

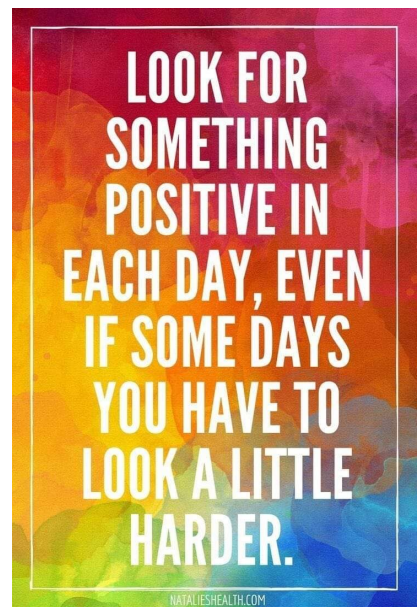
# District 18 NEWSLETTER

## Gratitude~

When was the last time you made a gratitude list? Why do people make them?

Make your own gratitude list in a new way. Use your name! Spell out your name in the boxes vertically. Using the lines next to the boxes, list one thing you are grateful for that starts with each letter. No repeats! Add more boxes if you have a longer name.

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Here's what mine looks like ~

- Values
- Intelligence
- Creativity
- Kindness
- Inclusiveness

*Vicki B*

# *I am grateful for ~*

How would you finish this sentence: ***I am grateful for.....***

Everything. Major challenges this last month. Because I was slow and producing less at work, they put me on a warning. I felt less than, not good enough. I thought about it and prayed before responding. I wanted to react and tell them to jump out a window. I replied that I was grateful for the opportunity to grow and improve. I get up everyday and can appreciate every second I have. I have enough today.....

Regrets that I had. I can be grateful today that they didn't work out. Like relationships that didn't work out and now I am glad it didn't.

Challenges make me grow. I hear it in the program all of the time. Sometimes it is sloppy and painful. Sometimes it is scary. I don't let my pain stop me from living my life. My sponsor always asked me if I was just going to sit there and be in pain. Get up and do something small and then sit down and rest if I am still in pain she would tell me. That's how she lived her life.

Opportunity to grow during the last year. I am grateful for Zoom. I was stagnant in my group. It is a wonderful group and it's the only one I was going to. I had slowed down so I didn't get to other meetings as often. Zoom lets me reach out to others and others reach out to me. I have met some really wonderful people on Zoom who are not in my area. I feel their warmth. All meetings are good, some are better than others my sponsor used to tell me.

I learned about gratitude from a counselor. She gave me a notebook and told me to write down 1 thing each day that I was grateful for. She had to give me ideas because I told her I didn't have anything.

I came to Al-Anon and life is so much better. I am grateful for this Zoom meeting today. I am grateful I can reach out and call someone for help.

I am grateful for my job even though it is stressful. My brain is so tired by the end of the day. That job gives me a life and provides what I need. My job helps me help my parents and helps me with my own wellbeing.

When I went to meetings in person, I took what I needed with me without worrying what people would think. I learned how to take care of myself here.

It helps me with my expectations of people. I wish my son would do what I want him to do. I wish my husband would too. I am grateful that I can talk to others about them and learn to change my expectations.

I was just talking about service and how to do the best thing for our group. I am drawn to the concepts right now. I am grateful that we are communicating and that there is a program. I am grateful for the opportunity to grow and find a way to make this situation work for us. So many people don't have tools like Al-Anon does.

...patience. Yesterday something that came up a year ago finally got resolved!

I am grateful I can drop into a meeting at any time to get some recovery and serenity.

I am grateful for Al-Anon. I had a friend share that she was with a mutual friend. Which one? She told me it was the "one whose husband had cheated" blah, blah. She was still holding onto that after years! I don't start with descriptions like that. I don't hold onto things like that anymore - at least not for years.

I have been struggling lately and I realized that it's about self-care. I haven't been taking care of myself as well as I can lately. Work, life, my daughter, everything is in the way and higher on my priority list. Meetings have been left out of my day because of this chore or that chore. I talked to my sponsor about it. I'm grateful that I have a better way to do things now.

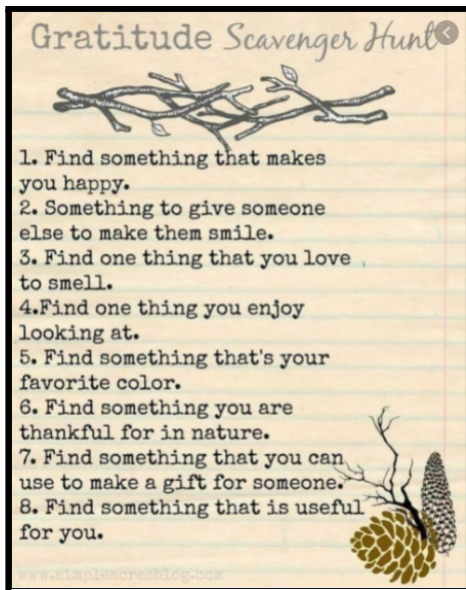
I start my day by texting my friend something I am grateful for today. If I start the day with gratitude I know I am going to have a good day.

It changes everyday. I don't want to keep using the same four things so my friend and I get creative and share every morning. Sometimes it's as simple as I am grateful for the technology working right now. I guess we are gratitude pals since we do this everyday.

I'm grateful I don't have the chaos that I used to have. I am recently divorced and I don't have the stress of fighting anymore. People tell me they are sorry about the divorce but I'm not. I have relief from the fighting.

The phenomenal things that happened in my life. And the hardships. I can say today I am grateful for both.

I am grateful every day for the opportunity to be happy!



I'm grateful I made it to a meeting tonight.

The tiny things add up for me.

I am grateful for the kindness of others, angels, and everything else!

Al-Anon! I think I am getting it little by little.

I don't have enough paper for that question!

Finding the love, warmth, and hope of the program.

I'm not where I want to be but thank God I'm not where I used to be.

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## A Beautiful Story

I usually find inspiration finds me in that moment and that, like everything else, it passes. I believe that's why we have to keep coming back to our spiritual practices over and over again because nothing is permanent but is actually impermanent and eventually passes. So today is a new day and I will do my best to recall some of what I shared but integrate it with today's experience, strength and hope.

Yesterday's meeting topic was Gratitude and what we are grateful for. I am grateful for the majority of things and whilst pain is inevitable and suffering is optional, I do find it is through the pain and the suffering that I see my greatest growth. It's through this adversity that I feel my truest self as I align with God, HP or the Universe. When I'm in the thick of it, I'm often scared, frightened and alone. Usually, at this point I have to reach out but what I'm finding these days is that I need not to necessarily reach out but go through my process. We are told in Al-Anon, we don't have to go through things alone and when I first came to program, I took comfort in this. I didn't like being alone and even now it can be hard during my challenging times but I also see that no amount of picking up the phone is going to take away my problems. In fact talking too much can actually confuse me even more. This in no way is to discourage the reader from reaching out as I feel when I first came to program I needed to do that and still do at times, but today it is a skillful balance of interdependence.

I heard recently when we come to recovery; we have to show restraint in whatever we are dealing with. For example, alcoholics have to learn how not to pick up that first drink and for me, it was not to pick up that first thought or not to engage in conflict with unhealthy individuals. Conflict scared me, I would get so confused, so I practiced not engaging, using the program tools to stay quiet. Watching this process gave me the ability to see that I was no longer engaging or reacting, and this new behavior was my "new part" in the equation. It would be nice if it could end there and that was the lesson. However, as I've learnt that after I learnt restraint to halt the unhealthy behavior I had to learn new skillful acts. My skillful act now can be speaking up when needed, using my intellect to be able to communicate or not communicate, or whatever the action may be. After speaking, pausing allows my words to hold their own space and the space of others as they respond.

I came across a beautiful story recently, about a Humpback whale trapped in a 25 feet weighted roped net. The whale was being pulled away from the water's surface therefore would eventually be unable to breath through her blowhole. Four fishermen took it upon themselves to help the whale. For two hours, they laboriously cut away the ropes that bound the whale. Finally, the lead fisherman took it upon himself to swim up to the whale's head to cut the ropes that were ensnared in its mouth, a risk he was taking. The fisherman looked directly into the whale's eyes and proceeded to cut away the ropes and the ropes fell away. As I listen to this story, I can only imagine the intimacy the fisherman faced looking deep into the whale's eyes. In that moment maybe both were in fear, the fisherman and the whale. The fishermen said once the whale was free, it circled each of the fishermen and cavorted through the ocean. This story touches me on a deep emotional level as I think of my own recovery. I think we connect with others through our own suffering and in this suffering we can help ourselves and help one another. Sometimes suffering alone is not enough and for me, it's my job not to always turn away but to face my fears and how one member puts it, "watch them disappear".

Life isn't always pretty; sometimes we get caught up in the ropes that bind us, some of them by our doing and some of them by others. What I can do is have restraint by staying calm and breathing as I wait for a solution to appear. Waiting can be difficult but this is an opportunity in itself to build courage, strength and resilience because whatever happens, the world will go on whether I like what's happening or not. So this is where gratitude comes in, my ability to keep living and growing in spite of the pain and suffering because this too shall

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pass. I experience both joy and pain but each experience passes, nothing stays forever. You can see me skipping sometimes on my walk, allowing my spirit to be free and just shine once in a while. Thank you for letting me share.

Author: Seema

I just do the next best thing. Last year my spouse had a lot of illness and I never lost hope. I am grateful for the program and being able to communicate with my HP.

Some days it's not easy to be grateful. I get lost in being busy, trying to work and trying to take care of the things I need to do.

I've learned that trying to figure it all out right now, like I used to do, didn't work. I thought it worked before, but the reality is that it never worked. I can do the next thing to try to keep moving forward. I still have no idea where I am headed. I still want to give up some days but it's not just in my nature. I'll just keep moving forward being grateful for this program and see what happens.

It's hard to wait for the right solution to appear. I feel overwhelmed and don't know where to begin. I try to think it all through on my own. Then all of the ideas will be mine. The problem is that sometimes my HP tells someone else what I need to hear.

When my son was in the hospital, we had to make decisions one step at a time. Each decision we made we needed help. One decision at a time, one step at a time, one day at a time.

When a relative of my ex-husband passed away recently, there was a stitchery she had offered to me. I couldn't remember which one since she had made so many. While I was trying to remember which one, I remembered a Christmas one I always loved. It was sentimental to me with all of the family's names stitched on it. Her son said I could have it. I am grateful I was able to ask for the one I wanted. I would have talked myself out of asking before.

I turn to my HP now instead of others. I considered myself religious before but it's different. I am grateful I have a deeper relationship with my HP than before.

When I go to gratitude my attitude changes. It helps me with the character defects I have, like judgement.

If confusion is a gift from God, I must be really blessed!

I ask myself if I have anything to be grateful for. The answer is always "Yes". My next question is "Why am I not grateful?" How do I share it? How do I show it?

I make a list of everything that goes right today then I focus on it.

I learned that alcoholism is a disease and a progressive one. I would worry about what that would look like in the future. I would have been stressed out about that before. With the help of my sponsor and working the 12 steps, I don't do that anymore. It's hard work to do the steps. I know that the daily readers are full of wisdom. They always speak to me.

I am grateful for the ability to have conversations that would have been really hard before Al-Anon. How are you or did you handle the conversations we are having about changing our meetings to in person or in person with a hybrid piece? I know I have been uncomfortable in some of the meetings.

When I asked members their thoughts, here is what they shared ~



Live and Let Live was the slogan that most frustrated me as I thought that "they" were getting a free pass. However, as I spent time in meetings listening, working the steps with a sponsor and reading literature, I learned that there is freedom for me by focusing only on my behavior and attitudes, and releasing everyone else to live their own life by their own choices without interference from me. This gives me a wealth of time to work on living my own life joyfully. Nancy T.



My friends and I planned a trip that I was looking forward to it for months. Then I got hurt. Everyone told me I couldn't go, shouldn't go. One friend suggested I talk to my doctor. My doctor said I was OK and just needed to take it easy. I get help at home. I am checking one day at a time to see how I feel. I'm not doing the "What if's" which is new. I wouldn't have been brave enough to think about going and trying things.

CTC page 315 - This page reminds me things are not urgent. I was compelled to do things. I couldn't let things be. I would start getting anxious days before Friday and the "usual" party. I try not to do that anymore. I need to be reminded though.

Sometimes it's one minute at a time. My brain will race at times. I want to plan out all the things that might happen so that I am "ready". I was never ready. When I get spun out, I remind myself to breathe.

In my house we have 3 days of sobriety. I am proud but need to remember that I need to keep working on my Al-Anon program. I can't direct his life or program. I can tell him how proud I am and leave it at that.

ODAT is how I am living my life right now. I lost my job during the pandemic. I've never **not** had a job. I had to file for unemployment and hope I could find a new one. It took months to find another job but it's temporary so I am looking again. I stay in today and keep taking the next step - apply for jobs, follow-up, go to meetings, and talk to Al-Anon friends. I trust that things will work out. I just wish I knew what that would look like!

The value of my voice increased as I started to use it. The biggest lesson was that I didn't HAVE to share it. I was always willing to tell you what I thought.

I learned that I had the right to speak up for myself but not insist on it every time. I might not add to the conversation.

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I rarely speak up in my meetings. The most recent discussions about hybrid or not changed that. I had voted for the meeting format but changed my mind. The next week I brought up that I had 2nd thoughts about that vote. Some people didn't like that I brought it back up after a vote. What I voiced was not popular.

Standing up for myself is a double edged sword. It's great to come out of the shadows but I have to accept the consequences.

Feeling that I have a right to speak up is great for me since I am timid.

In my experience at home, I have learned to keep it to myself when it would ignite more fire. I appreciate my serenity right now. I won't engage in a heated discussion now - even if that's what the alcoholic might like to do.

If my motive is to get you to be different so I can be ok, then I need to keep my opinion to myself.

I didn't have the self awareness before Al-Anon not to say what was in my mind. I thought I was right and you needed to know what I was thinking.

Sometimes I **ask** myself if I need to tell you what I am thinking. Sometimes I **tell** myself that I don't need to tell you what I am thinking.

I want to be quick and my HP tells me to slow down and take my time before sharing anything.

I need to explore what my truth is. Keeping quiet helps me do that.

If I choose to participate in service, I learned that my voice has equal weight.

I am so ready to get back to in-person. I am not necessarily opposed to hybrids but people that want them are the people that don't want to come back in person so they are wanting someone else to accommodate their needs. Is that doing for someone what they should do for themselves? I know there are people not driving or not wanting to be out at night, but anyone can start a new Zoom meeting to accommodate those needs. When I came into the program, one of the things my sponsor continually talked about was meetings being important to my recovery. If I was serious about recovery I needed to get in the car and get to meetings. To me it is a way of working my program. Suit up and show up. Zoom was a wonderful way to stay connected before things began to open up. I have been vaccinated so I am not overly concerned about COVID anymore. I feel like I have done the footwork and I am careful about crowds. God has a plan and it's perfect. I am exactly where I am supposed to be.

I am only doing one zoom meeting at this time because the church has not opened back up to the group. I am doing meetings that are in person and my recovery is getting back on track. I love and miss all of you that I don't see, but I'm in it for my recovery.

Thank goodness we are able to take what we like and leave the rest and get to work our recovery the best way for ourselves.

Love and hugs,

Lin

## ALATEEN COURAGE TO BE ME NOW MEETING!

Wednesdays 5:45-7:15pm

Ages 12-19

St. Joseph's Church St. John Paul II Center, Rm 8, 1813 Oakdale Rd., Modesto

### What is Alateen again?

Alateen is a fellowship of young Al-Anon members, usually teenagers, whose lives have been affected by someone else's drinking. Young people come together to share experience, strength, and hope with each other. Discuss their difficulties. Learn effective ways to cope with their problems. Encourage one another. Help each other understand the principles of the Alateen program. Learn how to use the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions.

### Are there other meetings?

Not yet, we need more AMIAS to sponsor a meeting.

### Can I be an AMIAS?

Yes, if you have been in Al-Anon for at least 2 years since turning 20 and get certified. Certification is easy! Contact the Alateen Coordinator (Maria P) or the District Alateen Process Person (Diana C.)



The summer is here and I have been a Group Representative for nearly 6 months. I imagine my experience as a new GR is similar to many GR's that came before me. I have feelings of excitement over something new in my life, gratitude for the opportunity to be of service, and curiosity for what is ahead. One thing that is unique is the fact that this is all happening amidst a global pandemic. As a result, I have yet to go to my home group, district meeting or any other Al-anon event in person as a group representative. Some of the first topics that I have been asked to bring to my group from the district meetings have been Zoom fatigue, dreams for outreach in our district, and what is our group's plan for transition as groups have the opportunity to return to face to face meetings. Whew! Those topics felt a little stressful on a personal level and I was grateful when one of my group members called to ask if she could initiate some discussion on face to face meetings. I said, "Sure!" The first time our group had discussion over the issue, it was clear that there were many different thoughts, opinions, and feelings about how and when to return to face to face meetings. We tabled the discussion for another time. I believe it was no coincidence that the current Tradition I was working on was Tradition One which states: Our common welfare should come first; personal



progress for the greatest number depends upon unity. This helped me to understand and trust that even though there may be as many different opinions as there are people in my group, if we used the Steps, Concepts, and Traditions we would come to an eventual decision that would support our common welfare and promote unity. It also caused me to think about myself as both a partner and a parent. As a partner I like things to go my way and as a single parent I have felt 100% responsible for the decisions in my home. What a relief to consider a different path within my relationships and home that can promote more healthy discussion of each person's thoughts and feelings and hopefully a decision that supports family harmony....and it's not ALL on me to figure out. After another week of my home group discussing the topic of face to face, zoom, or hybrid meetings, I noticed that I felt a sense of urgency. I was worried that the discussion was taking up too much of our meeting time, that group members were getting frustrated with how long it was taking to come to a decision. I felt relieved that a motion was made and voted on. My group passed a vote for a hybrid meeting. There were some things that felt unsettled in my heart and I spent time in reflection, but could not put my finger on what the issue was. After all, we had a vote and don't the principles of the program tell me that when there is a group conscience I can trust that? What finally emerged for me was recalling the times other members shared about growing up in alcoholic homes; that they often felt their opinions were never heard or mattered and that Al-anon was the first place they had the experience of being listened to. This was important for me, I wanted everyone to have a voice and be heard. I did not feel uncomfortable with all the different viewpoints. One of the things that I love about Al-anon is how multicultural it really is. I did, however, feel a pressure that we needed to make a decision before the group became more frustrated and impatient. I started to wonder if my home group members had an adequate opportunity to be heard? A couple of weeks later, I attended the Assembly event. It raised my awareness that many groups are having weeks and months of discussion on this one topic and that is okay. At the Assembly I listened to a fantastic presentation on KBDM - Knowledge Based Decision Making. I learned things that I will be thoughtful of, next time my group has to make a decision. I learned it's okay to take as much time as needed and that coming to a consensus is important. I also learned that what qualifies as a "consensus" is not well defined and that I would like to address this within my group, before a vote is passed in the future. There is so much I am learning as a group representative and so much more to learn. The amazing GR that came before me said she was just beginning to feel like she was starting to get a grasp on the service position, just as it was coming to an end. I can see how this is likely to be true for me too. Regardless, my home group has been successfully having hybrid meetings. I have enjoyed them very much and I am grateful that it really does seem to support personal progress for the greatest number. I am grateful for a home group full of members who in my experience, are truly thoughtful and caring about each other, who extend compassion and grace to each other, and who desire to live the principles of the Al-Anon program in all our affairs. My heart is full of gladness for what is and what is to come with my Al-Anon Family.

Sharon O. ~ Modesto

Did you know that coloring is similar to meditation? It is! Try coloring this page and see for yourself.

MINDS  
ARE LIKE  
PARACHUTES  
they only function  
when they are  
OPEN

Doodle Art Alley ©

Topics for the next  
Newsletter **Due 09/1/2021**



1. How do you use Step 1 in your everyday life?

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2. Do you have hope today? Why or why not?

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3. What does self acceptance mean to you?

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You can type your response in an email to [Newsletter Coordinator](#), **click on this link for a form**, email a picture of this page filled out or print and mail it to D18-Newsletter, PO Box 579491, Modesto, Ca 95357-9491



It's my pleasure to write why I am the new Institution person. My name is Patty L. I was listening to a report at the district 18 monthly business meeting and I was in awe that she was spreading the word of Al-Anon to the families of the recovery center. You see, all my life I was not very accepting of Alcoholics. Until I came to Al-Anon, I never called people that drank excessively Alcoholics. I didn't even treat them very nice. I disowned my own family – had nothing to do with them. As I have been in Al-Anon and scared to death I would do the same to my own daughter. I mean extremely scared because I knew I had it in me. Then I found that Al-Anon meetings were not to give me the tools to stop my daughter's drinking – it was to help me! The first thing that I started studying was "Detachment with Love"!!

What I learned in Al-Anon and walking through the steps with a sponsor, I am today able to have a family and love them for who they are, not the disease they have. When the position was open for Institution, I felt it was for me because I wanted to share the word of Al-Anon to help families not to have so much to deal with and no tools to help. I prayed for days if this was something for me. I feel very happy that I was accepted and able to serve by going to recovery centers and bringing what I can to give to these families.

I have been on Zoom with New Hope recovery center since January. I meet every third Sunday of the month for one hour. The meeting is with the families; they don't know about Al-Anon and have family in New Hope Recovery. I don't go alone (as we know we aren't alone in Al-Anon) I invite one to two Al-Anon members to join me to explain the strength and hope we get in Al-Anon. At first it is mainly us Al-Anon reading our literature and asking if anyone has any question or would like to share. Before long there is sharing. I really feel blessed that I have been able to serve. Yes, I was very nervous when I was starting, but aren't we all when we start something new? I have asked for people to join me and they do. I have had a lot of support from April. I am looking forward to serving in Institutions for these three years. I am looking forward to meeting the recovery in person when they are ready, but for now we are Zooming! I continue to bring my Higher Power (which is God) into these meetings by praying before, during, and after each recovery meeting. I have grown so much it is helping me more than I could have hoped for. I now look at everyone as a person. It is not my job to judge and I have to say it is so much easier to love than to hate!

To read Sacramento AIS's newsletter about service in Institutions and Prisons click [here](#).



## Sponsor's Corner

### The Delicate Art of Sponsoring

The prayerful art of when to step in for a little push with your sponsee, or perhaps letting them slip or stall as part of their growth process, to me is a decision I need to give to my Higher Power. I can get insight from my own sponsor too. I found most of my growth in Al-Anon came in spurts with some upward climbs, plateaus, and some valleys so why shouldn't my own sponsee be experiencing the same thing?

Some things I can do:

1. Try something different.
2. Always keep my conversation in the positive, fair, and firm feedback of what is going on.
3. Excuses, lack of effort sometimes could just be fear in another form.
4. It is easy to fall into complacency when their hair is no longer on fire or their life is overall right now better than when they first came in.
5. I need to remember this is their program not mine and I am sharing with them what was shared with me by my sponsee and I am here to guide them.
6. My sponsee does the work on their recovery , not me.
7. Sponsorship is just plain awesome!! I get just as much out of sponsoring as my sponsee does!!!

~ Greg F

I learned how to be a sponsor by being a sponsor.

Sponsorship is not a lifetime commitment.

Sponsorship is not a burden, it's an honor.

It was suggested to me to find the person in the meeting who annoys me the most and that will probably be the one for me to ask!

It is scary to be asked to be a sponsor. It challenged my belief that I had nothing to share.

It's hard for me to stay detached and not get emotionally involved in my sponsees' stories. I have to stay in recovery, go to meetings, and work the steps. I need to stay in contact with my sponsor.

Having a Higher Power helping me got me out of my way and helped me find the right sponsor.

I don't think having a similar background is important to picking a sponsor. Like both being an adult child. Our details are different but our hearts are the same.

## Special Events

- Membership Survey!! **June 16, 2021 - July 27, 2021**. Please take the survey if you haven't already by clicking [here](#). Participation is the key to harmony. This year for the first time, the survey will include an option to opt-in for a 5 year longitudinal study (not survey). Members who chose to opt-in will receive an annual email asking about their progress. Al-Anon has never had data over a 5 year period before. Think about choosing to opt-in!
- Save the date!! **Sept 17-19 2021 NCWSA Convention** in Sacramento at the Crowne Plaza. Shop the 2021 online Merchandise! [NCSWA Convention merchandise](#) ~ More details coming soon.
- Another save the date!! **June 29, 2023 - July 2, 2023** the **7th International Al-Anon Convention** in Albuquerque, New Mexico. Bookmark [this page](#) for updates.

Check the calendar on the District 18 website for more events including speaker meetings and updated meeting lists. Meetings are changing to in-person so check the website often: [District events and more](#)

Check the NCWSA calendar for events in other districts: <https://northerncaliforniaal-anon.org/calendar/>

For a list of all Electronic Meetings registered with the World Service Office (WSO) click below:

English Electronic meetings: <https://al-anon.org/al-anon-meetings/electronic-meetings/>

Phone meetings: [https://al-anon.org/al-anon-meetings/electronic-meetings/#Phone\\_Meetings](https://al-anon.org/al-anon-meetings/electronic-meetings/#Phone_Meetings)

Spanish Electronic meetings: <https://al-anon.org/es/reuniones-de-al-anon/reuniones-electronicas/>

### Getting & Staying Connected

Can't find a newsletter?? You can log into our website and go to the Newsletter tab to find it or click on this link: <http://alanonsanjoaquinvalley.org/newsletter.htm>

**Want to subscribe to the newsletter?** Send me an email using the email below. It's free!  
[newsletter@alanonsanjoaquinvalley.org](mailto:newsletter@alanonsanjoaquinvalley.org)

### District Meetings:

**When:** The 1st Sunday of every month from 1:00-3:00

**Virtual:** Zoom ID: 894 4011 5206

**Where:** In person on hold still:

Passcode: 900980

**Who:** Open to everyone!

### In The Loop News from the WSO

To sign up to receive the monthly emails from the WSO, click on the link below, fill in the following fields and click on Submit. [In the Loop Sign-Up](#)

Did you know that the WSO has a blog where you can share on the current topic? Here is the website: [Member's Blog](#)