Back to the Future – Where Will We Be in 2016?

by Larry A.

The 2016 ABC will be held the weekend of April 22-24, 2016. In addition, the Board has voted to host the inaugural one day World ACA Conference (WAC) either immediately before or after the ABC.

On behalf of ACA as a whole, our Annual Business Conference has the principal responsibility for the maintenance of our world services, and it traditionally has the final decision respecting large matters of general policy and finance.

We are asking ACA groups and Intergroups to consider hosting the 2016 ABC & WAC.

We will be very happy to answer any questions or concerns you may have to help you consider hosting the ABC & WAC in your city.

You will be working hand-in-hand with the Board’s 2016 ABC Liaison, Larry A., who is the Chair of the Board of Trustees. Larry will be available throughout the entire process to maintain an ongoing dialogue and provide coordinating support to the Host Committee and its designated trusted servant.

The Board and WSO staff will be responsible for preparing all of the delegate’s materials, and the Host Committee will have complete support from the WSO.

The WSO will reimburse all expenses expressly agreed to and made on behalf of the WSO by the Host Committee.

If your Group or Intergroup has any questions about hosting the ABC & WAC or would like to submit a bid to host the 2016 ABC & WAC, please send an e-mail with the subject line “2016 ABC & WAC” to litstaff@adultchildren.org.

If your Group or Intergroup is interested and able to be of service from a space of love to the fellowship with this important effort, we need to hear from you as soon as possible.

For more details about hosting this important conference, see our Fellowship Alerts page online at http://repository.adultchildren.org/aca-notices.
Western Great Lakes Intergroup Q&A

An Intergroup’s function is to assist with the helpline, public information efforts, hospital and institution meetings, and ACA events (support or help establish an ACA meeting) within a geographic region. Members of an Intergroup are elected representatives from each ACA group within the region and attend monthly or quarterly meetings. More information on Intergroups is located on the ACA website at http://www.adultchildren.org/intergroup-Intergroup and in the ACA Big Red Book.

The foundation and maintenance of an Intergroup has many ups and downs. Some fold and others remain strong. In researching the challenges and triumphs, one such group, West Great Lakes Group (metro-Madison, Milwaukee, WIS / metro-Chicago / and NW Indiana) agreed to be interviewed for the ComLine. Here is that Q&A:

Q: How did this intergroup form?
A: The West Great Lakes Group [WGLACAIG] formed out of a prior Chicagoland Intergroup that had been in existence since the early 1990s, or possibly longer; back into the late 1980s.

Q: How did your ACA groups respond?
A: Our new intergroup, the WGLACAIG experienced slow acceptance due to some organizational discord/dysfunction circa 2007 that existed at that time. Luckily, a core team of individuals with significant group time under their belts put in “the work” to incorporate WGLACAIG within the State of Illinois. They were able to draft By-Laws, and Standard Operating Procedures.

It took time, but now there are a significant number of ACA groups in the region that have accepted the WGLACAIG. However, there are still groups in our various metro areas that have chosen not to affiliate with WGLACAIG. As expressed by one WGLACA Intergroup trustee, “bad news travels very fast and good news never makes it onto the radar”. At one point we produced a document of all of WGLACAIG’s actions and accomplishments based on a request of a group representative to take back to his/her group.

Q: How did you persuade them to join, or did you?
A: The aforementioned actions and accomplishments document was the most we did to try to persuade metro area groups to join WGLACAIG. We gratefully accepted groups, but remembered that ‘each group is autonomous’.

Q: What sort of structure did you develop?
A: WGLACAIG has a chair, a secretary, three trustees, a webmaster, a small number of committees, and the volunteer services of an attorney.

Q: How well did/does it function?
A: Great question. I believe we are doing okay. The number of groups wanting to affiliate with WGLACAIG continues to grow. As is true for most volunteer organizations, we could use A LOT MORE VOLUNTEERS to do the outreach and other jobs our minds envision but our bodies never get around to. We embarked on our first sponsorship event – the 2015 ABC in Austin, Texas. We also have had several years of moderate attendance at ‘walk and talks’ at local forest preserves – weather permitting.

I guess I would resort to the words of my sponsor when discussing my own question about the condition of my condition – that is, I am about as good as I could expect to be based on the condition of my condition. Thus, the WGLACAIG’s condition is okay based on the condition of its condition!

Q: How often do you meet, and where do you meet?
A: We meet monthly on-line over the phone via teleconference, two months of each quarter. The third
meeting of each quarter is a face-to-face meeting in a convenient location in a rent-free church in a northern suburb of Chicago. Our meetings occur on the third Saturday of each month, and last no more than two hours. Our secretary sends out the meeting notices, documents the meeting minutes, and distributes the minutes to the groups whether they have chosen to affiliate with WGLACAIG or not.

A: How do you usually conduct business?

Q: Our By-Laws and Standard Operating Procedures govern how we operate. For example, we can spend up to $100. A simple majority vote governs costs up to $499. A simple majority of ALL groups affiliated with WGLACAIG is needed for items at $500 or more. *Robert's Rules of Order apply generally, with some gentle changes based on the particular circumstance. Trustees and other Officers can advise, but are not able to make motions or vote. Motions and voting is left to the group representatives.

A: Has support and participation fluctuated?

Q: Attendance goes up and down, but we have been able to most often reach our quorum (currently six group representatives) so we can conduct business.

Q: How many member groups do you have?

A: At last count there were 38 member groups; about 15 groups declined to participate.

Q: How well do member groups support you financially?

A: Cash flow is always variable. However since 2010, the treasury has doubled.

Q: Are you able to sponsor any special events?

A: Aside from hosting 2015 ABC, we’ve had several years of ‘walk and talks’.

Thank you, West Great Lakes Group (metro-Madison, Milwaukee, WIS / metro-Chicago / and NW Indiana) for providing informative insights into your Intergroup history, establishment, current structure, business conduct, and group relations.

*Ed Note: Originally published in 1896: Robert’s Rules of Order is based on the consideration of the rights: of the majority, of the minority (especially a large minority greater than one-third), of individual members, of absentee members – of all of these groups taken together.

The fellowship needs your input on this important piece of literature!

This assemblage of suggestions for ACA Intergroup Guidelines was generated by an international group of members of ACA to convey their joint strength and experience of involvement in ACA Intergroups.

These are not recommendations, nor are they are rules; they are ideas for ACA Intergroups to adopt if they so choose.

These guidelines are offered in the spirit of “take what you want and leave the rest”.

Find Intergroup Guidelines on our site under fellowship alerts at http://www.repository.adultchildren.org/aca-notices.

Email your comments and suggestions to litstaff@adultchildren.org.

You can review this draft document until October 3.

From Our Treasurer

In keeping with the WSO Board’s intent of maintaining transparency in all financial matters, I post monthly reports on the website’s Repository. These reports can be found on our site at http://www.repository.adultchildren.org/wso-treasurer. Seventh Tradition contributions are also shown in the “Donations Received” sub-tab.

If you have any questions I can answer in future issues of the ComLine, please contact me.

Yours in Service,
Mary Jo L.
ACA WSO Treasurer
treasurer@adultchildren.org
Going the Extra Mile

The disease of family dysfunction is a progressive disease that forces some adult children to seek help in a treatment setting or psychiatric hospital. Other adult children are sentenced to prison for crimes they have committed while acting out with addiction or codependency.

These adult children often form an ACA meeting in their facility and ask for outside support. This expanded booklet focuses on:
- H&I meeting recommendations
- Coordinating and starting an ACA meeting
- When a Hospital or Institution makes a request

Also included are sample letters for introducing ACA to a facility, as well as several tips on protocol and personal safety.

H&I meetings follow special guidelines. Find out for yourself what an H&I meeting is and is not.

Our literature reflects our fellowship. With this publication up for final review, each one of us has the opportunity to provide valuable insights.

We need your input! All ACA literature is reviewed by the fellowship prior to release. Review Hospitals and Institutions on our site under fellowship alerts at http://www.repository.adultchildren.org/aca-notices. Hospitals and Institutions will be available for review through August 15.

Please email your comments and suggestions to litstaff@adultchildren.org.

Find a Meeting in Your Part of the World

The Find a Meeting feature has been set to allow users to find a meeting by either:
- first, selecting their country;
- second, filling in the text box with Zip/Postal codes or State/Province or City, State and clicking NEXT;
- or, by skipping the text box and clicking NEXT to access the following screen which has a populated drop down menu, allowing the user to select their city.

The resulting page will yield results for all meetings within a 100 mile / 160 kilometer radius. We are currently exploring the possibility of reinstating the ability to set the distance.

The Meeting Map Search allows users to set the distance from a certain location and receive a map of all the meetings in that radius.

Selecting Meeting Map Search from the drop-down will display a default map. From this menu, select the country you wish to explore, then type in the city.

Please note the Map Meeting Search feature only works if we have map coordinates for the location. We are also exploring the possibility for results that would list the meetings chronologically, with their names in a printable format.

More information about the work being done on the website can be found on our site at http://www.repository.adultchildren.org/web-site-committee.
Keeping the Dream Alive

by Phyllis R.

This history goes way back to about 2000. It is also to acknowledge those volunteers who stayed the course to keep the fellowship going forward. These volunteers are why we are still here today.

Our fellowship had slowly begun to drift apart. The novelty of being in a Twelve Step group seemed to fade. With no book of our own to guide us in recovery and with other books about “adult children” flooding bookstores, the message of ACA was being overshadowed. Still, people who had experienced recovery wanted to continue, so they stayed.

As funds dwindled, our office could no longer be maintained. Business documents were stored in volunteers’ homes. Our post office box in Torrance was kept active so we could process what little mail we received. One volunteer in Sacramento, California mailed out what literature was still being requested, and a phone line was maintained. The Annual Business Conference continued, although very few people attended.

As I wrote in the previous ComLine (Vol. 29, Issue 1), a handbook was finally printed and a storage facility was rented. It was the best the fellowship could do and it had its drawbacks. It could only be accessed in the daytime as it was closed in the evenings, and because it was in the Los Angeles area, summers were hot. Volunteers spent their weekends wrapping, stamping, inventorying and piling handbooks into a Volkswagen to take to the post office for mailing. I have much gratitude for their work and their support.

Gradually, with fellowship funds increasing from handbook sales, an office was located in Signal Hill, in the Long Beach area of California. This is now our distribution center.

The office has two rooms. The front area is for business and in the back a fairly large area is for shipping and storage. We originally relied on volunteers to organize and manage the increasing workload. However, ACA’s Eighth Tradition states that ‘we should remain non-professional, but that our service centers may employ special workers.’ Following that Tradition, the ACA Board has employed special workers who answer the phones, reply to email inquiries, and make sure ACA books and literature are shipped out to the fellowship.

As with any project, there have been many learning and growing processes. The ACA Board is voluntary, and works devotedly to keep things moving. It’s unrealistic to expect any volunteer to contribute the labor required to meet the ever growing needs of providing literature throughout the world. But occasionally local ACA volunteers come in to help wrap books for shipping – they do this as part of their own Twelfth Step work.

It has been said that if our ACA fellowship is to continue, our Higher Power will see to it. Let us join with that Power to continue this work.

Volunteering at the distribution center warehouse.
I Had a PhD in ACA Behaviors
by Phyllis R.

Both my parents passed away in the month of April. My mother passed away 46 years ago and my father two years ago.

I always thought my mother’s passing was the start of my learning ACA behaviors until just this last year in ACA, when I learned how the behaviors are passed from generation to generation.

Both my parents came from alcoholic, abusive, dysfunctional backgrounds, but my overt initiation into ACA came after my mother’s death, since that is when my dad’s drinking became a problem – and the foundation was already there.

After my mother’s death I felt as if the rug had been pulled out from under me and I was falling into this abyss of darkness, and the safety nets that were once there were gone. Therefore, I think it is serendipitous that I found ACA in April.

Beginning when I was 10 years old there were days and nights that I was left home alone. No one bothered to check on me. It was as if no one cared. One day I came home and found blood on the curtains in the living room. I hadn’t seen my father in days and I didn’t know where he was or how to reach him. There weren’t cell phones in those days. I thought my dad was dead. Pretty scary!

My brother is four years older than me. He did what he could but he was struggling himself – we both were just trying to survive. So, with me being an “ACA in training”, at the age of 10, I took on the responsibilities of taking care of the house, my brother, and my father.

Eventually married a man who, you guessed it, had the same background I did. Only his was heavier on the abuse. Our marriage lasted two years, but the mental abuse lasted until my youngest son was 18. I think that marriage gave me a PhD in ACA behaviors.

Growing up the way I did and being married to the person I was, I developed everything I needed to be the best adult child I could be. So there I was – a grown woman still using the survival techniques that I learned at the age of 10:

- I lived/live in the river of denial.
- I see the world in black and white because the world is easier to control.
- I can walk into the room and feel/know the mood, then I am able to behave accordingly.
- I lived/live my life in fear of not being liked – offending someone regardless if they offended me.
- I’ve lost freedom of knowing what I want because I base my decisions on what I think others want me to do.
- If I make a mistake – or even just during the course of the day – the self-talk reinforces all the incorrect beliefs I learned about myself in childhood.
- I have to be like everyone else and able to do what they do, the way they do it because they are better than me.

Finally, everything came down on me. I had lost all hope and purpose in life. I know now it was my bottom. Then a friend recommended a therapist to me who in turn suggested ACA. It still took me six months to make it to a meeting.

My first weeks in ACA I did nothing but cry. I couldn’t share or even read any of the readings at the beginning or end because I would break down. I still don’t like sharing, but I know it is a way for me to heal. I just feel so raw putting myself out there. ACA has provided a new rulebook for me, and I love rules, but these rules have softness to them, allowing me the space I need to heal. I have learned there are more than 50 shades of gray in life through ACA and I can keep coming back as long as I need to.

Thanks for listening.
How Do You Forgive the Deceased?
by Tina S.

My father was an alcoholic and abused my mom on a daily basis. As far back as I can remember I knew that my life at home was not “normal”. Like most adult children, I have all or most of the characteristics from the Laundry List as an adult child as any “normal” person would.

My dad died at the age of 41 back in 1988 when I was at the ripe age of 16, and now, at 43 years old, I have yet to grieve his death. I am sad that he never got to live his life as a recovering alcoholic, but I am grateful that he no longer gets to abuse my mother or anyone else for that matter.

I just remember being grateful that God answered my prayers to make it stop even if it meant removing him from our lives. It is sad that I felt that way, but again, I knew at some point, I wanted my life to be somewhat stable.

I met a recovering alcoholic a few months ago who I was attracted to, and started building a relationship with him. I didn’t see anything odd about that, but after four months of attending ACA, I now see why we crossed paths.

I do believe that God placed him in my life for me to continue this journey of recovery. He was the first to plant the idea of ACA in my head, and he discussed his recovery with me. I found it very inspiring and wished my dad could have experienced recovery and a different life.

I somehow had to forgive my father and release the hatred I had for him as a man. How do you forgive the deceased?

I wrote a letter to my father forgiving him of all the pain he had caused me and I allowed ONE person to read it before sealing the envelope. The person I allowed to read the letter was the recovering alcoholic, and somehow I felt like this letter had been delivered to my dad. I addressed the envelope without a return address and simply wrote, “To Heaven” on the front.

I placed it in another envelope and addressed it to my church with another letter asking them to please see that my dad in heaven receives the letter and mailed it. I felt as if they are the closest entity to God and that was my way of forgiving him.

While I am currently in the Step program and we are just beginning Step Two, I somehow thought I could bypass Steps One through Eight, and I was already on Step Nine by making amends.

I was wrong. I still have some serious work to do within myself – but what a joy it was to release the culprit from running my everyday life of false emotions. I could not do this without continuing this journey with other recovering adult children. They are my new family that understands my feelings and me completely.

It is such a healthy release and I only wish I could have started the program sooner, but I am forever grateful to be on the path of MY journey in life.
Rapping With My Inner Child
By Charlz

Schtepz 7, 8 & 9?
We can rap on dat. Over.

Are you sure, Inner Child? Usually we use this time just for us to check in and connect. I thought you would want to tell me about your swim today. Over.

Nah B. We arredy told R fellow travałazz about da cadderpillar. Wat was dat cadderpillar doin on dee beach? Over.

Well... He (or she!) was taking the steps! Actually, he was crawling on the sand. He went upside-down when we picked him up, remember? He went upside-down. Where do you think he was going? Over. Oh! Over.

OK SO. He wuz going 2 da wodder. He wuz going 2 bcome a Monark Jellyphysch.

But he had shortcomingz N waz a false self! He had admitted his powerless over dee fx of growing up in a dysfunctional larvae.

He let in Godz LUV... Schteps 2+3

He took an inventory of all those leavz he chewed up!

He told his sponsor... Schteps 4&5.

Over.

That’s so interesting. Thank-you for telling me that. But wouldn't he have to become entirely ready to stop chewing leaves? I didn't even know it was wrong to do that! Maybe he had too harsh a sponsor. I think maybe he took a blameless inventory of his family of origin and told a fellow traveler about his childhood abandonment. He grieved. Then he humbly... No, wait. Not humbly just yet. Then, he became entirely ready to begin his hero’s journey (or healing process, whatever you prefer) with the aid of his Higher Power!!

Yea! So I scoped him up N wondered about him... Man, this is hard to write, knowing it is for Comline. I feel like Im trying too hard. Y duz it always have to be about sumthing?

About the step. About the reading. About this. About that. I don't like it to have to be about nothing. Now, Im speakin' up.

NO MORE RULES!

I hate all these rules. Computers need programs. Humans need... wat? Wat do humans need to function? Over.

Well, Inner Child... Those are some incredible, thought-provoking, and important questions. I would like to tell you about them. Ha! Just kidding with you. I appreciate your trying to write this article with me. I have a hard time focusing on one topic, too. I feel wrong when I’m not talking “about” or thinking “about” what I’m supposed to. I like how this dialogue turned out. I think other Fellow Travelers might understand it, too. Over.

Got 2 respekt ² timer. Over & owt
I See Dysfunctional People Everywhere

by Clare E.

Before I found ACA, my darkness resumed each morning shortly after opening my eyes. It was like a physical black curtain coming down, full of depression and dread. It was the darkest I had ever felt in my life. I was 59. Married to my third husband. Feeling trapped and alone and always with a blackness that weighed on me no matter how much I tried to keep moving and smiling.

It was a miracle that I found ACA. There was no alcoholism or addiction in my family of origin, and the adult child syndrome did not apply to me – or so I thought. Yet somehow I stumbled across a copy of the Laundry List and it scared me with how accurate it was. I shoved it away in a drawer for a while, but I couldn’t help thinking about it. I pulled it out a few times to reread it – gradually drawn to the notion that perhaps, just maybe, there were other people like me out there somewhere. So I made a promise to my dying cat that I would go to an ACA meeting before my 60th birthday. Two months after my cat died and two days before my birthday, I finally dragged myself to a meeting.

There were only a few people at the meeting. I stayed for an hour, left before the meeting was over, and didn’t say much. But I instantly felt – for the first time in many, many years – that I belonged. Not only did I feel that I belonged, I felt welcomed! And four and a half years later I feel more than ever that I belong in ACA.

Eventually those questions and doubts faded away. I began to understand that my own dysfunction grew out of my reaching for love; reaching for something good. But my family system had handed me something different. Now I KNOW there are dysfunctional people everywhere and I am one of them. I am one of the lucky ones. When I am with my ACA friends or at a meeting I almost feel like we are on holy ground. That our “loving parent in the sky” is especially pleased with the bunch of us and what we are trying to do. I am at home…finally. And my hope is that I can help other people who are suffering find their way home as well.

There are dysfunctional people everywhere, and I am one of them.
I Finally Realized What I Had to Do

By Joan

After months of working through the ACA Twelve Step workbook, listening in meetings, and praying that I do this right, I did Step Four, then Step Five, and then immediately did Steps Six and Seven.

I remember at times while working the early Steps that I could be driving down the road, listening to the radio and bam! A thought would come to me telling me I needed to add such and such to my list of shortcomings. Or while sweeping the floor, my mind said that I needed to add so and so to my amends list. I was thrilled and intrigued this was happening, and felt more secure in the process because the thoughts were coming to me at times I didn’t expect. I liked how freely such recognitions were coming to me.

Eventually my life got busier. I had finished the Twelve Steps, continued in my service work, and attended meetings – and my focus on the workings of each Step lessened. Then I began to experience thoughts and memories that I didn’t want to have again. I prayed simply that God stop those thoughts coming to me. They stopped for a few weeks, then returned. Sometimes dreams even happened that integrated those thoughts. The thoughts were always inappropriate to my state in life, and I began to think they were associated with the escapist teenager in me, not the kind Inner Child who had finally emerged after years of ACA work.

One night I’d had enough of those thoughts occurring again and again, seemingly without any encouragement from me. I then realized what I had to do. I had to do Step Seven again, just for this particular problem. I prayed hard, that God remove this shortcoming. I almost begged He do that. Then, day after day after day, peaceful thoughts returned – no more inappropriate thoughts! God answered my prayers.

I am continuously amazed at what I learn from doing ACA work! I learned that although I didn’t encourage such negative thoughts, they were a part of my past dissociations as a teenager, some of them still coming to mind, and so when they occur I can ask God to remove that shortcoming by doing Step Seven again! I know now that has to be true because no one is perfect, least of all me, and I can’t think of everything at one time, like all my shortcomings at one time.

This time I learned that Step Seven is another one of those steps that can be worked over and over again, as needed.

Me vida – basada en elección y libertad personal

by Larry A.

Siendo hijo de una familia inmigrante de La República Dominicana en la década de los 60 fue bastante difícil, pero teniendo un padre alcohólico solo hizo esa época de mi niñez aún más complicada.

Las características que adopte de mi familia disfuncional durante ese tiempo eran tan confusas como las que luego había experimentado de adulto. Me convertí en un alcohólico y adicto y vivía en la negación.

En 1987, encontré el programa de ACoA al haber sufrido una dolorosa separación de una relación romántica. Asistí varias reuniones pero cuando un día mi padrino me preguntó si estaba bajo la influencia de drogas, me asusté y me fui corriendo de la reunión. Aún estaba usando drogas y alcohol.

Cuando al fin pude tocar fondo y dejar de usar alcohol y drogas, me acorde que la recuperación todavía me esperaba.

En los 90’s, asistí reuniones de ACoA pero pocas personas asistían y menos se quedaban. Después de varios años, cerramos las puertas de esta reunión, pero yo seguía caminando a la recuperación. Fui a un terapeuta pero no experimenté en nivel de recuperación que esperaba.

En el 2006, estaba tocado un fondo espiritual aun estando sobrio, y me recordé del programa de ACoA. Lo busqué en la red y vi que estaban imprimiendo el Libro Rojo (el texto de ACA). Lo compré y lo leí como si fuera una novela, esperando que al final iba a conseguir la solución a mis problemas.

Luego, me di cuenta que yo tenía que leer y absorber el libro poco a poco para llegar a entender el trabajo de recuperación que aún me faltaba. Las respuestas han estado dentro de mí al igual que mis padres críticos, padres amoroso, y niños internos.

Hoy estoy feliz cada día más cuando admito que soy un niño adulto porque esto me ha brindado la oportunidad de una vida basada en elección y libertad personal.

Le doy las gracias al Servicio Mundial por haber escrito este libro y a todas aquellas personas que hoy se reúnen conviigo en este maravilloso programa.
Be Still and Know