

DISTRICT 18

Al-Anon Voice *of* Reason

SPECIAL SERVICE EDITION

Hope
for Today
— and —
Confidence
for Tomorrow



Al-Anon Family Groups
Help and hope for families
and friends of alcoholics



UNITY • SERVICE • RECOVERY

Together we make it possible

*When anyone,
anywhere,
reaches out for help,
let the hand of
Al-Anon and Alateen
always be there."*

— AL-ANON'S TWELVE CONCEPTS
OF SERVICE



Gratitude • Fellowship • Commitment • Service

As **Panel 64** comes to a close, we pause to recognize the many members who have given their time, talents, and hearts to service.

This special edition celebrates those who **serve now** and those who **have served throughout Panel 64**, helping carry the message and strengthen our fellowship.

◆ Thank You for Your Service ◆

Each position represents countless acts of service —

meetings attended, calls answered,
information shared,
events supported, records maintained, and
hands extended.

Together, these acts of service help keep
our fellowship strong
and ensure that the message continues to
be available
for those who seek it.



With heartfelt gratitude to everyone who served during Panel 64.

Your service has made a difference.

www.alanonsanjoaquinvalley.org
newsletter@alanonsanjoaquinvalley.org

August 2026



District 18 Business Meetings are held on the **1st Sunday of each month** from **1:30–3:30 PM**.

 **New Beginnings AA Fellowship**
1425 Standiford Ave. • Modesto

 **Panel 67 Elections Begin in September!**

Come learn more about District 18 service and be part of the beginning of our next panel.

 **Special September Date Change**

Due to the Labor Day holiday weekend, our September meeting has been **rescheduled from September 6 to:**

Sunday, September 13, 2026
1:30–3:30 PM

 **Can't Join Us in Person? Join Us on Zoom!**

Our District meeting is **hybrid**, so you can participate from wherever you are.

Meeting ID: 816 524 6871
Passcode: Serenity18

Come see service in action—we hope to see you there!



There is Hope in Service

It may seem counterintuitive, as it did to me, that while I was at my lowest and in the deepest pits of sadness, grief, depression, and pain, it would be impossible to find the strength to give and serve. How could I do that when I couldn't even get out of bed some days, or do any task without breaking down in tears or fits of rage?

However, it was in doing service where I saw a glimmer of light and hope that things would not always be so dark. I tried to find every reason to not stand for a service position, not least of which, convincing myself I was unqualified and would do it "wrong." That could not be further from the truth, as we never do this alone. The saying, "when I got busy, I got better" absolutely holds truth. Luckily, elections for positions are on the horizon, so please consider doing yourself a favor and deepening your program and relationships with yourself and others.

In Love and Light,

Kyle R

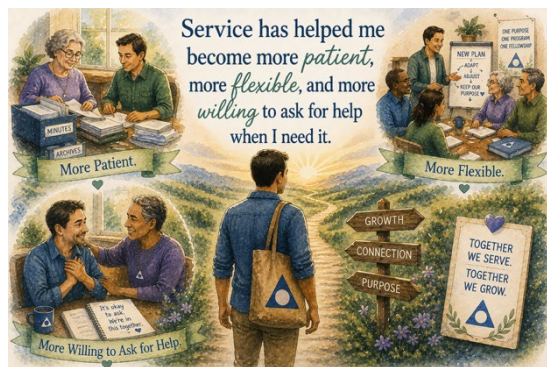
*when I got busy,
I got better ♥*

I Don't Have to Carry Everything Alone

When I first started taking on service positions, I approached them the same way I approached my business and other responsibilities. I thought I had to do everything myself to make sure it got done right. Over time, Al Anon has taught me something much more valuable. I don't have to carry everything alone.

Being Special Events Coordinator has helped me learn to delegate, trust others, and let go of the need to control every detail. When someone says they'll take care of something, I try to trust them. Sometimes things don't go exactly as planned, but most of the time people show up, and I've learned that giving others the opportunity to be of service is just as important as doing the work myself.

Service has also reminded me that I don't have to take myself so seriously. We can laugh, enjoy each other's company, and still accomplish meaningful work. Some of my favorite moments in service have been the conversations and friendships that happened while working alongside others.



I've also noticed these lessons carry into my businesses and personal life. I'm a better leader when I trust people, communicate clearly, and allow others to contribute instead of feeling like everything depends on me. Service has helped me become more patient, more flexible, and more willing to ask for help when I need it.

Most importantly, service has strengthened my recovery. It gives me an opportunity to practice the principles of the program instead of just talking about them. I'm grateful for the chance to give back to a fellowship that has given me so much.

Thank you for putting together this special edition. I hope my experience encourages someone to say yes to their first service position. It has been one of the most rewarding parts of my Al Anon journey.

Thanks,
Anonymous

My Service Journey in Al-Anon (So Far 😊)



I think it's important to know that there are **so many** ways to do service in Al-Anon. One of the best analogies I heard early in my recovery compared service to a dinner. Newcomers arrive hungry. At first, all they can do is eat, drink, and then leave. They have nothing to give because they are starving. Meanwhile, those who have been around longer prepare the meal, serve it, eat together, and then clean the kitchen so everything is ready for the next group of people who come through the door.

Eventually, the newcomer might clear their own plate before leaving. The next time, they may arrive a little early to help set the table. Before they know it, they're serving those who are even newer than they are and helping clean up

afterward. The beautiful part is that everyone contributes in their own time. No one is expected to do more than they are ready for. As we become emotionally and spiritually nourished, we begin to trust that there will always be enough "food," and we naturally become willing to help feed others.

That analogy perfectly describes my own journey with service. In the beginning, all I could do was sit and listen while others shared. I still remember the relief I felt when my sponsor told me that simply listening in meetings was an important act of service. Knowing that gave me peace whenever shame told me I wasn't doing enough.

Eventually, I found the courage to begin sharing in meetings. That felt incredibly difficult because I was so shut down and afraid. Through the kindness, patience, acceptance, and non-judgment of my fellow Al-Anon members, I slowly began to grow. I learned something that has stayed with me ever since:

When you listen, you learn. When you share, you heal.

The more I shared, the easier it became. I started to realize that whatever I was afraid to say had likely already been felt or experienced by someone else in the room. I no longer felt so alone.

As my confidence grew, I became willing to lead meetings and choose discussion topics. At first, I would nearly panic, convinced that every word I spoke or every topic I selected would be scrutinized and judged if it wasn't perfect. I still struggle with those thoughts from time to time. But I learned that every time I took the action and

did it, it became a little easier. Each experience strengthened my confidence and helped build my self-esteem.



From there, I took on group service positions like key holder, secretary, and topic chair coordinator. These roles became another important step in my recovery. Being accountable to others and having responsibilities within my group gave me something meaningful to focus on besides myself. Later, I stepped into the roles of Group Representative and a District-level service position at the same time. Both were three-year commitments that included attending monthly District meetings. To be honest, I kind of pushed myself into the pool with those positions. I didn't really know what I was getting into! But I had progressed far enough in my recovery to trust that I wouldn't have to do it alone. I knew I could rely on the encouragement, guidance, and experience of my fellow members.

That may be one of the greatest lessons services has taught me: there are always people willing to help when things feel scary or overwhelming. I don't have to have all the answers, and I don't have to do everything by myself. I'm now coming to the end of those three-year commitments. My favorite part has been the friendships and connections I've made with other Al-Anon members through service.

Balancing service with a full-time job, my spiritual practices, and caring for my mental health has certainly been challenging at times. But even that has been a valuable lesson. It has taught me that self-care is my responsibility and that it's okay to say no when something no longer serves my recovery or my well-being.

After six years in Al-Anon, I have also been blessed with my very first sponsee.

I am so grateful that my Higher Power has guided me through this service journey in exactly the order I needed. Looking back, I can see how each step prepared me for the next. I'm excited to see where this journey leads from here.

One thing I've learned is that **every type of service matters**. Where we serve depends entirely on where we are in our recovery, and every contribution has value.

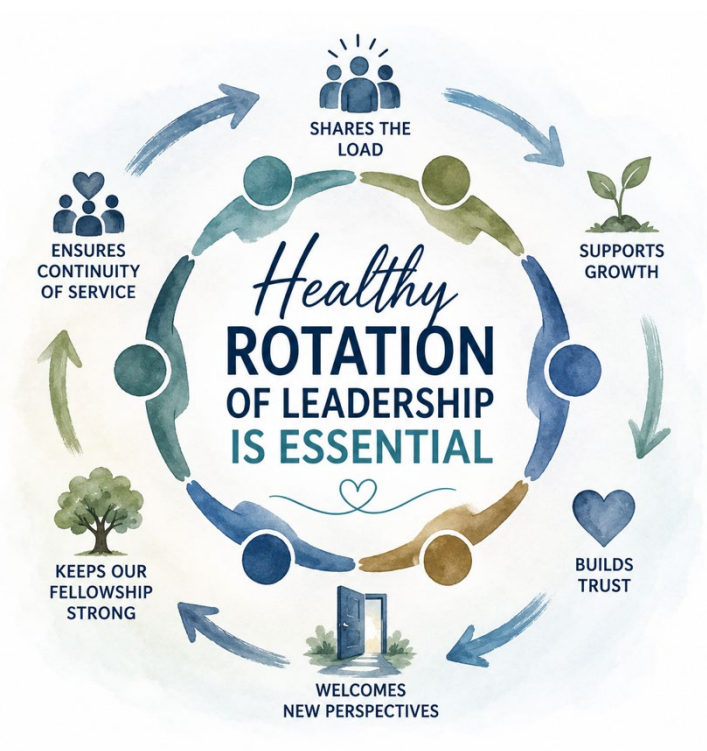
I also can't emphasize enough how important getting a sponsor and working the Steps has been for me. Service has helped lift me out of severe isolation. I'm the kind of person who follows through once I've committed to something—even when I don't feel like it. There have been countless times I've wanted to skip a meeting or a service commitment simply because I wasn't "feeling it." Every single time I've gone anyway, I've left feeling better than when I arrived.



Being around kind, understanding people always helps me. Staying home alone with my own thoughts usually doesn't. If you've ever considered getting involved in service, I wholeheartedly encourage you to give it a try. Service has deepened my recovery while helping ensure that Al-Anon continues to be there for the next person

who walks through the door. Healthy rotation of leadership is essential. It allows our groups to remain strong, welcoming, and available for those who are still suffering. Please consider becoming part of that rotation. You never know whose recovery—or your own—you may help along the way.

Anonymous



Service: Where Growth and Recovery Meet

I have been the AGR for Hope for Today Downtown AFG for the last 3 yrs, and as my term is coming to an end I have reflected on my growth in my recovery in Al-anon. Service has kept me coming back. Not because I felt I had to because I'm a responsible person, but because I knew it strengthened my relationships with those around me, including the alcoholic.

I filled in for the GR at District meetings on a number of occasions, and on zoom for the most recent Assembly. I learned about using Knowledge Based Decision Making (KBDM) in Al-anon and found out how a District meeting ran their meetings. I felt comfortable voicing my opinion and suggestions, for we are all equals in Al-anon.

Challenges I faced were more of other commitments that landed on the first Sunday of the month. But as the AGR it was not really a huge problem. At District I learned about the Concepts. 8 yrs I've been in Al-anon and my group never read the Concepts until this year when we made a conscious decision to read the Intro and the Concept of the month at every meeting and study the Concept of the month as our topic for the last meeting of each month. I started reading and answering questions in Reaching for Personal Freedom. My sponsor has me currently working thru the Traditions and has been a huge help in answering any questions I have had. My growth in Al-anon has been a journey of learning about myself and being aware of not only my character defects but also my assets and my capabilities.

As far as other positions, I've held in Al-anon they are Contact Mail person (for last 8 years) , Social Events coordinator, and setting up Technology for Hybrid meetings. Service also includes welcoming newcomers, setting up and putting away literature after a meeting, and really just showing up with a smile on my face, and sharing my experience, strength and hope. The future for District 18 is a bright one because of the people themselves. Rotation of leadership is so important so no one person experiences burnout. Working together and learning from those that have gone before us is so important in keeping a group moving forward. I highly recommend doing a service position. Growth and Recovery go hand in hand, and service indeed helps with that growth. It is within your reach.



Thank you to my GR, my group, and District 18 for allowing me as AGR to have a voice, and especially to my Higher Power who gives me my strength and hope.

Dianne K.

Something Bigger Than Just Me

I started in service at the group level after a few months of joining Al-Anon this time. My sponsor was active in service in groups, the district, and the area so I followed along. My first position at the district was as a GR. I really learned a lot about how Al-Anon as an organization was structured. When that term was over, my sponsor suggested a coordinator position at the district level. When I looked through the list of positions, I wasn't really sure what many of them were. I enjoy history so preserving history as the Archives coordinator sounded like something I could do.

At that time, we still had a great deal of paper for the minutes, the treasurer's report, and fliers. I kept all of them in binders as well as scanned copies. Right before my panel, the district rented the unit we have now. I only needed to go to it to put the binders in it at the end of the panel or to research something.

The position description was pretty short and didn't have much detail to it. It turned out that was because it was pretty simple! I am organized but the way I think things should be stored might not be the way others would understand so I asked questions of the previous Archives person. I had to be detailed and make sure I had copies of all of the critical information from the district business meetings ~ still trying

to be perfect. I got to know more members from meetings I didn't attend. That widened my circle of friends and support. I learned how the program had helped them. Service made me feel like I was a part of something bigger than just me.

When that panel ended, my sponsor again suggested a service position at the district. I knew that she was right to suggest it. I am still standing for positions - and sometimes getting voted in for them! I have volunteered for different tasks like updating the coordinator position descriptions, helping at area events like the convention and assemblies. I enjoyed being helpful and it helped me feel better about myself. I assumed that people at the district and area levels would all have some awesome (perfect) programs! Maybe I could learn from them! Bahaha

What I learned was that we aren't perfect. We weren't all sick on the same day ~ but most of us were still sick. When something went wrong (which it always did) no one yelled at anyone. There might be tears, but no harsh words were exchanged. People pitched in and helped. Things always worked out the way it was supposed to!

Since Archives coordinator I have been the Newsletter Coordinator, Group Records, and Alt District Rep. I will probably stand for another position since there are so many Coordinator positions, I haven't held yet. I don't know which yet. I usually pick something that sounds interesting (Archives Coordinator), something that sounds fun (Newsletter Coordinator), something where I have a skill set (Group Records) and rarely something that scares me (Alt District Rep). In service at the district level (or above) is where I get to really practice the Traditions & Concepts. Vicki



Stand for the Position, and Let God Decide

I am finishing my term as Alternate District Representative (ADR). In this position I supported our District Representative in overseeing annual budget planning and attending Central Valley Intergroup of Alcoholics Anonymous (CVIAA) meetings monthly as the Al-Anon / Alateen liaison, as well as chairing the district meetings in the DR's absence. Additionally, I served on the Public Outreach Committee, the 2026 Ladies Luncheon planning committee, and the October 2026 Assembly planning committee. Although I have served in multiple district positions over the years as GR and coordinators in two different districts, I had never served as ADR previously.

My personal leadership skills grew as I expanded my knowledge of working the Concepts on a personal level and for the benefit of our district as a whole as described in our Service Manual. My recovery has been enhanced through listening carefully to constructive criticism, utilizing knowledge-based decision making enabling the empowerment of the GR's to make informed decisions, compromising cheerfully, seeking consensus, developing patience, striving to reserve my input for times of uncertainty when additional clarity was needed, and including the minority opinion. I utilized my sponsor to reason things out with someone else when I felt conflicted, stressed or uncertain knowing that I would not ever do the work perfectly, but only had to give my honest best.



For years I have ensured that I hold a service position of some kind in my home group. Currently I am the Tech Coordinator for Hope For Today Downtown. I believe that service is the avenue for continuing the focus and structure of Al-Anon so that each time a newcomer arrives, they hear the same purpose which has brought us successfully through 75 years of support to the family and friends of alcoholics. Additionally, I have found that serving above the group level at district or the Northern California area levels expands my circle of friends, brings me satisfaction of knowing I am contributing to our

ongoing purpose and vision, and allows me to practice our principles in all of my affairs in different avenues.

Beyond all of this is the foundation of growing my relationship with my Higher Power by trusting the guidance and encouragement that I receive. One of my previous sponsors that has passed frequently stated "Stand for the position, and let God decide." If I am not elected, then stand for another position. This way I am consistently allowing God's leadership to be made known in my life. If you are wavering about a service position, try standing and let God decide. It works well for me.

Thanks for letting me serve. Nancy T

Finding My Voice Through Service

I have heard members share that there are many forms of service in Al-Anon. As a newcomer, there were many times I was being of service and didn't even realize it. It started in my home group by helping put the chairs away after meetings or putting away the literature. I then started doing the topic at meetings and volunteered to be our group secretary, literature person, key holder, and meeting chair. It wasn't until I heard other members share that I realized all of these things were service.

When I first came to Al-Anon, because of the effects alcoholism had on my life, I believed my voice did not matter. I was scared out of my mind to share my thoughts, feelings, or opinions. As I gained some self-esteem, I went in the other direction and started volunteering for service every chance I could. Well, I learned that wasn't necessarily good for me either!

Through service, I have learned there is a balance. It isn't beneficial for me to control or dominate my group or district, but sitting back, doing nothing, and never sharing my opinion isn't helpful either. Tradition One has helped me understand that being of service doesn't mean doing everything myself. I am one member of a group of equals. My responsibility is to participate, contribute, listen to others, and allow them the opportunity to serve too. When we work together instead of one person carrying everything, we strengthen the unity of the group.

I have learned so much about the Al-Anon program, but most importantly, I have learned a lot about myself. I have learned that I can be part of a group and, while I may not share the same opinion as someone else, I can still share mine. I have learned that I can do hard things and that I can be creative. I have also learned that I procrastinate. I am aware of that defect—or maybe it's an asset out of balance!

When I ask my sponsor, “Why do I procrastinate?” she says, “Great question. You have some work to do.” I'll work on that at some point...progress, not perfection, right? LOL.

Serving as Newsletter Coordinator has given me another opportunity to discover abilities I didn't know I had. It has challenged me, stretched me, and sometimes frustrated me, but it has also allowed me to be creative and connect with members I might never have met otherwise. Putting together this special edition has reminded me that every person's service story is different, but each one contributes to our fellowship.

Today I know that service doesn't always begin with holding a position. Sometimes it begins by putting away a chair, welcoming a newcomer, or simply showing up. Those small acts of service helped me find my voice and eventually taught me that **my voice matters—but so does everyone else's. I don't have to do everything, and I don't have to do nothing. I can simply do my part.** For that growth, and for all the people I have met along the way, I am forever grateful. **Thank you for letting me be of service.** Teri G.



Get Quiet, Breathe, Wait and Speak

As we approach the last few months of our terms ending at District and Group levels as well as our Area service positions, we are asked to consider our next service journey.

Service at any level, makes us grow.

It doesn't feel like it sometimes; however, our fellow members take notice. Our Sponsors are there to help us during our service terms and beyond. Members who have had the positions are also a resource.

Each position has guidelines.

Those guidelines are the foundation to build on.

♡Get Quiet

♡Breathe and

♡ Wait for direction on which service position will work for you.

♡ Speak to others you trust and listen and learn

AND

Read the Opening paragraph on the Concepts. It is about our levels of service.

I do have fun in service and I learn and grow and especially become BRAVE.

So, with that said.....I step away from the podium 🤖 🐶

Sharing In Service

Gaye E 🐶

Brave



PANEL 67
needs you!

SERVICE TERM 2027-2029

— • • —

**Ways to find out more
information about the
service position:**

— ◆ —

Visit District 18's Website:

<https://www.alanonsanjoaquinvalley.org/>


AL-ANON FAMILY GROUPS
Help and hope for families and friends of alcoholics.



What Are the Links of Service About?



From all walks of life, we enter the rooms of Al-Anon, find belonging and membership, and embark on a recovery journey. Our common bond is that we've all been affected by someone else's drinking.

Once we become a member of a group and participate in its business meetings, we are introduced to the links of service.



These links form a chain—not one of command, but one that functions as a flexible conduit of information and ultimately leads the future of Al-Anon. The first link is the **Group Representative (GR)**, who links the group to their District and Area via an Area Assembly. An Area is typically an entire state or province or a segment of one.



Group Representatives elect **District Representatives (DRs)** and **Delegates** to serve at the Area level. Each Area is represented at the World Service Conference (WSC), Al-Anon's annual business meeting, by its **Delegate**.



Delegates can bring knowledge of their Area's conscience to the WSC because it has been communicated through the links of service. Without these links in place, members risk not being able to carry out their responsibility and authority as described in Concept One:

"The ultimate responsibility and authority for Al-Anon world services belongs to the Al-Anon groups."

Are we linked?

- ✓ Does our group have an active GR?
- ✓ Does our District have an active DR?
- ✓ Is there participation and communication throughout our links of service?
- ✓ Is there regular rotation so that many members have the opportunity to experience service?

ELECTS ----->

ELECTS ----->

ELECTS ----->

REPRESENTS AT ----->



GROUP

The foundation of Al-Anon is our groups.



GROUP REPRESENTATIVE (GR)

Links the group to the District and Area via an Area Assembly.



DISTRICT REPRESENTATIVE (DR)

Serves at the Area level.



DELEGATE

Represents the Area at the World Service Conference (WSC).



WORLD SERVICE CONFERENCE (WSC)

Al-Anon's annual business meeting.

Information travels up and down the chain, uniting our groups worldwide.



Visit al-anon.org/s28 to download the free pamphlet *Links of Service* (S-28).



Go to al-anon.org/wsc-structure to see a diagram of how these links function in the World Service Conference Structure.



Al-Anon Family Groups

Help and hope for families and friends of alcoholics

Together we can make it.®

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