

# Serenity Sentinel

## FALL/WINTER 2020

Volume: Panel 58

Issue: #11



### DONATION ADDRESS

ALL Seventh Tradition donations, meaning all contributions from individual members, groups, districts, and AIS offices should now be sent to:

**MICHIGAN AFG INC.**  
**P O BOX 980174**  
**YPSILANTI, MI 48198-0174**  
or PayPal Option at MIAFG.org

**Please share this information with your group treasurer and your district and groups.**

*The Serenity Sentinel*, a quarterly publication, is the voice of the Michigan Area Assembly. A complimentary subscription is issued to all AFG groups registered with the Michigan Assembly, District Representatives, Assembly Officers, and Coordinators. Please direct any comments or questions regarding the *Serenity Sentinel* to the Editor. Please send all **group information changes to our MIAFG Area Group Records Coordinator.**

Is this issue your personal copy? Renewal date is found on address label, so verify when it will expire. Also, be sure your group is receiving their free copy of the *Serenity Sentinel*.

### AWSC Meetings and Assembly Location Directions

\*St. Louis is nicknamed "the Middle of the Mitten"

**St Louis Church of Christ**  
**1075 West Monroe Road**  
**St. Louis, MI 48880**

**989-681-2524** \*

**From US 127 take the M-46 exit (Saginaw/Edmore)**  
**Turn east onto M-46 (aka West Monroe Road)**  
**This large church is less than a mile from the exit,**  
**on the south side of the road**

9AM-Registration Opens \* 9:40AM-New Rep Orientation  
10AM Assembly/Meeting Begins

**ASSEMBLY and AWSC: park in FRONT lot**  
**Don't Forget to purchase CAL from the hosting LDC**

### Serenity Sentinel Subscriptions

Individual subscriptions are available for just **\$4.00** per year. To receive this Michigan AFG quarterly publication, please complete the form below: Include it with your check or money order (\$4.00 per each subscription) made payable to Michigan AFG, Inc. and send it to the **NEW** address listed below:

**Serenity Sentinel**  
**c/o Michigan AFG Inc.**  
**PO Box 980174**  
**Ypsilanti, MI 48198-0174**

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Apt # \_\_\_\_\_ City \_\_\_\_\_

State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip Code \_\_\_\_\_

You are welcome also to order GIFT SUBSCRIPTIONS for your sponsor, those people whom you sponsor, or any other program friends! Please list additional subscription information on a separate page.

**To all our Al-Anon Family who have lost loved ones recently our most sincere condolences.**

*In Loving Memory...*

**Mike D**

Chairperson

Panel 58 (2018-2020)

Past Delegate

Panel 55 (2015-2017)

Mike D passed away on November 6, 2020. He will be deeply missed by our fellowship.

*Donations can be made to the WSO in memory of Mike Drumbeller.*



## Delegate's Report ~ AWSC ~ Ann M

November 14, 2020

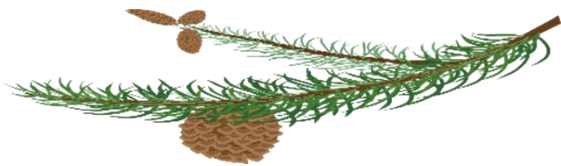
Thank you Panel 58! Thank you for your service to our members across the state. We began this journey with a Panel Kick-off gathering at the Alano Club East in Lansing, where we created our directional goals. The goal that has provoked the most growth for me is the fourth one, which speaks to "emerging technologies". I compare it to the pages in the Yellow Book (remember telephone books?) under attorneys specializing in DUP's. I was sure the picture in the Yellow Book of the police car really had on its lights. I might be the person who has grown the most with emerging technologies, and I'm proud of this today.

Thank you for your resilience as we persevered through personal experiences... undergoing major surgeries, supporting loved ones with major health issues, and losing those close to us. I have been witness of your reliance on a Higher Power, and acceptance of His/Her will. By the way, this panel officially ended at midnight on December 31<sup>st</sup>. Panel 58, I have a special request of each of you. Please make sure the trusted servant who follows you is well prepared. The holidays are coming fast. I have a few holiday tips to help us through this time.

1. Practice saying something new. This will break the vicious cycle.
2. Have sacred moments alone with your Higher Power.
3. Remember that hurt people hurt others, and kindness is a healing agent.
4. If you get angry, set a timer for 2 min. When the timer goes off, you stop being angry.
5. Call members (and potential members) to say Hello. Listen to them. Thank them for the conversation.
6. Keep a gratitude list going, find another member to mutually send your lists on a daily basis.
7. Laugh often. Our HP has a sense of humor and so do you.

**Ann M**

**MIAFG Delegate Panel 58**



## Kristine G ~ Alternate Delegate

Your trusted servants at MIAFG have been busy learning emerging technology to help us all stay connected during these unforeseen times. Below are some of the many things I'm grateful for:

1. Zoom
2. All Al-Anon members
3. Continuing to carry the Al-Anon message
4. Sponsorship
5. MIAFG Members who are willing to say yes to service work
6. Zoom Voting (Anonymously)

We had 0 New District Representatives attend the DR Orientations on Thursday November 12th, 2020.

Here's what I've had the privilege of working on since we met last. Anonymous Zoom Polling/Voting – Ross (Tech Coord) and I have been researching a simpler way for our membership to vote. We used the Zoom Polling method at Fall Assembly. We had a couple glitches, but we have learned from them.

I've been attending the Convention Feasibility Task Force Zoom Meetings, and my charge is to think outside the box on Convention Site Locations for a Single Day Event that allows MIAFG to follow the suggested guideline of the 7th Tradition (self-supporting).

During the past two years, I've been working with my Service Sponsor on the study of our 12 Concepts, which we completed on June 4th, 2020. I have continued with a Zoom Study Group "Recovery 3.0 the Concepts" that meets on the 2nd & 4th Thursday every month. This group is registered with WSO, and ID and password can be located at [www.alanon.org](http://www.alanon.org).

I learned that WSO asked that we NOT include a personal phone number or emails on Flyers. Instead use a service email. Example [miafgalternatedelegate@gmail.com](mailto:miafgalternatedelegate@gmail.com).

If you have any questions or concerns that I might be able to help you with, please do not hesitate to contact me at [miafgalternatedelegate@gmail.com](mailto:miafgalternatedelegate@gmail.com).

Grateful to give back,

**Kristine G.**

**MIAFG Alternate Delegate Panel 58**



**Renee F ~ Treasurer**

Our account balances as of October 31, 2020 were:

<b>Checking</b>	<b>\$ 28,481.47</b>
<b>Prudent Reserve</b>	<b>\$ 16,740.48</b>
<b>Convention</b>	<b><u>\$ 3,818.36</u></b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$ 49,040.31</b>

Our total income for 2020 to date is **\$15,922.87** and our expenses to date are **\$4,421.62**. This leaves us with **net income** of **\$11,500.95** to date. Though we are behind our budgeted income due to this unusual year our expenses have been very low this year.

Thank you for all the Group and individual donations to date which total **\$14,378.86** through the end of October, plus **\$44** in newsletter subscriptions. We have another **\$12** in subscriptions so far in November and an additional **\$1,377** in donations. The group donation list from Assembly is the most current; however, an updated list will be available at year-end. Remind your groups to include their WSO number, Meeting Location Zip Code and Group Name on their check, as this ensures correct documentation. We continue to accept *PayPal donations via our website (www.miafg.org)*.

Snail mail for MI AFG donations and Sentinel Subscriptions should be sent to:

**MI AFG Inc.  
PO Box 980174,  
Ypsilanti, MI 48198-0174**

At Fall Assembly the proposed 2021 budget was approved by the GRs. The GRs also approved the proposal to pay the full amount for our Delegate to attend the 2021 WSC. That amount is \$2,381.81. That payment will go out before the end of the year. We will also be receiving a refund of \$1,481.69 for the modified WSC of 2020.

A Fall Appeal letter was sent out. Many groups were very generous regarding the Spring Appeal.

Thank you to all our members for keeping MI AFG alive and healthy so we all can continue to carry the Al-Anon message. Grateful for this program and MI AFG, Inc,

**Renee F,  
MI AFG Treasurer  
miafgtreasurer@gmail.com**

**Technical Coordinator ~ Ross F**

As the new year is upon us, I'm thinking of my new role as MIAFG Alternate Delegate. With those thoughts come the thoughts of Al-Anon past. Who would have thought I'd be I where I am? And how did I get here? Looking back a lot of my early history In Al-Anon is a blur, some of it still very much in focus.

Panel 49 was in effect when I became involved with MIAFG as a Group Representative for the Harbor Springs Monday Night Al-Anon Family Group. Mike B. was the Chairperson.

As Panel 52 came in I was the District Representative for District 40/41. I learned a lot about the function of the World Service Office (WSO) and MIAFG record keeping during this time. District 40/41 was a combined district but due to the records structure used at WSO I was only allowed access to the District 40 part of the WSO records. Working with the WSO, MIAFG, and the various local Al-Anon Family Groups in District 40/41 we were able to meld the two Districts into a proper single entity. At the beginning of Panel 52 I was asked to become a member of the Policy Review Committee. Another great experience learning what is and is not policy and how policy is reviewed, established or eliminated including what needs approval from the Area World Service Committee (AWSC) and what needs Area Assembly approval. A great committee to learn the MIAFG Service Manual. I also became the Co-Chairperson (Linda R was Chairperson) of the 2015 Michigan Al-Anon/Alateen State Convention. The Convention committee meetings is where I truly learned to trust that things always (and sometimes mysteriously) work out. Debbie K. was the MIAFG Chairperson.

With Panel 55, I was asked to be the Area Literature Coordinator. Okay. Met more people at the WSO. Learned the origins of a lot of the literature and the process it takes to bring literature into being in Al-Anon. I came to understand the reasoning behind Conference Approved Literature (C.A.L.) This position made me realize how important each position and each task is in Al-Anon. Matt D. was the Chairperson.

I started Panel 58 as the MIAFG, Inc Archive Coordinator. Part way through the term I was asked to become the Technical Coordinator. Both positions are unique. Both have a rewarding side. The Archive

Coordinator position is somewhat solitary. The Technical Coordinator position has a lot more facets to it and more interaction with other Coordinators and Officers of MIAFG, Inc. Software subscription purchase and updates, password storage, and troubleshooting are part of the job. Another part of the Technical Coordinator position is the audio/visual equipment setup, operation and storage at the Area Assembly and AWSC meetings. Due to COVID this part of the job has been replaced by the coordinating the replacement Zoom Meetings. Two new laptops were purchased one for the Newsletter Coordinator and one for the Website Coordinator. Also purchased was a new printer for the Newsletter Coordinator. The replaced computer's hard drives were destroyed and accompanying paperwork has been filed in the Technical Coordinators files per the Policy Manual. I was also part of the Policy Committee. A task force was created from the Policy Committee and through that we updated all the MIAFG, Inc Guidelines except for the Convention Guideline which is on hold while the Convention feasibility taskforce debates its charge. Mike D. was the Chairperson.

I have found service work to be very rewarding and fulfilling. The experience, strength, and hope of those that were in service before me and with me now is an astounding wealth of information there for the asking. I am looking forward to serving MIAFG, Inc Panel 61 as your Alternate Delegate.

**Ross F.**



### **Group Records Coordinator ~ Sandy C**

Well, all things considered it has been an interesting year so far! Especially because of Covid-19. I found that I needed to be open to the changes coming my way! Thank goodness for my program!!!!

I have been busy updating group records with the usual changes as well as updating groups moving to Zoom and now some hybrid meetings! If the meetings that you are attending are Zoom /Hybrid mtg's **Please** be sure

that the group contacts their DR or MIAFG Records Coordinator with the necessary information; so that WSO and MIAFG show updated group information!

We currently have:

390 Active meetings

120 Inactive meetings

5 mtg in No Mail status

On that note -- as I write this report, I realize that my term as Area Records Coordinator for MIAFG is coming to an end.

It has been a growing experience for me and allowed me to learn more about the program, policy and procedures for MIAFG, WSO and how it all works to keep the program Al-Anon!!

It gave me the opportunity to experience working with WSO and A.A. and all that that entails with being involved in the A.A. International Convention with Al-Anon participation. I cannot believe that if things had been different, I would have met over 50,000 A.A. and Al-Anon members from all over the world!!!!!! The Al-Anon Welcome Committee introduced me to so many Al-Anons that I had only occasionally heard of who helped me to grow in the program.

I have also served on the MIAFG Policy Committee. The committee has been remarkably busy!!!

We have revised and updated ALL Service Positions Guidelines!! The only guideline not updated at this time is the MIAFG Convention Guideline, this is currently at a Feasibility Thought Force for further consideration.

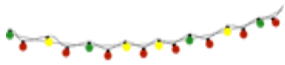
Being part of MIAFG on their different committees was an AWESOME experience. When I began to be active as a GR, I was given the opportunity to grow in my program and in service! One of the most important advantages I received was getting to Mike D!

Mike was my "Go to Guy!" whenever I had any questions or concerns but especially if I needed a friend! His words of wisdom and knowledge of the workings of our program knew no bounds! And helped me develop that knowledge of my own. He may not be here with us BUT I know I can talk to him whenever I feel the need!!!!!! Mike you are truly a marvel! I am so glad I got the opportunity to work along side with you and to count you among my friends!! Rest in Peace my friend and even though you left us so soon you left us in good hands!!!!!!

For anyone interested in stepping up to service as the next MIAFG Coordinator - - It is an opportunity to serve and grow in Al-Anon. I will be available to help you through the process, Valerie at WSO with Group Records is also available and Renee is also a great resource! This is not a service position that requires a lot of time; it goes in spurts.

Happy Holidays to ALL of you!

**Sandy**



## Newsletter Editor ~ Jeannette G

As my term as Newsletter Editor for MI AFG comes to a close I am grateful for the knowledge and experience this position has provided me. Many technical difficulties along the way with great support, and finally a new laptop, certainly made my position much easier.

It has been a difficult journey personally for me ,as primary caregiver for my mother (requiring 24/7 care during this pandemic). She passed away, at 100 years young July 21<sup>st</sup>. She had been an Al-Anon member since 1974.

I am grateful beyond words for the experience and help of Maggie and Steffi as past newsletter editors to guide me through. I look forward to reading future editions created by our next coordinator.

Happy Holidays to each and every one of you.  
Grateful to Serve,  
Jeannette G

## CAL Corner...

“I also continue to come to Al-Anon because I want to give newcomers a little of the love and support that were given to me when I came to my first meetings. I cannot imagine what might have happened if those wonderful Al-Anon members had not been there for me when I so desperately needed their help. I cannot begin to express my gratitude for the renewed enthusiasm for life that I have found, so I will have to let my actions speak for me by giving service, by coming back, and by continuing to learn and grow.”

*How Al-Anon Works..page 149*



## Memories of Mike...

My life of recovery will not be the same without Mike. He was a man with integrity. He was always a phone call away. He Never gave me the answers, he taught me to find my own answers through the Steps and the Traditions. He could always talk me off the ledge. I loved going to him for his wisdom, I always felt better after our chats. You will be missed Mike D. Prayers you are now feeling on top of the world.

See you again.

**Janet O**

I can't really recall when I first met Mike D. (I probably met Marte first through applying to be an Alateen sponsor.) Whether it was a Spring or Fall Assembly, an AWSC meeting or a State Convention. Mike was so welcoming and positive that I really wanted what he had. A healthy positive program. I began ordering literature from Mike's Central LDC as a group rep and always looked forward to speaking with him on the phone. Before an Assembly or an AWSC meeting I would call him to put my order in and he would bring it to the meeting.

The last time I spoke to Mike I was ordering materials and we talked about surviving Covid-19 and both so grateful we have this fellowship to keep us going.

Mike was such a spark of goodness and light which I know will continue to shine in all of us that knew him. Until we meet again dear friend.

**Eileen T. District 40**



My service work journey at Michigan Al-Anon Family Groups Inc started a number of years ago, by getting in the car with fellow District 5 friends to meet many others wanting to give back a bit to Al-Anon. I met amazing people at AWSC in DeWitt, as I also attended Spring and Fall Assembly whenever possible. Truly, 'when I got busy, I got better' and witnessed that premise in Mike D.

Mike did a variety of service work over the years, and I met him as I started out as Alternate Public Outreach Coordinator. I then transitioned to editor for the Serenity Sentinel newsletter. He was always available to me for any questions that came up, and his supportive manner helped a scared newbie feel more at ease. It never felt like I asked a 'dumb' question, as his positive vibes always came through.

He wore many hats in Al-Anon service, including Area World Service Committee Delegate in Panel 55 . Most recently in Panel 58, he held the Chairman role, always striving to do his very best, arriving early to set up the meeting space, have copies of reports available, verified projector equipment was in working order, besides giving hugs and making all feel welcome in the room.

There are two instances of Mike's generosity that come to mind: I'd purchased a Service Manual but somehow misplaced it. As I mentioned it once to Mike, he offered me his 'extra copy'. At another AWSC Meeting, shortly after a World Service Conference and summary booklets were offered to District Representatives and I was not a DR at that time, he said go ahead and take this 'extra copy'. Thinking back on that today, as the Lansing Area Literature Distribution Center Coordinator, he may have had an 'extra copy'. So generous!

I was privileged to hear a couple of his family recovery talks and panel shares at conventions over the years, and appreciated his honest, matter-of-fact manner, especially on how Al-Anon and Alateen helped his family! One of our last conversations was about the kitchen remodel he was doing (himself) and the one we were in the middle of due to a leak under the sink. Trading stories and experiences strengthened our common journey, where using recovery program principles helped so much!

To say I was shocked at the recent news of Mike's passing would be an understatement. While I knew of a few of his past health scares, the email stunned me and stirred up a wide variety of feelings from sadness on his earthly time being shortened, to the deep loss to Marte, their children, grandchildren and numerous friends and a bit of a review of my 'autumn' in physical years. Doing the 'next right thing' came to mind and I drove to Lansing a couple days later. The lovely Tuesday afternoon allowed many others to pay respects, hear the family love story and be a support to all who came from near and far in Michigan Al-Anon to reflect on a fellow trusted servant's legacy. Being with the winners has been rewarding. Words are barely adequate in summarizing a life well-lived, but I hope I can actively model an Al-Anon life in all my actions, as did Mike D. You'll be greatly missed.

In gratitude,

**Maggie S**

MIAFG and the Al-Anon Fellowship has lost a wonderful and knowledgeable member. I have had the privilege of sitting at the officers table with Mike for the last 2 years. Prior to that, I worked with him while he was Delegate and I was Records Coordinator.

Over the years, I found Mike to be a great source for the answers to those questions that come up when giving service to this organization. He was always available, understood the process, and always

provided guidance. I will miss this man and send love and prayers to Marte and all his family.

**Renee F**

Life has no guarantees, which is why I try to live in the present and feel God around me each day. God spoke to me often through Mike. He was a mentor and spiritual leader to me.

Things I learned from Mike.

1. Answer the phone when a member calls.
2. There is often a punch line...wait for it.
3. Nothing happens quickly in Al-Anon. It happens in God's time.
4. Let the hand of Al-Anon & Alateen always be there...
5. It's not always about me. Don't take it personally

I will miss your jokes and spiritual guidance.

Rest in Peace my friend.

**Kristine G.**



I remember the days of Mike standing in the back of the rooms at Assembly and AWSC in his Harley Davidson T-Shirt and a twinkle in his eye, taking it all in. Mike's days in service were many, and MIAFG was fortunate to have such a kind voice of reason as a part of our service arms. I can only imagine his impact on Al-Anon at the local level.

I never knew if it was Ann or Mike that thought to ask me to take the journey of service through being the Newsletter Editor, but I have my suspicions. Note to self, *talk to Ann.*

I will always treasure the sometimes lengthy conversations with Mike as he tried to "Talk to Each other and Reason things out with one another" as another district issue reared its ugly head in our district whilst I was the D.R.

He always had a gentle way of talking me down from the cliff and putting the focus on an Al-Anon solution. And in the position of Newsletter Editor he reminded me often of how we are all trusted servants doing the best we can with the understanding that life has its challenges and we may not do it perfectly, but we're doing it. Progress not Perfection.

We lost two greats this year in Liz P and Mike D, as past delegates. Thank You both and I'll look forward to seeing you both in that big Al-Anon meeting upstairs.

With great appreciation,

**Jeannette G**



Mike was one of the kindest people I've ever known; a great listener, a hard worker, a strong leader. Always available and willing to assist his Al-Anon family wherever he was needed.

On a personal level, Mike had a tremendous impact on my life. He helped me build confidence in myself in a way that has kept me growing for many years. I'll never know if he really believed in me or if he just needed someone to do something for him, but one time he asked me to write a skit for an MIAFG assembly. I thought to myself, "well, if Mike thinks I can do it, maybe I can". So I did it. And since then I've written skits and parodies, and parodied songs about once a year for the last 20 years for the good of our 12 step program. Every time I sit down to work on one, I think of Mike and give a mental thanks to him.

I have many other memories of times Mike made a difference in my life and I'll bet everyone who reads these shares about him can remember at least one story about how Mike impacted their life.

My prayers go to Marte and the rest of his family. R.I.P. Mike.

Fondly,

**Steffi**



I received a special thoughtful card from Illinois AFG and members of Panels 46, 47, 49, 50, 52, and 58. "So much to honor and celebrate." Our Mike D was known by our neighboring Areas. Her note states, "Dear Michigan Al-Anon members, our hearts ached when we heard about the passing of Mike D. We send our deepest sympathies to all the members he touched." The card came from Ramona C., who was our speaker at our last convention in Shanty Creek.

**Ann M**

One of my first memories of Mike is the vote when I was elected to take over as MIAFG Secretary when FloAnn Y. moved to Arizona. Mike asked, and I was among the standing Al-Anons who had previously held the position of Group Rep. When he asked those who were not willing to take the role of secretary to be seated, I was

momentarily distracted answering a question of the nice lady seated beside me. Since I was talking, I missed his direction and stayed standing. Next thing I knew, there was only another wonderful lady and me standing. I tried to excuse myself to sit, but Mike would have no part of it. He merely laughed, as only Mike could do, and then he said something to the effect of, 'It's too late to sit down now. Since you're already standing, you may as well stay for the vote.' Every time I think about Mike and that experience, I smile and giggle just a little. Thanks, Mike!

**Theresa S.**



## Members Share Experience Strength and Hope

I finally have an example in my own amends-making that to make the amends would injure us or others. I spoke up and learned the hard way. I insisted I get out the amends, while thinking I will sleep better tonight.... Plus, I wanted to make sure I was heard. I could see I had gone too far. He got very quiet and his eyes were moving like he was thinking....possibly wondering how to shut me up once and for all. I can see the pattern in me and in my thinking that I "prolong the problem" and often have situations/relationships be even worse for me. What I learned from this is that some amends-making needs to show up in others that I have changed for the better. I can behave and act like the person my HP wants me to be. It's an opportunity to go back to the previous couple of steps to "humbly" ask him to take my shortcomings". I humbly ask for "the wisdom to know the difference".

**Ann M**





**Forum subscriptions reminder**

To order the Forum, send a check payable to AFG, Inc., for \$11 to start or renew a Forum Magazine subscription. [1600 Landing Parkway, Virginia Beach, VA 23464-5617](http://1600LandingParkway.com) On-line sign-up at [al-anon.org](http://al-anon.org) or, via fax (757-563-1655) and pay with Visa, MasterCard, Discover or American Express credit card

It has been a difficult year for all of us on so many levels. Without my program I don't even have any idea how I might have survived. My sponsor's have been so supportive during these tough times.

The program has never failed to guide me to a place of restored sanity, if only for treasured moments. The inability to meet in person and to share the treasured hugs with those in the program who mean so much to me, and to those newcomers who will come to mean so much to me, is a challenge none of us ever imagined. We will hopefully be able to return to these treasured connections soon.

Meanwhile I continue to connect with my program and my program friends in the safest ways possible. Recovery is extra important these days.

**Anonymous**

**Some Recovery Tidbits**

Author Unknown

~Many others are suffering just as much and are just as lost as we were before we found the program. We were on the brink of despair giving up, looking for answers, and found the support we so desperately needed.

~We throw open the doors to those who are standing outside in the cold. We will welcome them just as we were welcomed. And offer them our experience strength and hope. We are privileged to carry the message of understanding and hope to those who will listen.

~Its better together than working alone.

**A message from the Editor...**

It is rather bittersweet to say goodbye to our Panel 58 members, and welcome our Panel 61 members to MIAFG service. Though service is no stranger to most entering into this journey of service and recovery.

I wish to thank all who have served MIAFG on so many levels...and those who will take on a position in the years to come.

Our new Delegate for this panel is Kristine G, and our Alternate Delegate is Ross F. Other Officers and Coordinators have been updated. Welcome all to your journey in service, and thank you for your willingness to serve.

Wendy will be our Newsletter Editor for the next term, and I welcome her to this service position.

Jeannette G

MIAFG Newsletter Editor

Panel 58

**Step One; Turmoil and tranquility at the ocean's edge – I am powerless** *by Barb R.*

While I sat at the ocean's edge, it was obvious that there was a Power greater than I. The sea was immense – waves rolling in and out without ceasing. Nothing I could do would stop the motion, change the waves significantly, or corral the vast amount of water that stretched to the horizon and beyond. I was absolutely powerless over this body of water.

I observed beachgoers over the course of a week. When the surf was rough and choppy, most people noted the advisories and stayed on shore. A few went in anyway where they were thrashed about. One was scraped and bloodied, another was caught in a riptide – a lifeguard had to rescue him.

When the water was calm, people of all ages, relaxed in the water where the ocean gently massaged them. As the waves got a little bigger, people had fun bodysurfing or catching a wave on a surfboard.

The pleasure, the tranquility, came from accepting the ocean for what it was and responding to it accordingly. No amount of cajoling could whip up waves to surf on a calm day. No amount of screaming or whining could calm the rolling sea on a stormy day.

God used my week at the ocean to help me see that there is at least one vast thing over which I will never have control. Could I possibly be equally powerless over alcohol and my alcoholic loved ones as well?

Instead of spending my life trying to control the uncontrollable and always wishing the day brought something different, can't I go with the flow today? I can relax, rejoice, and be recreated in the calm moments, and not allow myself to enter into the storms when they roll in.

In this way, I can admit my powerlessness over alcohol, yet keep control over my feelings, and reactions. By letting go and trusting God, I can enjoy my life the same way I enjoy the beach – "One Day at a Time."

~From the Forum, January 2007

*Reprinted with permission of The Forum, Al-Anon Family Group Hdqts., Inc., Virginia Beach VA*