

The Wagon Wheel

MARCH 2011



IDAHO AREA 18
NEWSLETTER

GOD
grant me
the SERENITY
to accept the things
I cannot change,
COURAGE
to change the things
I can,
and WISDOM
to know the
difference.

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“We sense that an AA meeting is our place, and these are our people because they are us – they speak our language. I don’t think it is a verbal language we mean; I think it is a deep non-word communication based on all the dark experiences we have encountered in our lonely search for a home of the spirit. We sense that here in AA this shared darkness has become a shared light.”

—*Spiritual Awakenings*, pg. 30
(from an
August, 1959
GRAPEVINE
article by *H.W.*)



*“Our common welfare
should come first—
personal recovery depends upon
AA Unity.”*

LIFE ON LIFE'S TERMS

No one ever plans on being an alcoholic, but with both parents and grandparents being alcoholics, I may have been genetically predestined.

“I was a heavy drinker when I was diagnosed with cancer on July 11th, 2002.”

In any case, I was a heavy drinker when I was diagnosed with cancer on July 11th, 2002. Of course I thought it was my drinking that was the cause. A subsequent CAT scan revealed a large tumor—a drop-to-your-knees-with-fear moment that I will never forget.

Of course, this alcoholic drank along with the pain medicine I was given. Up until the day of my surgery, the tumor had continued to grow and the pain was by then extreme! The last thing I asked the surgeon was that no matter how bad things looked inside, please make it possible for me to see my family once more.

For two to three years after my surgery my memories are groggy due to weakness and sleeping up to 16 hours a day. I was sad, depressed, mad, and scared. When I felt barely well enough to get out and do anything I drank. Yes, I drank. I soon fell back into a habit that I used for my release. I found that a glass of wine or two brightened my spirits and helped with the side effects I was

experiencing. I drank every afternoon right up until bedtime. My weight eventually got down to a scary 72 lbs. So, I drank more.

I was an isolated drunk and had a system where I would stock up on alcohol and hide it everywhere including the trunk of my car. Hiding it from my husband wasn't easy, but I had friends and a neighbor who sadly enabled me to drink as much as I wanted.

In November of 2008, my quarterly blood work showed a change in my liver functions and enzyme levels, puzzling my doctor. As a result, I was taken off of my chemo regime because my oncologist thought it might have been damaging my liver. I never told my doctor I had a drinking problem, I just kept lying to everyone including myself.

By February 2009 I had hit rock bottom. I remember my last drunk; it was awful and will be a constant reminder to keep myself sober, God willing, forever. On Feb. 18 I admitted myself into a 30-day, in-treatment facility.

My husband and grown daughter came to the family education week and we all learned together how deadly alcoholism really is, how it can sneak up on you and take over your whole life and the lives of others, as well. This is a disease I cannot fight alone, nor do I have to. With the help of my family, sponsor, counseling, good sober friends, and AA meetings I enjoy a great freedom in my life, and a spirituality I've never experienced before. How grateful I am for life itself. My husband and I have become closer than we have ever been. I have made friends that will last a lifetime and have been blessed with miracles that I never before would have

recognized.

I went camping sober for the first time in many years, and took vacations with my daughter and two wonderful grandsons. The last night we were camping I had a dream. It was so real when I woke up I knew it was true. I dreamt that a tumor the size of a man's thumb was growing outside of my abdomen just to the left of my navel. I told my husband and sponsor about my dream and about the dread I felt about my upcoming CAT scan.

It revealed a reoccurrence. The thing I feared most had happened. But by the grace of God, I came through surgery with flying colors, with no complications, and with my bowels still intact. I came out of recovery to see the relieved faces of my beloved husband and daughter.

My life has become richer and fuller as I continue to pray for a cure that has yet to be found for us with this rare form of cancer. I have a strong support group: a great team of doctors and nurses, the love of my family and friends who keep me in their prayers, and a God that answers my prayers daily. I've grown

"I've grown in humility, compassion, and empathy, and have a renewed respect for life and nature."

in humility, compassion, and empathy, and have a renewed respect for life and nature.

My desire for alcohol has left me, and I am free from the burdens of remorse and shame. I no

longer have to be sorry upon awakening. I am a gratefully sober alcoholic who has no idea what lies around the next corner, but is still willing to move forward and meet each day with a happy, grateful heart.

—Terry H.

LAVA Liberty Bell

Lava Hot Springs



← WANTED: → EXPERIENCE,

“I won’t accept an AA service position because I don’t want to deprive one of the newer members the opportunity to serve.” Or, “I’ve already done enough service work in AA and don’t need to do anymore. Besides, I do all of my Twelfth Step work by sharing in meetings.”

Maddening to hear these comments, isn’t it?

With the first statement there’s just enough truth in it to make it a little credible. The last two are purely nonsense, in my opinion.

But who would be foolish enough to make such a ridiculous statement in an AA meeting? Me. I was guilty of making the first one after 5 or 6 years of sobriety. At that time I had held a myriad of service positions within the local region. Then I allowed the delusion of having done enough for AA to creep into my thinking. I used the partially accurate justification that if I were to continue in any service work I would be taking away service opportunities from newer members. Little did I want to acknowledge that there were

“I allowed the delusion of having done enough for AA to creep into my thinking.”

service positions in my home group, intergroup, and district that were practically begging to be filled!

While it is true that some groups have old timers who will not let go of their service positions (see “bleeding deacons”), I believe this is a relatively small occurrence. When this does happen, yes, other members are deprived of an opportunity to serve in that position. But when compared to the various service positions that go

STRENGTH, AND HOPE

unfilled, it is a pretty minor problem. Also, our practice of rotation and elections really takes care of much of this.

Sadly this kind of flawed thinking is not confined to me; I have heard others share similar thoughts. More often I hear these statements made when

“Having taken a 10-year hiatus from service myself at one time—allowing others to do the work—I am familiar with most of the excuses.”

I ask an old timer why he or she is not involved with service work. Having taken a 10-year hiatus from service myself at one time—allowing others to do the work—I am familiar with most of the excuses. Thank God it is never too late to right this kind of thinking.

So what type of service positions do I have in mind for the more experienced members to assume? They include positions that some groups typically having difficulties filling: existing committees such as the Grapevine, H&I, and CPC/PI often need representatives or a chairperson. There are also opportunities to serve

on numerous ad hoc-type committees. And unless a group or district is struggling to find individuals for the positions of GSR, DCM, and intergroup chair, these positions should be rotated amongst those who have not yet served in those capacities.

Is the problem with service work unique to Alcoholics Anonymous? No. I am very active in another organization and from my casual observation it appears that 5-10% of their membership do 99% of the work. Similar statistics probably apply to AA too.

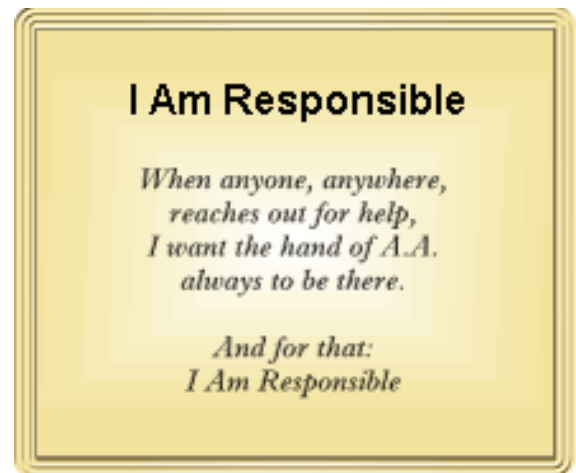
This imbalance obviously is not a healthy situation and is one of the reasons behind this article. It is also no secret that most AA groups and service committees could certainly use more involvement from others.

Equally important is the wealth of talent and knowledge that these service-work

“graduates” possess. When the Fellowship is able to tap into these longtime members, what a difference it makes to those of us with less experience, strength, and hope.

Finally, and most importantly, I find that when I am involved in service work and helping others, the rewards come back to me tenfold. More specifically, the gift of being relieved of the bondage of self can be no more assured than through the giving of my time and effort within the realm of service work. The sunshine of God’s spirit is greatly cast upon us when we help others.

—Brian M.
Lunch Bunch Group
Idaho Falls



Out of the Pit

*"I was
terrified
that anyone
would see the
real me.
Sound
familiar?"*

As a newcomer at one of my earlier AA meetings, I heard an older gentleman, Greg P., share that he said the Third-Step Prayer "every morning before my feet hit the floor." He shared this every now and then, but on that particular occasion he looked right across the table at me. There was some intensity behind those eyes. I know now it was his way of suggesting to that trembling, whining newcomer that I might want to consider saying that prayer myself so I didn't end up getting drunk again.

At the time, without booze, I was as self-centered and miserable as ever. Stark, raving dry—that was me. The only glimmer of hope I clung to at the time was that a "God of my understanding" had managed to keep me from that first drink for a full week. I'd hit my knees seven days earlier and uttered that all important three word prayer, "God help me." I hadn't prayed in years, but King Alcohol had beaten me into that "state of reasonableness" it talks about in our Big Book.

I'd read the Third-Step Prayer (pg. 63 in the Big Book) over and over the night before, trying to impress it on my foggy mind, but still wasn't sure of the wording come morning. And, in spite of Greg's suggestion, I wasn't convinced that praying

while still in bed would even work. But, when my eyes opened to what I was convinced would be another dreadful day, I remembered to recite the prayer to whatever God was listening. That morning began a ritual I have continued to this day.

I have yet to experience any "burning bushes" or "voices from above" as a result of this practice, but it is discipline and right action for me, and that's what this undisciplined alcoholic needs to grow spiritually.

Also, Step Three is one I need to revisit each day, and this ritual helps me to do that. Of course, I took Step Three as it is outlined in the Big Book, but I am an alcoholic EVERY DAY. All I have is a "daily reprieve contingent on the maintenance my spiritual condition," and simple, disciplined practices help me in that regard. Turning my will and my life over to the care of God as I understand Him can be a daunting task for me, and I need to practice doing that as I travel the

path of recovery from alcoholism.

When I got to Alcoholics Anonymous, I hated myself because I couldn't live up to what I thought were the expectations of others. I worried about what other people thought of me and I strived to be a people pleaser. I was terrified that anyone would see the real me. Sound familiar? Family, religion, and society as a whole all presented challenges.

I grew up in a strict, Catholic home, believing in a punishing and vengeful God. As a young teen I began to realize I was attracted to members of the same sex. I was ashamed, guilt ridden, and was sure I was going to burn in hell. I'd never heard the word "gay"—"homo" is the word I'd heard other kids using. No way anyone was ever going to know I was one of those! So, I pretended to be straight, determined to keep this truth a deep, dark secret.

By my mid teens, I was using alcohol as the primary means to oblivion. I'd turned my back on the God of my religion because my prayers weren't delivering the results I demanded. Through years of active alcoholism, I sank deeper and deeper into what I like to call the "pit of hell." By the grace of the God of my understanding and the miraculous program of Alcoholics Anonymous, I've been rescued from that dark place.

What I heard Greg say that day at a meeting of AA stands out as one of the most important moments in my recovery from this relentless disease. By learning—SLOWLY—how to turn my will and my life over to the care

of my Higher Power, I've been able to let my family and friends know who I really am.

This doesn't just relate to my sexual orientation, either. I got to AA with a lot more baggage than that! This discipline of visiting Step Three each morning reminds

"This discipline of visiting Step Three each morning reminds me that I need to keep turning it ALL over, good or bad."

me that I need to keep turning it ALL over, good or bad.

Through the program of Alcoholics Anonymous, I now have a Higher Power, whom I choose to call God, who guides me along the road of recovery, be it smooth or bumpy. And I'm certain of one thing today: God "works in and through me," and He loves me . . . just the way I am.

—Dennis B.
Back to Basics Group
McCall, Idaho

In the Market for a MAKER

“Get a God,” I hear repeatedly in the rooms of AA. “If you don’t get God, you’re wrecked. Your own ‘best thinking’ got you here, so you’d better get God and follow directions.” I’m told my God can be anything, anything at all with power greater than my own — “hell, even a doorknob,” an old-timer smirks, only half-joking. (After all, the doorknob clearly comports itself with greater sense than I did in my addiction!)

As newcomers, we set about scrambling to “get a God.” It’s a life-and-death mission, and few of us—regardless of the doorknob’s indisputably superior sense—are willing to entrust the endeavor to a hunk of hardware. So having eliminated Home Depot as an option, where does one get a God?

I imagine a God-shop opening at the mall, where I could consult a knowledgeable salesman about the available features of the various Gods on the market, accessories (protective case for the pocket-God, color choices, belt-clip, charger) and downloadable apps. I’d be looking for a God-plan with unlimited messaging, a planner, an e-reader, and two indestructible cases, one in turquoise to match my favorite shoes, and the rugged outdoor model for travel. The GPS feature would respond automatically to the phrase, “Where the hell am I?” with geographical as well as metaphysical directions. My unit wouldn’t have a mute or a power-off button (I wouldn’t use those wisely), would never need charging, and would never lose its signal.

As much as a tangible pocket-God appeals to my concrete mind, the intangible God is more accessible, and less limited. A doorknob may

“A doorknob may indeed serve as a starter-God, particularly if I choose the doorknob of an AA room.”

indeed serve as a starter-God, particularly if I choose the doorknob of an AA room. (The one message that doorknob delivers — “Enter!” — is, after all, a useful one.) But eventually I’ll need more direction than that. “Okay, I’m here. Now what?”

My sponsor says she has a Great Forgetter between her ears; I’m realizing I have a Great Complicator between mine. Finding God turned out to be much simpler than anything I’d tried to plot. At my sponsor’s insistence, I first put my planner on pause, then loosened my grip on the doorknob. I had to, I was blocking the door!

Imagining my life as a kitchen, I relinquished the recipe-rolodex, shopping lists, and meal plans. No, let me be more honest: I didn’t set those things aside — my sponsor confiscated them and then pointed me to a quiet kitchen chair and commanded me to sit still. “Just wait, Honey. Just listen.”

Minus my usual kitchen weapons, I sat still in my own mind. Not easy for

me, but simple. As I spun recipes in my head, I began to pay attention when ingredients didn't feel right — which gradually translated to “God would prefer I didn't.” When groceries appeared that I hadn't expected or planned for, I began wondering if the new dishes might be *meant* to be — which gradually translated to “God has a menu in mind for me, even if I don't yet know what the dishes taste like.” When feasts fell into place — unmarred by my clumsy attempts at control — I began to accept them as gifts. My life was being shaped by Something other than my will and my thinking. A benevolent

“ My life
was being shaped
by Something other
than my will and my
thinking.”

Something — and a better cook than me!

If I didn't find God as a result of all my thrashing, planning, and searching, it's because I'd made the mistake of searching for God elsewhere. God is in me. One member of the AA Fellowship put it this way: “You know why it's so hard for us to find God? ‘Cause He ain't lost.” I didn't have to find God, I merely had to get out of my own way so I could recognize God, who had been there all along.

God and I chat at the sunny kitchen table these days. Sometimes I talk out loud, and sometimes I just shut up to listen. My God still doesn't much care for my cooking, but I'm thankful beyond words that my God has a sense of humor.

—Kana T.
“Meat & Potatoes” Group
Boise, Idaho

“I
have a
hell of a lot
of fun with
God. I think
that the guy has
a tremendous
sense of humor,
or he wouldn't
have hid himself
in the last place
we'd ever
look—in me
and in you!”

—Chuck C.,
A New Pair of Glasses

GEMS

from
AA Literature

Our Higher Power's
prayer for us:

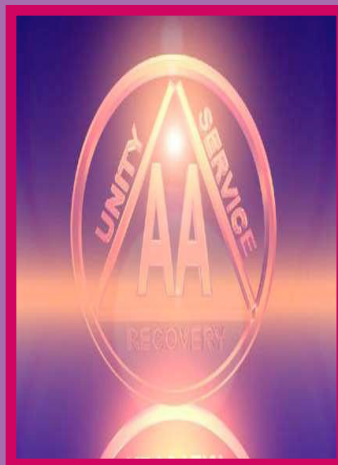
*"It is my joy to give you, hour by hour,
sufficient strength to have you entirely
dependent on My love."*

*"The AA way
of life is a blessing
and a privilege beyond
estimate – a blessing to live
a life free from the pain and
degradation of drinking and filled
with the joy of useful sober living,
and a privilege to grow in sobriety
one day at a time and bring the
message of hope as it was
brought to me."*

—Alcoholics Anonymous,
pg. 451

*"I did
not need to find God,
I only needed an open mind,
and the Spirit found me."*
—Alcoholics Anonymous,
pg. 397

*"A long time ago",
I read, "God did
not save you to be
a sensation— he
saved you to be a
humble servant."
—From L.M.'s
letter to the editor
in the May, 1986
GRAPEVINE*



*"AA is spiritual, is
the eye of the hurricane,
is my refuge and my
comfort.... I hear the voice of
the Spirit in the winds, in the
animals, and in AA meetings."*

—From an anonymous
contributor to the
May, 1960
GRAPEVINE

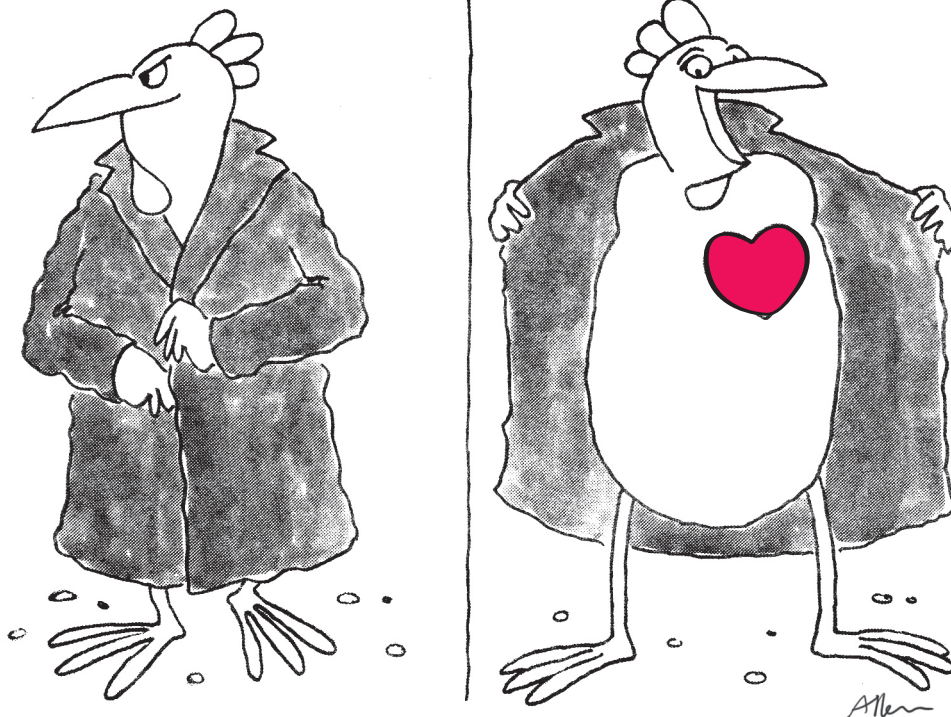
*"No man
can spend more in
good works than he
earns in meditation."*

—From K.C.'s story
in the May,
1960
GRAPEVINE

“Clearly, the sense of being special, of being ‘something,’ has its dangers, its drawbacks for the alcoholic. Yet the opposite, namely that one is to be nothing, has little counter appeal. The individual seems faced with being a something and getting drunk, or being a nothing and getting drunk from boredom. [Nothingness] runs counter to all our desires for identity, for an apparently meaningful existence, one filled with hope and promise.... But the fact is that the person who does not learn to be as nothing cannot feel that they are but a plain, ordinary, everyday kind of person who merges with the human race – and as such is humble, lost in the crowd, and essentially anonymous....

“Anonymity is a state of mind of great value to the individual in maintaining sobriety.... The maintenance of a feeling of anonymity – of a feeling that ‘I am nothing special’ – is the basic insurance of humility and so a basic safeguard against further trouble with alcohol – truly a precious possession.”

Harry M. Tiebout, M.D. (non-alcoholic, longtime friend of the Fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous)
Excerpted from his 1965 *GRAPEVINE* article



PLEASE CONSIDER SHARING YOUR EXPERIENCE, STRENGTH, AND HOPE

with your fellow Area 18 alcoholics,
for the May issue
of The Wagon Wheel.



Contact Information:

- Send stories or other contributions as e-mail file attachments to zorbabury@earthlink.net (Please put the words “WAGON WHEEL submission” in the subject line.)
- Send typed or handwritten stories, etc. to
WAGON WHEEL, c/o Brad P.,
38 Fox Hollow Gulch Rd., Bellevue, ID 83313.
- Send contributions as file attachments to the Idaho Area 18 website at idahoarea18aa.org (click on “WAGON WHEEL newsletter” in the left column, then on the “click here” button on the right).

WAGON WHEEL Contributors

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(both members of the Wood River "To Handle Sobriety" home group, Hailey)

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Heart-shaped Earth photograph: NASA

ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS



Snake

H & I Subcommittee



River

Serving Districts 9 & 11

2ND ANNUAL SNAKE RIVER H&I SPRING FLING DINNER/DANCE

Food, Fun and Fellowship.

ONTARIO, OREGON ELKS LODGE, BPOE 1690

20 SW 3RD STREET (CORNER OF SW 3RD ST & W IDAHO AVE.)

SATURDAY, APRIL 16TH, 2011 – 5 PM - 10 PM

\$8.00 per Person – \$15.00 per Couple

Raffle Tickets: \$1.00 or 6/\$5.00

(Dinner/Dance & Raffle tickets available ahead of time and at the door)

DINNER AT 6 PM TO WHENEVER!

– ROAST BEEF, HAM & LOTS OF SIDES –

DANCING, SILENT AUCTION & RAFFLE ALL NIGHT LONG!

Music by: **GroveKandy
Productions**

*We need donations of side dish items for the meal (or a roast or a ham)
and lots of raffle & auction items, so anything will help!*

If you have any questions or would like to volunteer, please contact us:

[Mike C - \(541\) 212-4366](#)

[Rob H - \(541\) 216-3552](#)

[Laura G - \(208\) 949-0129](#)

[Patrick B - \(541\) 216-3282](#)

(Click on the person's name and number to e-mail them)

Idaho Area 18 – 2011 SPRING ASSEMBLY / CONVENTION

May 13th, 14th & 15th, 2011

Hosted by: District 6 / Idaho Falls, Idaho
In cooperation and not affiliated with Al-Anon



We are responsible for AA's Future – Let it Begin with us

Assembly will be held at the...

Shilo Inns
Suites Hotels
"Affordable Excellence"

780 Lindsay Blvd
Idaho Falls, ID
208-523-0088

For more information contact:

Kelly B.
208-757-1912 or
Wade H.
208-520-5035

Al-Anon contact:
Pam L. 208-523-8734

Friday May 13th

11:00 am Golf Scramble
1:00-9:00 pm Registration
4:00-5:00 pm AA Panel Discussion
6:00-7:00 pm Kick-off Meeting

Keith J., Idaho Falls

7:30-9:00 pm Roundtable Meetings

GSR, DCM, H&I, CPC/PI, Grapevine, YPAA,
Archives

Alcathon Meetings

Friday 10:00 pm thru Sunday 9:00 am

Hospitality Room

available throughout the Assembly

Saturday May 14th

8:00 am - 6:00 pm Registration
9:00-11:30 am Area 18 Business Meeting
9:00-10:00 am AA Panel Discussion
10:15-11:30 am AA Panel Discussion
11:30-1:00 pm Al-Anon Luncheon

Maureen R., Idaho Falls

1:00-5:30 pm Area 18 Business Meeting
1:00-2:15 pm AA Panel Discussion
2:30-4:00 pm AA Panel Discussion
6:30-9:00 pm Banquet

Rod B., Pacific Regional Trustee, Tooele, UT

9:30 pm Talent Show & Dance

Sunday May 15th

8:00 - 9:00 am Registration
9:00 am Spiritual Breakfast

Madeleine P., Meridian, ID

We are responsible for AA's Future – Let it Begin with us

REGISTRATION FORM: Address: Idaho Area 18 2011 Spring Assembly, P.O. Box 50134, Idaho Falls, ID. 83405

AA GSR DCM Area Committee _____ Al-Anon GR DR

Early Registration by April 13th

Name _____

Address _____

City, State, Zip _____

Phone _____ Email Address _____

Events:	Early	Late
<input type="checkbox"/> Registration	\$15.00	\$20.00
<input type="checkbox"/> Sunday Spiritual Breakfast	\$17.00	\$19.00
<input type="checkbox"/> Saturday Al-Anon Luncheon	\$15.00	\$17.00
<input type="checkbox"/> Saturday Banquet	\$25.00	\$27.00
<input type="checkbox"/> Dance / Entertainment	Free	Free
<input type="checkbox"/> Coffee Mug (Limited Qty)	\$6.00	\$8.00

Method of Payment

Cash / M.O.
 Check # _____

Mail Complete Registration Form To:
Idaho Area 18 2011 Spring Assembly
P.O. Box 50134
Idaho Falls, ID. 83405

Registration Total: \$ _____

Late Registration Total: \$ _____

AA'S GOT TALENT

The show begins with you

Idaho Area 18 Spring Assembly and Convention
May 13-15, 2011
(show Saturday night)

* Sing *

* Dance *

* Skit *

* Play Instrument *

* Comedian *

* Other Talents *

Interested in Participating Please Contact: Lenny F. (208) 360-4896