look a little different for each member. This was well demonstrated on Saturday morning during the panel discussion, when Rachel, Mirasol, and Marion described their own definitions for abstinence and gave many helpful tips on how they maintained their

STRONG ABSTINENCE CHECKLIST

1. Have I been abstinent today?
2. Did I pray and meditate today?
3. Am I maintaining or working towards a healthy body weight?
4. Did I rely on my Higher Power to get or stay abstinent today?
5. Is what I am currently doing working for me to remain abstinent?
6. If I am having problems have I asked someone else what they are doing?
7. Have I made an OA call today?
8. Did I have an attitude of gratitude today?
9. Did I plan my food today?
10. Have I helped someone else today?
11. Did I have an action plan in place to stay abstinent today?
12. Do I have a sponsor and am I working the Steps with that person?

A LETTER from GOD

"Dear Anne,
Yes, I've heard you and know of your struggles. I feel especially close to you when you are on the beach. Give yourself time and opportunities to heal from your experiences. You deserve happiness, love and peace in your life. I know your true inner self to be awesome, playful, and wise. Listen to her as you create your life at 50 and beyond. Be honest with yourself and others in your life. Feel secure in asking for my help with your cleaner abstinence, whenever you need, it's there for you. And you can't depend only on yourself and on Me. You need to be in touch with the people I send to you on earth.

Love, HP"

Contributed by Anne M.
Written at the retreat, at the Saturday morning letter to God activity

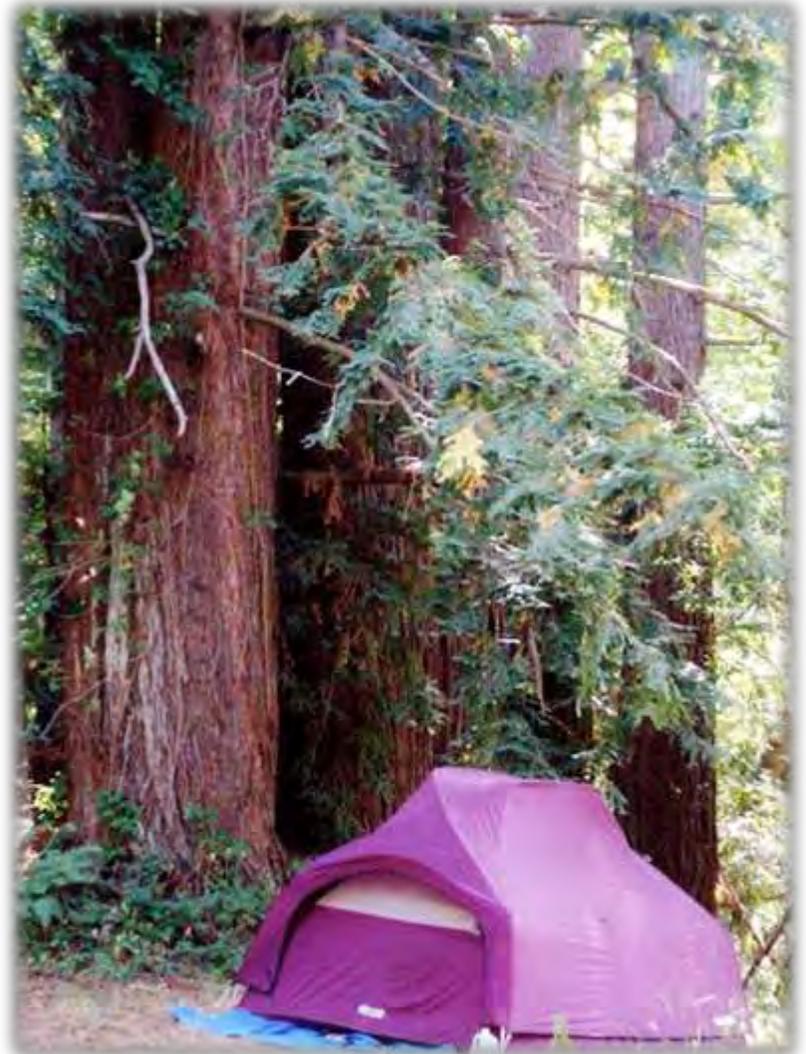
On Saturday afternoon we had some free time, and some members took the opportunity to take a hike, enjoy some fellowship, or even indulge in a nap. Others participated in the Improv Workshop offered by Glenda, where small groups improvised funny skits using phrases from the *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions* as cues. Even this shy and always-in-control reporter got into the fray, and discovered that letting go and letting God can open up the creative channels and be a lot of fun!

Wonderful and inspiring speakers, fellowship around the fire, the always-popular "Letter from God" exercise, the "love letters" envelopes where members could send supportive messages to each other, breathing yoga -- all this and more contributed to a lovely retreat experience. "One of the things I most enjoyed about the retreat was the opportunity to get to know other OA members a bit more. The small group discussions and dyads were a wonderful way to connect with others and share our experiences," Kelly commented.

- Carol F.

abstinence in the face of various obstacles. A lively question-and-answer period revealed even more strategies for remaining abstinent as many of the other participants shared their ideas.

Another important feature of the retreat was the Strong Abstinence Checklist, which we were asked to fill out several times over the course of the weekend. "The Strong Abstinence List that we received in our retreat packets has already been a great resource!" said Anne. "I keep the wallet card with me and usually read it in early evening to see what part of my program needs tending. That simple reality check is invaluable in staying honest about how I'm doing."



We would like to thank Suzanne and her family for providing such a beautiful place for our retreat.

SERVICE: A Tool of Recovery

PUTTING ON THE RETREAT

Every August for more than a decade, Santa Cruz OA Intergroup organizes the Annual Retreat in the Redwoods. As tents and campers dot the beautiful landscape, OA members gather around the campfire to reflect, learn and share about the OA twelve-step program of recovery. Communal meals, hiking, yoga, meditation and poetry, as well as songs and games, round out each day of the retreat. Each year, there is a different focus for the speakers, workshops and writing exercises presented to the participants who are seeking to strengthen their program and their recovery.



This retreat is the highlight of the summer for our OA fellowship. But how does it come about? Who comes up with the ideas? Who designs and leads the workshops? Who finds the speakers? Who makes it all happen?

At the May Intergroup meeting a Retreat Committee is formed. Intergroup reps go back to their meetings to ask for volunteers for this committee and in June the first committee meeting is held. The first task is to brainstorm a focus for the next retreat. There is a great deal of discussion and a number of suggestions are made. Thoughts and ideas coalesce into a vision. It is exciting to consider putting together a weekend that supports our recovery with an immersion in a specific aspect of our OA program.

By the end of the first committee meeting, the topic and a title for the retreat have been chosen. Individual committee members assume various jobs and responsibilities. Next, a flyer has to be created to inform the fellowship of the upcoming event.

A couple of weeks later, at the next committee meeting, a rough program for the weekend is discussed and laid out. A volunteer sign-up form is created and given to Intergroup reps to pass around at their meetings. A committee member takes on the job of coordinating the volunteers. Another member will act as the treasurer for the event, processing reservations, answering questions and arranging scholarships. Two people share the job of recruiting speakers.

At the third committee meeting, the retreat program is further tweaked and an agenda starts to take shape. We are now just a month away from the weekend of the retreat. There is still so much to be done!

The committee goes into high gear. Two people meet with Suzanne M., whose family owns the campground, Rancho del Oso. Together, they determine what supplies are needed to provide comfort to the participants and to support the Love Notes activity. Two committee members go shopping for materials that will be used to create information packets for all participants. The Love Notes envelopes are designed and printed. Items needed for the workshops are designed, printed and laminated. Notifications are emailed to participants, speakers are confirmed, volunteers are scheduled, supplies are purchased.

The retreat begins Friday afternoon, but there is more to prepare at Rancho del Oso. Committee members and volunteers arrive early and get to work. Signs are posted. Water is heated. The kitchen is set up. Firewood is gathered. The lines are strung for hanging the Love Notes envelopes and the crafts table is stocked. We are ready.

Throughout the weekend, committee members and volunteers continue to do service in innumerable ways. At the campsite, everyone chips in to make this another memorable event, and on Sunday, as we break camp, we are already looking forward to next August and another magical retreat!



Body Love

previously published in
Writing for our Lives

I stand
In sunrise orchards
Breathe apple air
Feel kinship with my body
Muscled thighs beneath me
Held by mother's hips
Rounded stomach
Breasts still full and high
That nursed two children well.

I hope my body understands
Can forgive the hate I held
Not really for the body
But for the self inside.

This morning
Poppies flower inside me
Redwoods fill my core
I begin to heal
To be home
Inside my skin.

- Sue A.

The Literature Table

In each issue of the newsletter we will feature a different piece of OA literature. If you have been helped or inspired by one of the OA or AA books or pamphlets, please let us know for future issues!

"I had completed the first three steps when my sponsor suggested that we read over the "Before You Take That First Compulsive Bite, Remember..." pamphlet. What I found was a rushing stream of helpful information about remaining abstinent in spite of the ominous things we face with our disease; clear ways to remain free of using food to solve problems; and an association of ideas that enable me to make choices for abstinence. I recommend reading this pamphlet. I had a complete sense of new balance after doing so."

- Peggy L.

Find a Meeting

Meetings are drop-in and open to all.
Meeting information is subject to change.

SUNDAYS

9:05-10:15 a.m. Speaker
Sutter Maternity & Surgery Center
2900 Chanticleer Avenue, Santa Cruz

FRAGRANCE
FREE

4:00-5:15 p.m. 90-Day

Church of the Nazarene
115 South Morrissey, Santa Cruz

FRAGRANCE
FREE

MONDAYS

12:15-1:15 p.m. Literature
Trinity Presbyterian Church, Library
420 Melrose Avenue, Santa Cruz

7:00-8:00 p.m. Literature/ Speaker

Soquel Congregational Church
4951 Soquel Drive, Soquel

FRAGRANCE
FREE

TUESDAYS

12:15-1:15 p.m. Steps/Traditions
Trinity Presbyterian Church, Library
420 Melrose Avenue, Santa Cruz

WEDNESDAYS

10:30-11:30 a.m. Voices of Recovery
Bayside Baptist Church
1335 Seabright Avenue, Santa Cruz
(across from the Gault School)

12:00-1:00 p.m. Learning Our Literature
49 Blanca Lane, #303, Watsonville
831-707-0039

6:30-7:30 p.m. Writing

The Wednesday Night Meeting
335 Spreckles Drive, Suite A, Aptos

THURSDAYS

1:00-2:00 p.m. Big Book/Literature
Louden Nelson Community Center, Room 5
301 Center Street, Santa Cruz

FRIDAYS

12:00-1:00 p.m. 90-Day
Live Oak Family Resource Center
1740 17th Avenue, Santa Cruz

FRAGRANCE
FREE

12:00-1:00 p.m. Wonders of Writing
49 Blanca Lane, #303, Watsonville
831-707-0039

12:15-1:15 p.m. For Today

Quaker Meeting House, Social Hall
225 Rooney Street, Santa Cruz

SATURDAYS

9:00-10:10 a.m. Speaker/Literature
Calvary Episcopal Church
532 Center Street, Santa Cruz

11:00-12:00 p.m. Speaker/Literature
Watsonville Hospital
Sequoia Room
75 Nielson Street, Watsonville

FRAGRANCE
FREE