



Why is a healthy weight important in OA?

At the WSBC this year we voted nearly 2 to 1 to expand the definition of abstinence to address healthy body weight. The Statement on Abstinence and Recovery has been revised to include the italicized words at the end of the first sentence: "Abstinence in Overeaters Anonymous is the action of refraining from compulsive eating and compulsive food behaviors while working towards or maintaining a healthy body weight. Spiritual, emotional and physical recovery is the result of living the Overeaters Anonymous Twelve-Step program."

The 2010 Membership Survey Report released in April said that 82 % of our 54,000 members came in overweight. (AA had over 1,000,000 members after 50 years) Only 50% of our members had significant improvement of their overall physical health. 51% are maintaining a healthy weight and only 33% have maintained a healthy weight for more than a year. 41% of our members are not sponsors.

I am a trusted servant in Region 8, which contains 7 of the 10 most obese states in the United States according to the Center for Disease Control. Recently I was asked if I thought obesity was an outside issue in OA. The OA Bylaws Subpart A states: "The general purpose and power is to promote the public health, and to work with and furnish charitable and cultural assistance to those

with the problem of obesity..." If we don't address weight are we ignoring the elephant in the living room? When I came into OA in 1986 at 250 # (114 kilos) I was looking for escape from a fat body. In the beginning I

The 2010 Membership Survey Report released in April said that 82 % of our 54,000 members came in overweight.

didn't know I needed more. Today at 125# (57 kilos) I know OA has more to offer me.

Why is a healthy body weight so important? **First...** We desire and deserve healthy useful lives.

Second... We are the message. If we don't demonstrate that the

12 Steps on Overeaters Anonymous works we lack credibility to do the 12 step work which is vital to each of us and the survival of OA.

Taking a food plan is starting point to physical recovery and using the tools of recovery including the new Action Plan will support us as we continue to work the 12 Steps. Each of us has a promise of a healthy physical, emotional and spiritual life in OA. Let this new expanded definition of Abstinence which is the goal of recovery help us focus on growing OA and helping newcomers.

Stephanie D 5/28/2011

My Action Plan Experiment

Recently the WSO defined the tool Action Plan. When I first heard about it last year we had several meetings to talk about what it might be defined as and how we could immediately implement it for ourselves and our recovery.

I am a science geek and love information about behavior and neuroscience so I decided that since the current science on obesity says there are many factors in this disease my action plan should include some modifying behaviors. Since I can't think my way into right action there had to be things I could do that would help.

Sleep: I committed for three months to have a regular sleep schedule. No more waking up super early and going to bed late. I was only getting about 4-6 hours a night. So I began to go to bed at a reasonable hour, when I was tired, 8-9:30. Then would wake when my body wanted to 7:30 - 8:30 most days. Amazingly I had fewer munchies at mid morning and no longer required coffee to stay awake.

Time Out: Around three I get cravings so I thought why not sit down and take time to have a cup of decaf or herbal tea. I have a ritual. I heat water in a kettle and drink out of a china cup and slowly thoughtfully have tea. I take the time to call friends in the program, or do step work and this time out for myself has curbed the craving at that time of day, and made a regular time to work the tools.

Exercise: I HATED the idea of exercise. The few times I tried, I went too fast, pushed too hard and ended up in pain, or worse bored. So it wasn't really on my list of things to do. But I made a commitment to walk 20 minutes a



day at 2.5 miles an hour on my treadmill while listening to cd's of encouraging talks, program, or spiritual stuff. I was neither bored or in pain. Even the chronic back pain I had was beginning to be less intense and less frequent. I also got an unexpected result. My body began to inform me. Things I had always ignored began to stand out in contrast. Feelings would come up to be dealt with. That brought up something else that needed to change.

Self Love: I began slowly to realize that the constant nagging sense of unworthiness became louder and louder. With the help of my sponsors I could really look at my ideas around self love. I realized that I was getting angry and shaming myself for still being sick. That's like telling a diabetic child that even though she is doing the best she can that it isn't good enough because she still has a disease. So I changed my self talk. I acted more patient, non violent, and kind to myself whenever I caught myself being mean and "should-ing" myself. The shame of should shuts down my choices. Now I say, I could do X if I wanted to. I am not doing it so why don't I want to. This opened up choices for me. As an adult there are many things I believe I should do. Like be a more consistent friend to people. I could but why don't I want to enough to do it? What am I afraid of? Is the relationship controlling, or too much work? What can I do about that, how can I help the situation? What is my part? I also had to find out if I was acting out in other ways that weren't food related? I committed to get help for the other things I found and my abstinence is clear and I have a little back to back time.

So now all these things are part of my action plan. Things I report on in my 10th step. What a great eye opening tool. It's for all the things I ignored before for fear of being fired by my sponsor because I am a complete person, with complete problems that needs complete solutions.

Liz L.

Food...Then and Now

Many years ago food was my savior...my friend...my lover...my confidant. Food helped me to hide my feelings from myself and others. In all situations food came through as the shining star in my life. Why have relationships, so people could hurt me and make me feel bad about myself? I hid in bags, boxes and gallons. They couldn't hurt me; they made me feel better, so...weren't they my friends? In the beginning they were...then they (food) started to have a different effect on me. I started to feel...tired...depressed...irritable. The more I ate the more pain I felt, inflicted by my best friend. What was going on? Had I reached the end of my relationship with food? It no longer was hiding my feelings...it was causing feelings. For months I struggled with this...how could this be??

I was invited to a friend's AA anniversary. I had never been to a meeting like that. I went with an air about me...."Poor souls...thank God I don't drink". When I look back now, I abused alcohol too. God must have opened my ears that night. I sat quietly listening to each person that got up to tell their story. After each story I said "that's me...only I don't drink...I eat". The next day I was telling a friend (my eating partner at work) about this. I said I related to what was said...but I don't drink...."To bad there's not a place that people who eat could go and get the same support". She said there is such a place, Overeaters Anonymous. We made a decision to go to a meeting. That was Sept. 27, 1989.

Since then I have worked the steps, used the tools, read the traditions and use these principle in my life on a daily basis. No longer is food all those things to me. I still am learning of my character defects that I once thought were good character attributes. Wow, take away the food and a fog was lifted.

I was able to take a good look at my life through the 4th Step and continue to do so. I realized that you don't graduate from this program...you do "continuing education".

Today food only nourishes my body. Oh sometimes it still calls, I am aware of that, I have to work my program on a daily basis. Food is cunning, baffling and powerful and that's the truth! It is no longer my friend, lover, confidant or savior. I can now look at it as my enemy.

As long as I work a 3 fold program physical, spiritual and emotional, I'm in recovery. I ask my H.P. everyday for the willingness to continue on my journey.

Thanks for the opportunity to do service!

***Linda
TSW Chair***

Now that I say I'm Sorry

This story it has no beginning

A story that needs no bitter end

We used to be best friends and then best buddies

How did this world become so unclear?

Amends means you need not forgive me

Just listen to the things I need to say

My program teaches that I need to say them

It doesn't tell me how or what's the way

God brings me to this place before you

And gives me voice for you to hear

I pray that you will now forgive me

And I have nothing more to fear

And all you have to do is listen

To what I have to say this day

To understand amends that are now given

No balances that I am left to pay

50th Anniversary World Service Business Conference

April 26-May 1, 2011

I was privileged to be selected to attend the 50th World Service Business Conference as a delegate for Region 8. I had some trepidation about the responsibility related to this position, but realized that I was taking my HP with me and that He would help me with any new challenges. I also realized that I would have the support and the fellowship of the Region 8 delegation, including our chair, trustee, and the green-dot mentor that had been assigned to me.

The Region 8 delegation was quite impressive. Many of us wore our Region 8 sweatshirts and we displayed flags from all states and countries from our region, provided by our chair. I participated in the 12th Step Within committee at WSBC, mirroring my work with the same committee at Region 8. I am on the subcommittee "Ideas that Work" this year, as we strive to develop strategies for creating ideas and events to promote relapse prevention and membership retention.

Among the significant issues that the assembly considered and voted on:

- A new statement on abstinence and recovery was adopted- "Abstinence in Overeaters Anonymous is the action of refraining from compulsive eating and compulsive food behaviors while working towards or maintaining a healthy body weight"
- A motion to cease publication and sales of the pamphlet "If God Spoke to OA" was defeated
- A motion to rescind the ninth tool "Action Plan" was defeated
- A revised Tools of Recovery pamphlet was adopted, including a definition of Action Plan"
- A motion to bestow the title of OA founder to Rozanne S. was adopted
- A new pamphlet, A Common Solution: Diversity and Recovery, was given Conference Seal of Approval
- A motion to remove conference approval for all AA literature except the Big Book and the AA 12 and 12 was defeated.
- Two Region 8 delegation members, Karen C. and Janice S., were elected as General Service Trustees.
- The Finance Committee is working to create a

document to assist intergroups in achieving and maintaining non-profit status.

- A motion to remove conference approval for all AA literature except the Big Book and the AA 12 and 12 was defeated.
- Plans are in progress to provide a "hot button" on the OA website so that members can make contributions to OA.

It was a time to renew old friendships and to make new ones. I realized that one of the trustees had led a retreat that I had attended. I renewed acquaintances with someone from another region that I had met at a SOAR assembly last year. I also made two new friends with delegates attending from outside the United States. It was eye-opening and enlightening to share meals and to discuss plans of eating with other attendees and delegates and to see how many different ways there are to eat abstinely.

The banquet on Saturday night was a fitting capstone of the week, highlighted by a play about the founding of OA and written by Rozanne S. The presentation was alternately moving, spirited, and hilarious. It featured a cross-section of delegates and trustees from all over the world.

WSBC was wonderful and overwhelming. A member of our delegation described them as "the SOAR business assembly on steroids". The business sessions were intense but civil, and someone always suggested interrupting a particularly spirited debate or discussion so that all attending the business sessions could say the



Serenity Prayer. It was gratifying and humbling to hear the Serenity prayer said in Hebrew, French, and Spanish, and to hear the call to vote spoken in Swedish or Hebrew. Everywhere during the week, whether in a committee meeting, in a

business session, or at a meal, it was evident that Overeaters Anonymous is indeed a worldwide fellowship in recovery.

Delegate report submitted by *Neill McCormick*

My WSBC "green dot" experience

The annual OA World Service Business Conference convened last week in Albuquerque NM, and I was honored to serve there as the Suncoast IG delegate.

Registration began at the Hotel Albuquerque in Olde Town on Monday at 4 pm, followed by the first workshop of the week, titled **Abstinence: What a Great Service.**

Tuesday morning I began by attending an OA meeting and then workshops all afternoon and into the evening. One of them was an introduction to Conference for all green dots (first time attendees).

Wednesday began with a Forum on Celebrating Recovery. I volunteered to speak for our table, introducing myself before the assembled OA delegates from around the world as the delegate from Suncoast IG in Tampa, FL, Region 8. I was so thrilled to be able to speak for my intergroup and my region in front of the entire assembly! Just another example of the "risk-taking service" I have been gifted with by being abstinent in this program...one day at a time.

Then committee meetings followed for the rest of the day. I was assigned to the Finance Committee. After a short introduction and discussion period, we broke up into subcommittees. I am on the FAQ Update/Train the Trainer subcommittee, and I volunteered to take notes for the chair that we elected, so now I'm listed on the roster as the secretary of our subcommittee, although I intentionally did not stand for any offices my first year on the committee!

Wednesday night we had dinner with our respective regions...it was fun to be in a room full of people that I knew, for a change! All of us were wearing our SOAR 8 sweatshirts (on which Kat had embroidered our names for a \$5 donation to Region 8, something I think she may consider doing at the Nashville Assembly as well if you're interested. :) After dinner there was a workshop on Parliamentary Procedure, which was very educational.

Thursday at 8:30 am the first Business meeting began, and lasted until 5:00. Then I had dinner with the Region 8 chair and treasurer before retiring to my room for the night. There was a workshop on Unity with Diversity that night, which I missed, but I did purchase the cd and listened to it when I got home.

We attended business meetings all day Friday and until noon on Saturday, and then I went to another OA meeting. We then had another committee meeting to set our goals for the coming year. Lots of interesting ideas were put forth in our committee, for example one subcommittee will be researching the difference between 501(c)3 and tax-exempt status, and the application processes and fees involved in each. My committee is working on completing and updating a frequently asked questions document for treasurers of regions and intergroups, and taking steps to assist IG treasurers in how to better do their jobs.

Saturday night there was a banquet and entertainment,

cluding introductions of new officers and past board members, and a skit. Sunday I was up early and headed to the airport and home.

One of the most memorable things that happened during my stay in Albuquerque is that I received over a dozen cards and letters from my OA home group members showering me with love and support and gratitude for my service...proving once again that service is indeed its own reward! I am so grateful for all who took the time to hand write notes, address them to the hotel, stamp them, and mail them in time to arrive before I left NM (not a small gesture in these days of texts and emails) to show me that they cared and supported my service...my home group members are the wind beneath my wings!

Some of the highlights of the business meeting were adoption of an expanded definition of abstinence and adoption of the definition for our newest tool, Action Plan. We also adopted a new pamphlet on diversity (line by line...lol!), as well as the revision of the Recovery Checklist pamphlet.

Our Region 8 treasurer, Karen C., was elected to the board as a general service trustee (GST) and Janice S., also of Region 8, was elected to fill the second board vacancy for GST. As Karen vacates the treasurer's position I will be appointed to serve as interim treasurer. I will serve in that capacity until the July Assembly when the body will elect an interim treasurer to serve until the November election, at which time a treasurer will be elected to fill the 2 year term. And Region 8 made over \$400 from our Ways and Means project sales at WSBC, which included "prayer" scarves, knitted and donated by Gerri H., our trustee, and a donation of slogan bracelets and wallet cards from my own Suncoast IG!

I've attached a link (http://www.oa.org/pdfs/Addendum_Tools_Pamphlet_2011.pdf) to the addendum that contains the new wording for abstinence and the action plan. This can be printed out to use as an insert in any Tools of Recovery pamphlets you still have on hand at your meetings, as well as included in the Newcomer's Packets. As soon as the current stock of the tools pamphlet is sold out OA World Service will be printing the new pamphlets and making them available to us.



Last, but not least, we officially bestowed the title of Founder of OA to Rozanne S.

**Respectfully submitted,
Patti Schumacher
Ways and Means Committee Chair/Interim
Treasurer
May 7, 2011**

WSBC Report for SOAR 8

Last November, I was amazed to find that I would be going to OA's WSBC. I had applied to be a delegate but never expected to be chosen. I was thrilled!

I was asked to write about my experience and am honored to do so but how does one describe the most awesome, amazing event of their life?

I arrived early and was able to enjoy the Early Bird workshops. I also attended the Tuesday evening workshops. I listened carefully as Bob F. suggested I take care of myself by getting enough rest, attending OA meetings and, above all, protecting my abstinence.

Thursday morning, when the actual business conference began, I appreciated Bob's suggestion that I have no preconceived ideas but, rather, listen to all the information presented, ask my Higher Power for direction and guidance, and vote how my HP and I think is best for OA as a whole. He also suggested I abstain from voting if I wasn't abstinent at the time of the vote.

Each session was started with the Serenity Prayer, read in different languages represented at conference... French, Polish, Spanish, etc. There were many motions/amendments. It was overwhelming thinking about how we could possibly get through it all. I witnessed some very heated debates, calls for the Serenity Prayer before a vote and motions removed from the floor. We didn't finish yet we assume we did exactly what HP wanted.



In addition to the business conference, I attended the TSW (Twelfth-Step-Within) committee. I offered to be the Secretary and am co-chair of the Speakers List subcommittee. I could write a whole report about this experience itself so I will suffice it to say ... wow! To be part of a WSBC committee. I feel so honored to give this service.

In the interest of not rambling, let me close with what I learned:

1. There is long, strong recovery all over the world. It is possible to be abstinent and at a healthy weight.
2. Those representing us at WSBC take that service very seriously and are truly making decisions for the good of OA.
3. **Region 8 rocks!**
4. Coming to WSBC with preconceived ideas of how to vote does a disservice to my home group, intergroup and region. I need to listen with an open mind to both sides, pray then vote.
5. It IS possible to not get your way and remain calm and peaceful. Trust me. I witnessed it time and time again when the makers of a motion (or the deterrents of that motion) didn't get the vote they hoped for.
6. Giving service in OA is the best thing that ever happened to me or my abstinence.

Thank you for giving me this awesome opportunity. I will never forget it.

Sincerely,
Lisa Spears

WSBC 2011 Chair's Observations

This writing will be personal rather than a blow by blow report. The WSO has done a wonderful job of capturing the specifics of the event and they are available at:

- WSBC wrap up report: <http://www.oa.org/pdfs/wrap%20up%20report%2011.pdf>
- Key decisions: <http://www.oa.org/news>
- New tools Pamphlet: <http://www.oa.org/new-to-oa/tools-of-recovery.php>

I arrived Monday afternoon.... Imagine a room filled with 30 pool noodles, 3 Styrofoam coolers filled with food, a suitcase filled with props for the "Three-legged Recovery" Forum and the Rotation of Service Concepts Skit, another suitcase filled with a few clothes, a computer and large red carry on. And that was just my stuff.... Thankfully my roommate Cyndy, the Region 4 Chair, was a champ and rolled with the punches.

After a dinner together, the Region Chairs Committee started rehearsing for the Rotation of Service skit and the Forum skit. What a great fun! The whip for Donna the Dominator was a favorite prop for the Concepts skit. (Who knew the OA Concepts of Service would be this interesting?)

Tuesday when the RCC (Region Chairs Committee) met with the BOT (Board of Trustees) I had an opportunity to talk about our Region. I shared that 1) All our service positions are filled. (Ours in the only Region where the Committee Chairs are funded), 2) At the November Assembly 59% of the Service Bodies were represented and we voted to have our 2012 Assembly in Medellín Colombia S.A., 3) The Board has done more than 11 workshops on abstinence, abstinence action plan, sponsorship, strong meetings, tools, OA service structure, steps and traditions, 4) The funded Chairs will be trained soon to help do workshops as well.

In the middle of the afternoon we had a chance to perform our Rotations of Service Skit as part of a Concepts workshop. Characters in the play included: Donna Dominant-power grabber, Susie Submissive-doormat, Nancy Nutter-all talk but no service action, Farkle Fearful-full of fear, Bobby Bleeder-bleeding deacon, Melissa Meddling-into everybody's business, Xena Service-fearless leader who does it all, Patricia Perfect-codependent, Wilfred Whiner-Eeyore type, and Hope Plantagenet (HP)- narrator & elder stateswoman. You can probably tell by our names it was a fun skit. We had to scoot out for a meeting with the BOT to talk about OA's Strategic Plan. The ideas discussed will be further developed at the August meeting. More info about the OA Strategic Plan is available at: <http://www.oa.org/pdfs/SP2012DelegateIdeas2011-2.pdf>.

I began to see more and more of Region 8's delegates as the day went on. Twenty three delegates were registered from Region 8. Twenty one were able to attend. We had 12 green dots who did a fabulous job and 6 mentors who went above and beyond. Each mentor had 2 green dots. THANK YOU MENTORS!! 14 of our 57 Service Bodies were represented. That low 25% representation allows Region 8 to have up to 5 additional delegates at the 2012 WSBC. (Our Bylaws require Region 8 maintain a 40-60% prudent reserve, so that number will be dependent on our financial health and the 2012 Budget.)



Wednesday the Region Chairs put on the Forum. The topic was Life in Balance

- a three legged stool. I got to play a "Vanna White" type helper for the "It takes Three" game show set in the Tropics. You can find Forum feedback at: <http://www.oa.org/pdfs/Forum%20Feedback%2011.pdf>. I think everyone had fun and the point was made that Recovery falls short if any of the three aspects (Physical, Emotional or Spiritual) is out of balance.



After committee meetings all day we had our Region 8 dinner in the Café at Hotel Albuquerque. It was great to get to meet with the delegates. The topic of abstinence was brought up because the BOT had asked each Region Chair to address with their delegation the right and responsibility of voting at the WSBC carries a one year abstinence requirement. Abstinence is taking a more prominent place in the discussion at the WSBC. This week the body voted to expand the definition of Abstinence. After our dinner I attended the Literature Q & A and got some much needed insight into a statement in the *A Common Solution: Diversity and Recovery* pamphlet that bothered me.

My early morning routine included the usual prayer and quiet time, breakfast with a dear OA friend from home, and awesome OA meeting and then it was off the business meetings. The early morning OA meetings are one of the most special parts of the WSBC to me. They put me in the right frame of mind for the business meetings to follow.

Region 8 rocked!! FLAGS! FLAGS! FLAGS! In front of us on the tables we had flags from every country in our Region that has OA meetings and a Region 8 flag with our logo as well. Region 8 sweatshirts were everywhere...

Our Region 8 green dots were magnificent! They were up at the microphone asking questions and participating in debate. I felt like a proud mama. Many thanks to Kat M. and Becky F. who were our representatives on the Reference Committee. Speaking of Region 8..... both of the newly elected General Service Trustees are from our Region. Congratulations to Karen C. and Janice S.

Please take a look at the WSBC wrap-up report. Here are a few highlights.....

- The Definition of Abstinence was amended. The definition now reads: "Abstinence in Overeaters Anonymous is the action of refraining from compulsive eating and compulsive food behaviors **while working towards or maintaining a healthy body weight**. Spiritual, emotional and physical recovery is the result of living the Overeaters Anonymous Twelve-Step program." (The new language is in bold type.)
- The revised *The Tools of Recovery* pamphlet added and defined Action Plan.
- A new pamphlet, *A Common Solution: Diversity and Recovery* was approved.
- The body moved to give the title of Founder to Rozanne S.
- An OA group must be registered with the World Service Office to be considered an Overeaters Anonymous meeting.
- OA approved literature still includes all AA approved literature.
- OA now has a statement on Public Media which recommends against any member,

group or service body endorsing (sponsoring, creating, funding or using) any public media of communication for OA purposes where the personal anonymity of OA members cannot be maintained.

- Service Boards, Regions and Groups must submit to the WSO a copy of their By-laws/and or Summary of Purpose any time it is updated or revised.
- New Regional Trustees were elected for Region 1 (Margie G.), Region 4 (Teresa K.), Region 5 (Allen B.), Region 7 (Barbara G.), and Region 10 (Faith M.)
- Teresa K was elected Chair of the BOT for 2011- 2012

What a grand week. It was my pleasure and privilege to be your Region 8 Chair at the 2011 WSBC. Thanks for this opportunity. Please contact me if you have any questions.

REGION 8 ROCKS!

STEPHANIE DORAN
REGION 8 CHAIR

Sharing my 4th Step Inventory

Question One, Step 5, in the Twelve-Step Workbook of Overeaters Anonymous asks, **“How (did) I feel about sharing my 4th Step with another human being?”** As I look back at that day, nearly five years (and 140 lbs) ago, I realize I had been frightened about sharing everything. I was fairly confident about sharing most of my inventory with my Sponsor. After all, I had gained the courage to share it from Step 3. I had confidence that my HP would protect me in this process. “Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death (Steps 4 and 5, 8 and 9), I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.” However, there were two or three items in my inventory that still frightened me.

What if my Sponsor “freaks out” and disrespects me? How could I couch my defects in a way with words that would seem less embarrassing? Do I really have to share everything?

Today, as I look back on that day, I realize that my fears actually represented the core defects I didn't know I had. Fear of embarrassment. Fear of looking foolish, weak, or somehow “morally defective.” Fear of loss of respect. Loss of control. Fear of abandonment. Would my Sponsor leave me? Would my new friends in OA abandon me? As I completed that first Step 5, my



Sponsor asked, “Is that all?” As if all I had just admitted were of no great consequence. When she said that, I realized

I had held back one last very embarrassing incident. And so, before I got up from the table where we had met, I said, “No, there was one more thing.” So I finally admitted my one last secret. I was so relieved that she accepted me and loved me just as I was – all my secrets, all my warts. If she could accept that of me, and my HP had done the same, maybe I could finally accept and love myself. I no longer had to hide from my secrets with food. This was the real beginning of my recovery from my obsession – my disease. My insanity.

When I had written my defects in Step 4, I had been concentrating on the “bad acts” I had committed and not on the reasons I had acted badly. Now I realize my real deep-down defects were not in the acts themselves but the fear motivation behind them. I had acted and behaved badly out of fear.

Today, I take a daily 7th Step and I ask HP to remove from me my unwarranted fears. I ask Him to help me examine my motivations in light of His will for me to always “do the next right thing.”

Anonymous
Marietta, GA

F.U.N. in ABSTINENCE in Venezuela

The trip to Venezuela with our Region 8 Trustee Gerri was "FUN in ABSTINENCE" in action. (FUN = Fellowship, Usefulness and Nearness to Higher Power.) We had a blast!!

Making new Venezuelan friends and getting to fellowship with old friends from Colombia was a highlight of our trip. As we flew into the Caracas airport on Tuesday we had the



Caribbean Ocean on our right and the Andes Mountains on the left. WOW! What a view....

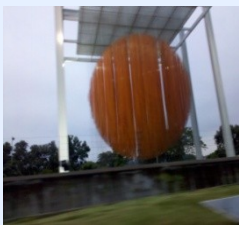
Venezuela is a very beautiful country with equally beautiful people. We were met at the airport by Carolina (our hostess in Caracas) and Yajaira (the Coordinator of the Retiro (Retreat), our hostess in San Cristóbal and friend from our August visit to Bogotá).

The metro Caracas area has over 5 million people and only 4 OA meetings. We had the opportunity to share our stories with 25 local OAs later Tuesday evening. The fellowship continued for nearly an hour afterward as many people had questions and wanted to talk to the gringos from Florida. Members were very interested in the expanded definition of abstinence. The meeting already had the new Action Plan definition but had questions for us. The Serenity Prayer Coins I brought to hand out were a big hit.

Wednesday started with the usual spiritual routine with a twist. It's difficult not to giggle when Sofy, Carolina's schnauzer, is kissing you when you're trying to pray. I was delighted to find that local *guanábana*, papaya and mango, arepa and cheese fit my food plan. Que Rico (Yummy) breakfast!



Later we saw the sights including this cool piece of kinetic art by Jesús Rafael Soto and went



out to lunch. Watching our hostesses explain that we each needed a grande....muy, muy, muy grande ...ensalada (a big..very, very, very big ..salad) was fun. Lots of grand hand gestures. We were very grateful that our abstinence was respected and that they were willing to go the any length to help us. (By the time we left both hostesses were eating lots of veggies

too.) Abstinence is contagious!! I also think it was very powerful to have two people carrying the same strong message about having an abstinence that works towards or maintains a health body weight.

Thursday we flew an hour and took 45 minute van ride across the frontier of Venezuela to get to San Cristóbal where we stayed at Yajaira's hotel. During the flight we were working on our Sexuality Workshop based on the 12 steps and an Action Plan for each step to work on sexuality issues. A member, who sat next to us during this process, started talking



about procrastinating on her 4th step and feeling powerless to get it done. We supported her to write her 4th step that afternoon and made our room available to her for privacy. Later that day she shared her 5th step with us. I felt like part of God's plan. What a gift. I had been praying for several weeks before we left for God to use me on this trip.

There were roses 🌹 🌹 on each of our pillows with little love notes when we arrived. What a blessing to feel so loved. There was a major hug fest when Pedro (Presidente of the Colombian National Service Board), Angela Maria, Sarah, Amanda, Sonia, Terecita, Claudia, & Rafael from Colombia arrived. After dinner we presented Pedro with an OA birthday medallion. I was wonderful to share this special event with him.



The next morning after a good night's rest and my usual spiritual routine we shared a typical Venezuelan breakfast with the others. They were interested in our scale and watched closely as we prepared our plates. We spent the morning talking with the Colombians about the November Assembly and after lunch we left for a half hour bus ride to



the convent. We got great views of San Cristóbal as we moved further up into the Andes Mountains. Costumed members really added pizzaz to the registration. It was exciting to see the flag of all the countries & states in Region 8 as well as our own Region 8 flag on the tables in Venezuela. Claudia a beautiful Colombian girl with 17 years of abstinence shared on the Tools of OA as part of the opening ceremony.



Saturday morning (very early) the roosters declared it was time to arise. The entire trip no matter whether in downtown Caracas with all its many trees, public art and nearby lush green mountains (and crazy traffic!) or in the frontier with cows, roosters and amazing flowers there was always sense of the majesty and power of Nature. Most mornings I took my quiet time in a beautiful chapel in the retreat center. What a great way to jump start Saturday.



Saturday was a glorious day. We did workshops on Abstinence, Body Image, Service, Finances, & Strong meetings. I even had time to take a mini 5th step after lunch. The topper for this wonderful day was a fantastic Blanco y Negro Fiesta (Black & White Party). Wow.... did



We all had **fun in abstinence**. Wahoo!!!

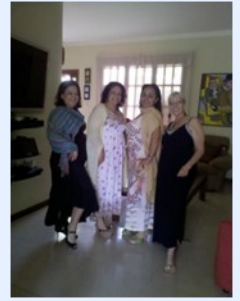
After arising early on Sunday morning I visited the chapel and we reviewed our plan for the Sexuality Workshop using Actions plans for each of the 12 Steps. The workshop was really well received. This day was Gerri's 18th OA Birthday. We all cried and laughed as she told her story and received her 18 year medallion.. O11ur Region 8 Trustee is a truly wonderful example of abstinence in action. Pedro and friends did a fabulous presenta-



tion about the Medellín Assembly in November. The Colombians are really excited about hosting the ground breaking Region 8 Assembly in South America.

After lunch we headed back to Yajaira's hotel and had a most astonishing afternoon. Nearly a dozen people asked for help with food plans and wanted to know where to get a scale. Our consistency with food had made an impression. Leaders in the OA community wanted to try what we do to see if it could work for them. Abstinence is contagious!! I felt like God had just handed me the winning lottery ticket.

At breakfast on Monday there was a line to use the scale. I had promised my scale to Yajaira, but wished I had more to give to others. The body image workshop had an impact as well. Several women who did not own a dress when they came to the retreat did a style show in dresses and skirts Gerri and I had given them earlier in the day.



After lunch we had a exciting 30 minute cab ride to the airport. Those Venezuelan cab drivers are fearless & fast!!!! The flight was delayed a few hours so I was grateful my sponsor has trained me to carry an emergency meal or two when I travel. Eating late at night is not good for me. I wouldn't kill me, but you would wish it did!



Our Tuesday departure was delayed and we had a wonderful opportunity to spend an extra day with Carolina and her family including Sofy the wonder dog (You really wonder if she's human.). We made arepas ourselves and did some window shopping at a gigantic mall in downtown Caracas.

Wednesday we headed home content that HP had used us for His purposes in Venezuela. During the layover the Costa Rica I was selected randomly to have my checked suitcases examined. Yikes! They took out everything....books, cosmetics, clothes, gifts, dirty underwear, hammock, tambourines (ask me about this)all laid out on the floor. Then it was on to Miami.

It was wonderful to be part of the bridge building between OA in North America and South America. It really filled my heart and soul and reminded that OA speaks in the language of the heart.

Many thanks to our Hostesses Carolina and Yajadia and our translators who patiently helped us. There were many people helped make this beautiful week possible. Their generosity of time, talent and treasure is truly amazing. MUCHAS GRACIAS!



**GRATEFULLY SUBMITTED,
STEPHANIE DORAN
REGION 8 CHAIR**

If you have an opportunity to come to the Region 8 Assembly in Medellín don't miss it. You will not be disappointed!!! The experience of OA in Latin America will open your heart and strengthen you spiritual experience. The Region Chairs from all over the world will be there to speak as well.. More information is available at the Region website: <http://www.oaregion8.org> or <http://www.oaregion8.org/formsdownloads/upcoming-assembly/november-2011-medellin-colombia/> or http://www.oacolombia.org/convencion_y_asamblea_2011.htm