

# October 2021 OA TODAY NEWSLETTER

St. Louis Bi-State Intergroup of OA  
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## STEP TEN

**Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong, promptly admitted it.**

I love this step because it means that I never have to again pretend to be perfect - only human. Which is by far and away better!

I am never going to do my life or my recovery perfectly - what a relief, once I get over myself and the believing I am supposed to. I was first introduced to this way of thinking by an early sponsor who when I'd call and tell her I'd been "good" with my food on that particular day, hoping for a gold star or at least a pat on the back. She instead would say that recovery was not about me being or getting good. It was about me getting healthy and letting go of the lies I believed about food and life. That was hard for me to grasp, because I thought I had to "be good" in order to be okay. If I wasn't

good or when I was wrong, I had to hide it and not let anyone know. If they found out, groveling was in order to get "Them" to once more accept me.

It may have been during this early recovery that I heard a poem that had a line in it that has become my touchstone for Step 10. It goes something like this: we don't have to be good, nor walk on our knees for a hundred miles repenting. Ah, freedom! We don't have to be good. Instead, I can acknowledge my wrongs make amends, shake it off and move on. What a gift and relief.

Because it is an inventory, I get to celebrate what is right with me. Or as store managers say about inventories, "We count the goods." Part of my ongoing recovery is noticing that even now it is harder to acknowledge what's right with me, and to celebrate my accomplishments, so I will keep coming back.

Sometimes in the middle of the night, if I am unable to sleep, I inventory my gratuities and do so by going through each letter of the alphabet and saying something I am grateful for to match each letter. I rarely get through the whole alphabet as I fall asleep somewhere around P. Thanks for letting me share.

Anonymous





### TRADITION TEN

**Overeaters Anonymous has no opinion on outside issues; hence, the OA name ought never be drawn into public controversy.**



Tradition 10 asks me to be neutral inside my meetings. It acknowledges that as an individual I have opinions on what's going on in the world, and that other members have their opinions as well. What I'm asked to do for the time between the beginning prayer and the closing of the meeting is to leave my opinion at the door.

When I'm inside the meeting I'm there to share the experience, strength, and hope of my recovery in Overeaters Anonymous. Hearing others' stories and daily practices using the Steps, Tools, and Traditions is what has strengthened and encouraged my recovery over the years.

When I walked in the doors of OA, I didn't realize how many people from all walks of life I would meet. If the first person had said I was only welcome if I shared a specific religious belief, political view, or culture as all the other

members, I would not have stayed. For one thing, even though I didn't have a lot of opinions on these matters, I would not have wanted to be pushed into someone else's belief. I needed to grow in my own way, at my own pace. Because I did not hear such opinions expressed in the meeting, I was able to focus on the message of OA rather than issues and ideas that made me uncomfortable or upset.

I am also responsible to not give the impression that OA has an opinion on anything other than the OA program when I am sharing with people who are not members. Giving anyone the impression that OA has all the answers or is better than some other method of weight loss or maintenance is not appropriate. It is better to share that I have found a way to deal with my compulsive overeating through a spiritual program, rather than voicing my opinion about other methods or programs people use to help themselves.

On page 190 of *The Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions of Overeaters Anonymous* I am asked: *Do I ever give the impression that there is an "OA opinion" on diets? On diet clubs? On diet doctors? On diet pills? On psychiatrists and therapists? On eating disorders treatment centers? On churches or religions? On nutrition? On food plans? On exercise? On vitamins? On sugar? On other twelve step groups?*

I must confess that I've heard and shared on all of these topics at one time or another. Sometimes those opinions were positive, many times they were negative and disrespectful of the businesses, institutions, and ideas. What Tradition 10 tells me is that the time spent in my meeting is too precious to be about my negative experiences, and that sharing those opinions interferes with the positive atmosphere of the meeting.

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Yes, many of our members have had negative experiences with these topics, but they can be shared one on one with a sponsor or other member, rather than in the meeting. I must remember that my opinion voiced to a newcomer or a non-member can be misconstrued as the philosophy of OA as a whole.

That is why Tradition 10 reminds us to be careful how we voice our opinion both in and outside the meeting. I can never speak as an authority on any of these subjects as I am not trained in any of the fields they represent. And even if I were, those opinions have no place in a meeting. As a member of this fellowship, I leave my expertise for when I am at work, not in a meeting or when giving service representing Overeaters Anonymous.

Anonymous



## HOW CAN I BE USEFUL TODAY?



- Celebrate a special day with an extra donation to OA. (You can give at your meeting, or online to other levels of OA, such as [oa.org](http://oa.org) for all of OA, [oaregion4.org](http://oaregion4.org) for our Region, or [stlouisoa.org](http://stlouisoa.org) for our Intergroup.)
- Call someone in relapse. (Relapse is not contagious. Recovery is.)

E.C.

## DO YOU LIKE SPEAKER MEETINGS?

To hear speakers tell their story every single week, consider the Monday 7 pm Newcomers Meeting! It's a small, intimate meeting, with lots of time for enthusiastic and meaningful sharing. Great for newcomers and the general membership as well.

Log in to this meeting with Zoom ID 508 858 0200, password 921299. Or use this link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/5088580200?pwd=cXBaYlI2UFhVSDQ4QmRxbzJRZ1JEQT09>

To come in by phone without using the Zoom app, call 312-626-6799 and give them the ID and password.

We hope you can join us soon! A warm welcome and a great speaker are waiting for you.

*Elizabeth C*



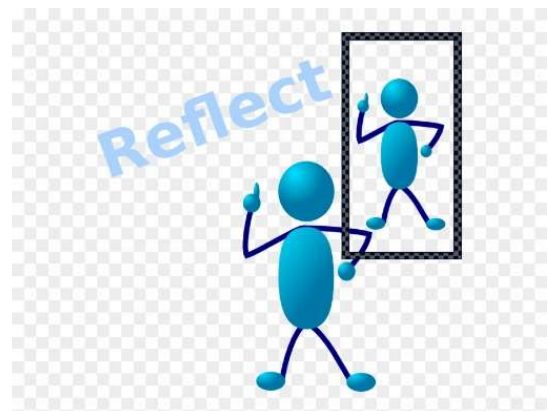
## Fall Retreat, November 5 and 6! REGISTER NOW!

Here's an event you won't want to miss -- the Fall Retreat: **A Time of Reflection.**

There will be three Zoom sessions:  
Friday Nov 5, 7-8:30 pm  
Saturday Nov 6, 9-11 am, and 1-3 pm

Online registration is available at [THIS LINK](#). Suggested donation is \$20, but never let financial hardship keep you away from a recovery event. All are welcome!

See page 10 for the retreat flyer.



**SPREAD THE GOOD NEWS:  
OA CHANGES LIVES  
Miracles Happen All the Time....**

I came to OA via the suggestion of a sponsor in another fellowship, after my fourth step there included a lot of the shame I had about my food addiction: my shame about how I looked, how I ate and how I lied about that, how I stole my binge foods, etc. I was and still am in the caring professions and did have a lot of assets then, but I hated myself, was fearful that I would never be loved, would never get what I needed, and that everything in my life was screwed up.

And, of course, I was the victim!!!! Poor little me, the queen of self-pity, and fear and negativity were my constant companions. I couldn't face life on life's terms, and I took everyone's inventory but my own. I was also atheist by then, so I cried at every meeting that I went to for the first several months since I didn't know how the hell I was going to work this program, and I didn't understand words like spiritual, prayer, trusting God, etc.

I cried and was hopeless and suicidal for quite a long time, and I already knew that medicine, religion and psychiatry would not help me, as I had had extensive experience with all of those by the time I was 20 years old. It's also interesting that none of the professionals I saw understood or even asked about my eating behavior, as they didn't understand, like folks in OA taught me, how my bingeing impacted my mood.

I learned in recovery that when I am bingeing, it is like cocaine in my brain. I got the good feeling for a few, then crashed chemically, and felt miserable/depressed. It also contributed to my overweight, which increased my self-hate and hopelessness regarding the impact on my life from that, and the chronic self-centered fear - which I learned in recovery is the core of my disease.

It was suggested to me after I spent another \$3000 to cover costs my insurance wouldn't pay when I had (insanely for me) tried to use a mental health hospital to help with my suicidal thinking and came out in exactly the same shape that I had gone in, that I could have used that money for a trip to Hawaii. I can tell you that since then I have not had to return to a psychiatric facility, but I have been to Hawaii eight times and loved every time.

I can laugh about all of that now, after being in recovery since 1989 and also being binge free for 27 1/2 years, working the steps daily since I started in recovery. Of course, admitting powerlessness included becoming honest, open-minded and willing, and doing daily 10<sup>th</sup> steps, as well as spot checks during each day.

Before I came to recovery, I was experienced at taking everyone else's inventory instead of my own and had spent my life before recovery gossiping about everyone so I would not have to look at myself or face my own crap. I was taught in recovery that if I find myself engaging in taking your inventory, then anything I saw in you was really me looking in the mirror, that I had to look at how that defect or issue I saw in you had somehow manifested in my own life. Needless to say, that stopped me from gossiping. LOL. The Steps require me to work all the steps on those defects or issues, since that was my only hope for recovery.

When I initially started working the Steps, I did my best, but didn't really have a clue about the exact nature of my defects and shortcomings, and how they affected and harmed others. After formally working the steps at least 18 or 19 times with my sponsor, and doing many years of daily 10<sup>th</sup> steps, I can admit to my defects and shortcomings, and have learned and get reminded over and over about how many more amends I still owe as part of living life differently. I will never be perfect - darn, but I know that perfection is not a real state for a human being.

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I love the saying: "What's the difference between you and God? God's not trying to be you!"

Admitting when I'm wrong and making prompt amends also keeps me from living in the guilt and shame that I've progressively been able to release by working Steps 9 and 10 repeatedly, and by applying all the Steps in my life.

Step 10 is a good reminder, too, that I have many assets today: that I have real value as a human, even with my disease, all of my defects, and all of the mistakes, sometimes very tragic ones, that I have made in my life. I know that I am a loving, caring person who is still of service to others. I have also learned to apply spiritual principles to all area of my life and to keep focus on having balance in my life. The scales need to balance between working my program, being a responsible, productive member of society, being of service to others, making time for fun for myself, etc., because if I don't do those things, then I'll cop an attitude of resentment - which can kill me.

I am so grateful for recovery and all the Steps, and all of the gifts I have received in recovery! I plan to keep coming back and I hope you do, too! Don't leave before the miracle!

Anonymous



## OA Invites Submissions For Upcoming Publications

OA is updating the existing publication **A Common Solution: Diversity and Recovery** and expanding the representation of OA's diverse membership. We are seeking stories that express your experience, strength, and hope, particularly if you identify as a member of one or more of these underrepresented groups within OA:

- Race (Black, Asian/Pacific Islander, Indigenous, Latinx)
- Male or non-binary
- LGBTQ+

- Atheist, agnostic, Jewish, Muslim, Buddhist, or other religion
- Young (under 30)
- Nationality outside of North America
- English not first language
- Compulsive food behaviors or surgical methods of weight control (e.g., anorexia, bulimia, or bariatric surgery)
- Disability or other health condition

You can help under-represented members identify with other OA members by sharing what brought you to OA, what you found here, and what keeps you coming back.

Please include which diverse group(s) you identify with and how our common solution (i.e., the Twelve Steps of OA, the nine Tools of Recovery, and reliance on a Higher Power) has led to your abstinence and recovery. See this link for more details:

<https://oa.org/app/uploads/2021/09/a-common-solution-call-for-stories-flyer-color.pdf>

Also, OA is updating and reforming our current **sponsorship** publications. The new publication will provide guidance to sponsors, both new and veteran, who are being challenged to meet the needs of our increasingly diverse Fellowship. We are asking all sponsors to share their experience, strength, and hope. Write about the ways you provide support and guidance to your sponsees, while keeping the focus on their recovery through the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions.

As you respond, please focus on one or more of the prompts that may be found at the link below, answer one prompt at a time, and be specific. We are looking for targeted and concise submissions of 250 to 300 words in a story format. It is our intention that your responses will be the framework for this new publication.

<https://oa.org/app/uploads/2021/08/sponsors-publication-call-for-stories-color-flyer.pdf>.

## HELLO FROM THE OUTSIDE: SPONSORS ARE HELPED BY CALLS TOO - A Recovery Story Featuring Paddie and Ria

It is Tuesday and Josie is finishing up cleaning the kitchen after dinner and the phone rings at 6:30 sharp. Josie realizes this is her scheduled call with her newcomer sponsee Audrey. Josie groans inwardly. "I am tired and have a lot to do before I go to bed. I wish we didn't have to talk tonight."



**Paddie (*Progressive and Deadly Disease*)** is thrilled at the opportunity to jump into Josie's overwhelmed and tired state of mind.

"Talking to her every week is a big demand and it gets

in the way. Just tell her it is a bad evening and get it over with. Eventually you need to drop doing this. It is a chore."

**Ria (*Recovery in Action*)** - "It has been a busy night, and you are tired. But take the call and listen. It is important to keep service commitments."

Josie takes a breath, asks for guidance and patience, and picks up the phone. "Hi, Audrey. How is it going?"



"It was going well, until a couple days ago. I was so anxious about food and wanted to eat so much. I had not felt like this in couple weeks," explains Audrey anxiously.

**Paddie** - "She is making excuses."

**Ria** - "Listen with the heart and mind of a more experienced fellow recovering compulsive eater."

After fifteen years in program and with ten years of abstinence, Josie knew what to ask next. "Was there anything different about the

last couple days with your food? Were you stressed about anything?"

Audrey pauses to think. "Well, work was about the same grind. The only difference in my food is that I used a different creamer for my coffee the last couple days. That wouldn't make that much difference, would it?"

"Did you check the ingredients in the creamer?" asks Josie.

Audrey pauses and then says, "It's right here on the counter. Let me look.....Well, yes. It has sugar as a second ingredient, unlike what I usually use, which has practically no sugar. Would that make that much of a difference? It is such a small amount."

Josie remembers and says, "Well, in my experience, it has. I learned that with certain salad dressings, it has always a battle to keep from putting too much on my salads. OA helped me figure out why. When I read the ingredients, I was shocked to see how much sugar there was in what I was using. And sugar is a binge food that I just cannot eat. As soon as I stopped eating certain salad dressings, I could tell the difference in my abstinence."

"Wow! That makes a lot of sense. I've already discovered that I can't eat refined sugar either. I am going to go back to what I was using before. Guess that creamer is another thing I can't eat," sighs Audrey.

"I know, I really know," says Josie. "And I am glad you are being honest about your frustration. It helps me to focus on what I can eat and be grateful for it. I remind myself how important abstinence is. Change back to your other creamer and let me know how it goes."

"I will! Thanks so much!" says Audrey.

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After the call, Josie wonders, as usual, who was helped more by the call - the sponsee or herself. "I need to remember how good it feels to be able listen and help a newcomer. It is amazing how sponsorship helps me to learn and relearn my program and how to keep my abstinence sound and intact."

Josie is amazed that she is not as tired after the call. Thanks, OA!



## **What's Up with Those Weird Guidelines for Sharing? Hmm.....**

When I began attending OA in 2010, one of the strangest parts of the meetings for me was the facilitated format, without impromptu chatting by attendees. I had grown up in a big, loud extended family where holiday gatherings generally meant no fewer than six separate conversations going on in one room at any given time. Each family member spoke louder and louder, trying to be heard over the other voices.

Imagine my surprise when these guidelines for sharing were read at the meeting I began attending:

*As you share your experience and strength in OA, please also share your hope. You may thank the speaker and/or leader of the meeting for their service, but please save other comments to them for after the meeting. We do not engage in feedback, advice giving or "cross talk." Cross talk during an OA meeting is giving advice to others, speaking to another person rather than to the group, and questioning or interrupting the person sharing at the time. As we are often a large group, we ask that you speak in a clear, strong voice so that everyone can hear, and please confine your sharing to two or three minutes. Should one of us inadvertently lose track of time or topic, the chair will redirect to allow all who wish the chance to speak. We are now open for sharing.*

(Note: Most meetings include reading a statement similar to this before sharing commences.)

As strange as those first meetings seemed to me due to the lack of "chit-chat" among attendees, I have come to deeply appreciate the gifts of a meeting where the guidelines for sharing are taken seriously. I find that these meetings are strong, focusing on recovery through the 12 Steps and 12 Traditions of Overeaters Anonymous.

Recently, however, I have noted an increase in members ignoring the information in the guidelines for sharing in our online meetings. Perhaps this is because there is little chance to interact more informally at the conclusion of meetings - when we'd clean up the room and walk out to our vehicles together in "the old days." The pandemic has robbed us of time together. Yet the guidelines for sharing are often adopted as a group conscience, so ignoring them may be a violation of Tradition Two.

I raised this issue in my home meeting recently, and several other members quickly noted that they had noticed the same thing. In that group conscience, we agreed to use slightly stronger wording as we read the guidelines for sharing for the next six weeks, and then we would talk about it again.

So far, the experiment seems to be a failure. Breaking the guidelines has continued, so it may simply be that people do not understand some of the language. This article is intended to help us think about this more carefully and to understand why it matters.

I have seldom seen anyone question or interrupt someone who is sharing, so that part is apparently clear. The few interruptions I have seen were meant to flag when shares go far beyond time limit suggestions or to note that a Tradition had been broken.

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It is important that we lovingly raise the issue if an OA fellow breaks a Tradition in a way that might harm our unity or damage our fellowship. For example, we should interrupt if someone attending insists that we all subscribe to one concept of a Higher Power, violates confidentiality, or tries to establish requirements for membership beyond a desire to stop eating compulsively. It is possible to choose words that convey loving regard for all in the meeting instead of a shaming tone toward the one who broke the Tradition.

Frequently OA fellows do speak to an individual instead of the group. For example, many begin a share with words like: "I really got a lot out of your talk today. When you described your tendency to be a people-pleaser, it reminded me of how I do that too."

It can be very helpful to examine our own shortcomings in light of what we hear in a meeting, and it's fine to talk about this during sharing. Here's a way to do so that avoids the trap of addressing the speaker instead of the group: "I'd like to thank today's speaker and meeting leader for their service. Today, I heard some things that reminded me of my history of acting in people-pleasing ways. I did that again last Friday when visiting my mother-in-law, and I've been asking HP to remove the character defect of people-pleasing as part of my daily Step Seven prayer."

Often OA members mention the many ways they know the speaker or various service roles the person has held. This sometimes sounds like a banquet emcee introducing the recipient of an award. The intention may be to help speakers know they are loved and affirmed, but Traditions Eleven and Twelve remind us to be one among many and not to put members on pedestals.

The guidelines for sharing suggest that we simply thank the meeting leader and/or speaker and save other remarks for after the meeting. If some receive long accolades while

others do not, this can contribute to a feeling that there are cliques in the meeting and be off-putting to newcomers.

Let's all work to keep our meetings [strong and healthy](#). Our recovery depends on OA unity. For more information about meeting formats, click on this [LINK](#); for more about cross talk, see [this resource](#) from the OA website.

Anonymous



### INTERGROUP CHAIR'S COLUMN

GREAT NEWS! St. Louis Bi-State Intergroup is having a FALL RETREAT!! It's going to be VIRTUAL!! That's right; it's on Zoom!

You're probably thinking what?? What?? At home, on Zoom, a retreat?? It's time for OAs to get creative, think outside the box.

How can you retreat at home? Create your own special place, maybe a special nook or cranny in your home, or on your porch or deck, set the scene maybe some candles or quiet music in the background. If you have a hot spot on your phone, what about a nearby park? Get comfortable, relax on your couch or in a favorite lounge chair. Invite an OA friend or two to retreat with you, maybe dinner Friday evening before the 7 pm session Reflection with Prayer and Meditation, or breakfast or lunch on Saturday, then Zoom in together.

Maybe you have a program friend who doesn't have the internet. What a perfect opportunity to have them come over and experience Zoom. Please feel free to continue to create and share out of the box retreat ideas.

Your inspired Retreat Committee is hard at work putting together a great program – three Keynote Speakers, Hands on Activities, Time to Share and Visit. They've chosen to break the program into three sessions with time in

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between, so you're not glued to a screen for six hours. The rest is up to you. Get registered. [Online registration](#) is open.

Sponsors, encourage or invite your sponsees to attend. Invite your OA friends to attend. The more, the merrier.

FRIDAY NOVEMBER 5, 7:00-8:30 PM \*\*  
REFLECTION WITH PRAYER AND  
MEDITATION

SATURDAY NOVEMBER 6, 9:00-11:00 AM \*\*  
DISCOVERIES OF SOUL TO SOUL  
WITHOUT FACE TO FACE

SATURDAY NOVEMBER 6, 1:00-3:00 PM \*\*  
REFLECTION WITH GRATITUDE

In other Intergroup news, Our Annual Bi-State Business Conference is on Sunday, November 14 starting at 1:30 pm. We will be electing nominated individuals as Officers for our Service Board (Board of Trustees), Representatives to Region 4, and Delegates to World Service. We will also be voting on motions for changes to our Bylaws and Policy & Procedures Manual. Everyone is welcome to attend. Zoom ID 940 5580 8391, password Serenity. Phone 312-626-6799, password 75183374

With gratitude for service,  
Dianne S.  
St. Louis Bi-State Chairperson  
[chair@stlouisoa.org](mailto:chair@stlouisoa.org)



### October 1-2 - Region 4 Fall Assembly

Join us virtually – everyone welcome!!  
Sponsors – bring your sponsees! Learn about the Board of Trustees restructuring being discussed. Help set the course for Region 4 in 2022 – elections, convention, budget...  
<https://oaregion4.org/event/2021-region-4-fall-assembly/>

### October 10 – Intergroup Meeting\*\*

**November 5 and 6 - Fall Retreat – A Time of Reflection** (see flyer on page 10)

**November 14 – Intergroup Meeting\*\*** – This is the meeting where elections are held

**November 20-21 – IDEA Day** (International Day of Experiencing Abstinence; no home meeting has volunteered to host a recovery date on this theme as we go to print)

**December 11 – Holiday Booster Recovery Event** – see flyer on page 11

**\*\*Note:** Each Intergroup Meeting is 1:30-3 p.m. via Zoom. **The meeting number is 940 5580 8391. The password is: Serenity.** Those in elected service positions and Intergroup Representatives are expected to attend. All other fellows are welcome.

**ARTICLES FOR THE NEXT NEWSLETTER ARE DUE BY OCTOBER 20, 2021.** Please send your submissions to the **OA TODAY** editor and Newsletter Team at [newsletter@stlouisoa.org](mailto:newsletter@stlouisoa.org) or mail to St. Louis Bi-State Area Intergroup, PO Box 28882, St. Louis, MO 63123-0082. Personal stories express the experience, strength, and hope of individual members and not of OA as a whole. Other OA groups and service boards may reprint articles from this newsletter without requesting permission.

OVEREATERS ANONYMOUS  
ST. LOUIS BI-STATE AREA INTERGROUP

# 2021 VIRTUAL FALL RETREAT A TIME OF REFLECTION

FRI. NOV. 5: 7-8:30 PM

SAT. NOV. 6: 9-11 AM

SAT. NOV. 6: 1-3 PM

## THREE KEYNOTE SPEAKERS

- SUGGESTED DONATION \$20
- PLEASE REGISTER IN ADVANCE
- NO REFUNDS
- WE CARE SCHOLARSHIPS AVAILABLE - NEVER STAY AWAY FOR FINANCIAL REASONS

GENERAL QUESTIONS? ELIZABETH C. (314)304-1444

SCHOLARSHIP REQUESTS: MARINA F. (815)343-6412

MARINAFRUTH53@GMAIL.COM

ZOOM INFORMATION EMAILED AFTER OCT. 29

ONLINE REGISTRATION AT  
STLOUISOA.ORG  
OR MAIL-IN SEE BELOW

MAIL IN REGISTRATION TO:  
MARINA FRUTH, 14644 N COURT 6, EFFINGHAM, IL 62401

FIRST NAME: \_\_\_\_\_ LAST NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

EMAIL: \_\_\_\_\_

PHONE NUMBER:( \_\_\_\_\_ )

ENCLOSED REGISTRATION \$ \_\_\_\_\_ WE CARE DONATION:\$ \_\_\_\_\_ TOTAL \$ \_\_\_\_\_

WRITE "RETREAT" IN THE SUBJECT LINE OF YOUR CHECK\_

Overeaters Anonymous • St. Louis Bi-State Intergroup

# *Holiday Booster*

**CELEBRATING ABSTINENCE AND RECOVERY**

*Saturday, Dec 11, 2021*

**IN PERSON!\***

Webster Groves Christian Church • 1320 W. Lockwood, 63122  
Lower Level - Enter from the rear parking lot - Handicap accessible

Registration 9:00 AM  
Program 9:30 AM - 12:30 PM  
Suggested donation \$6

Please never stay away from an OA meeting or recovery event for financial reasons!

**HOSTED BY THE SUNDAY MORNING ST. MARY'S GROUP**  
**QUESTIONS? CALL ELLEN 314-603-3712**

\*Circumstances may require us to shift this event from in-person to Zoom. Please check at [stlouisoa.org](http://stlouisoa.org) during the week leading up to the event to find out if that change has taken place.