

JANUARY 2022 OA TODAY NEWSLETTER

St. Louis Bi-State Intergroup of OA
P.O. Box 28882, St. Louis, MO 63123
info@stlouisoa.org, www.stlouisoa.org
Phone: 314-638-6070



Happy New Year!

**Every Day We Live Well,
We Are Well....**

Welcome to a new year of the **OA Today Newsletter** of the St. Louis Bi-State Intergroup! Our goal for the newsletter is to attract still-suffering compulsive eaters to our fellowship, to help those in relapse within our membership to regain abstinence, and to support the recovery of all readers. We want to lift spirits by sharing experience, strength, and hope. We may even bring a smile or laugh because “we are not a glum lot.”

The newsletter also highlights OA events at the Intergroup, Region, and World levels, offers a witness that long-term recovery is possible, and encourages our fellows to consider filling service positions. We welcome your articles and your letters to the editor. Find submission guidelines and the deadline for each month on page 12. Please help us get out the word about the availability of the newsletter and consider making a printed copy a part of your Step 12 conversations.

STEP ONE

We admitted we were powerless over food — that our lives had become unmanageable.

Admitting my powerlessness over food came in layers, like most (probably all) healing. One of the most helpful layers of understanding for me was realizing I couldn't stop my compulsive eating alone because I didn't see food as nourishment or fuel. I saw and used food as a drug to control my feelings. I used some food to calm me, some to numb me out, some to shut down sexual urges, some to pump me up, and then ate all day to keep me at the desired level. It didn't really work. It just created misery.

I didn't feel any real, clean emotions. When I'm clean I feel all my feelings. I was told my first year in recovery - 32 years ago - that pain is mandatory; misery is optional. When I'm abstinent I feel pain and sadness and it passes instead of turning into prolonged misery. When I'm abstinent I can also feel joy. When I'm in the food there is no joy, but when I'm abstinent - even if sad things are happening - I can still feel the love and joy in life, too.

In another layer of admitting my powerlessness I admitted I used my eating and weight as a bargaining tool with life. This is totally insane and impossible, of course, but I did.

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My eating disorder didn't start until adolescence, but its roots are in the magical thinking and misunderstandings of childhood. From my childhood interpretation, I thought terrible things would happen to people I loved when I was happy, confident, or independent. My awareness of the seeds of that misunderstanding has grown recently after decades in OA, and it has become easier to act on life rather than reacting to that hidden belief.

For years I harbored the idea that if I punished myself by burdening my body with extra weight and foods that were poison to me, I was somehow sacrificing myself to protect those most dear. Freedom has come through admitting I am powerless over the effects food and lethal eating behaviors have on my life and the lives around me.

I had to admit that even though I had practiced these behaviors on and off for decades the only effect they had had was to bring me to a place where I was twice my healthy weight and miserable. I am powerless over food.



I came to OA half of my life ago. I've enjoyed many years of recovery and suffered through some of relapse. After returning home to OA after a long and brutal relapse I kept hearing about the idea of being allergic to certain foods. I probably heard that before, but it didn't click with me then. Now, the allergic

reaction portrays the unmanageability of my disease perfectly.

A few years back I developed an allergy to poison ivy. The poison ivy was in my yard and gardens, so I had several bouts of it over a two-year period. When the rash first showed up, I tried to control the spread, but I was taking hot showers thinking I would break down the oil. That opened my pores and spread the oil faster and deeper. Then doctors would prescribe prednisone to control the hives. That made me feel like a crazed cicada who couldn't stop buzzing. I used an over-the-counter antihistamine to calm the buzzing. At that point I was a buzzing, drugged, itchy pile of hives. Totally unmanageable.

That is also what happens when I eat certain foods. My body feels terrible, and everything I try to do to control it makes the discomfort spread and increase. I can't feel anything except misery. If I stay away from those foods and poison ivy, I can feel comfortable in my own life - the flowers and the weeds, clay soil and surprise late blooms.

I'm uncomfortable talking about Step 1 without talking about the joy and freedom that comes with all the other steps, but Step 1 is crucial. When we admit we are powerless over food and share how our lives were unmanageable, we welcome each other into this fellowship. We recognize we are truly not alone. That first step makes all the other steps and the OA Promise possible.

In love and gratitude,
Anonymous

A stylized signature in cursive script that reads "Honesty".

Why Do the 12 Traditions Matter? An Intergroup Series for 2022

I have come to value the 12 traditions of OA as a safety net for members and groups. They are not just theory, but rather lessons learned the hard way from trial-and-error during the early history of 12-step fellowships. This safety net is very important. When traditions are not followed, newcomers, members and whole groups can be lost. This can be a matter of life or death.

Here are two examples from my own past:

The two meetings nearest to my home were both very religious, calling HP by a name specific to one religion. As I was sliding into relapse, it was easy for me, an atheist, to decide there was no room for me here. It helped me justify walking out the door. How many newcomers walked out the door of their first meeting because of this sort of thing?

As I was returning from relapse and doing my best to try again for abstinence, I had a series of three sponsors who laid out specific food plans for me. I tried my best but couldn't follow them for long. All three in turn said that their way was the only right way, so they fired me for being a failure. Fortunately, I was desperate enough to stick around and try again. Later on, I sponsored other people who had suffered the same way. Like me, they had persisted to try again. How many people just believed they were failures and never came back?

E.C.



**Spiritual Principle of Tradition One:
UNITY**



TRADITION ONE

Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends upon OA unity.



To start with, here are two examples I've had of maintaining unity between individual OA members. I like to think of myself as a calm, loving person, but over my years in OA I have found myself in conflict situations a few times. Maintaining unity meant remembering that we are all human beings together, sometimes rubbing each other the wrong way, and that it is important for everyone's recovery to heal conflicts rather than let them turn into open feuds with other people lining up to take sides.

One time, for no reason that I could ever figure out, I felt a bitter antagonism toward someone I hardly even knew. My sponsor and I, with guidance and strength from my Higher Power, worked out a plan: (a) keep my feelings to myself; (b) take action to treat the person with respect and loving-kindness whenever we ran across each other; and (c) spend time in my own recovery work and a lot of prayer. Eventually my negative feelings faded, and I came to feel as respectful and loving as I had been acting.

In another case, during several frustrating differences of opinion with someone, I had repeated times of feeling a burning, helpless fury toward them. In this case, the guidance was (a) remember that I surely had a part in this and that I was the only one I could change; (b) hang in there, taking a middle course between inflaming the situation and running away from it; (c) evaluate each instance to see what action was appropriate; and (d) as in the first example, be respectful

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and loving while focusing on my own recovery and the opportunity for growth. In time I came to feel pretty matter-of-factly about our differing opinions, focusing instead on how much I love and value this person.

At the group level, I have seen groups work for unity during serious disagreements about how to do things. Once my literature study group had the policy of reading Step One whenever a newcomer was present. Some people thought it was very important to put newcomers' needs first. Others found that the repeated reading of that step took away from the literature study so much that the meeting was no longer nurturing them.

Some of them left. It seemed that whichever course was taken, the group was doomed to split apart or fail altogether. But we came up with a creative plan to give newcomers a short break-out session while continuing with the regular literature study. This worked well, and the division was healed.

Finally, within OA there are many different approaches to recovery. As I experience it, some groups seem to value only part of the literature available to us. Others seem to value only certain specific food plans and are strict about requiring members to follow them. Some prioritize spiritual recovery while others emphasize physical recovery. Some have strict abstinence requirements for service. OA unity does not mean everyone has to do things the same way. It means that we do our best to avoid splitting up into warring factions.

Doing my part in this situation means that I do not bad-mouth groups whose methods I disagree with. I try not to criticize them in public or in private. I do not warn sponsees to stay away from them. Rather, I let sponsees know (sometimes with gritted teeth) that there are many approaches they can sample while finding out the best way for them to work their program at any given time.

E.C.

Happy OA Birthday: January 19, 1960

The book [Beyond Our Wildest Dreams: A History of Overeaters Anonymous as Seen by Our Founder](#) shares the story of Rozanne S and the early days of our fellowship. I was struck in reading the book by Rozanne's struggles with weight and her long years of dedication to the development of OA.

I realized that as an organization, we have learned what to focus on: The 12 Spiritual Principals:

- Step One Honesty.
- Step 2 Hope.
- Step 3 Faith.
- Step 4 Courage.
- Step 5 Integrity.
- Step 6 Willingness.
- Step 7 Humility.
- Step 8 Self-discipline.
- Step 9 Love.
- Step 10 Perseverance.
- Step 11. Spiritual Awareness.
- Step 12 Service.

Those of us who live this program don't simply carry the message, we are the message. Each day that we live well we are well, and we embody the joy of recovery, which attracts others who want what we have found in OA. We're always happy to share our secret - the Twelve Steps of Overeaters Anonymous which empower each of us to live well, one day at a time. **(Pg 85, OA 12&12)**

I am humbled that we are all imperfect human beings learning to be better. When we fill ourselves with the spiritual principals instead of food, we are filled with "Love and understanding beyond our wildest dreams!"

Anne H

Spread the Good News: OA Changes Lives

Lessons from Group Conscience Carry Over to Family, Community

As a recovering fixer-of-people and manipulator-of-situations, the concept of group unity through group conscience was alien to me. I had sat comfortably for three decades, self-satisfied in my isolation, absolutely sure that I knew what was best for everyone I knew, and exactly how life was supposed to go so that everyone was happy and satisfied.

Yes, I was living in a delusion, the idea that anyone else had anything to contribute was an idea that never entered my brain.

OA changed that. The first time I sat in a group conscience, watching a large group of people, all with diverse opinions, discuss issues regarding what was best for our group, was a real eye-opener. The amazing set of steps, traditions, concepts and their principles that guide us in living this program of recovery had shown me an inkling of what it means to allow others dignity of choice in their own lives.

As with every step I have taken in this program, learning to use this in life was a slow process of small steps. In the rooms, I learned to disagree without arguing, to state an opinion without condescension, to look for common ground rather than insist everyone stand on the ground where I felt comfortable. As I grew in recovery, I came to understand that a unity of purpose in our fellowship protects us and guides us, ensuring that the rooms stay open and the program stays strong and reliably steadfast so that others who still need recovery can find us when they are ready.

As I grew in confidence, and with the clear head that comes with abstinence, I was able

to begin to practice this idea out in the world. In my family, I began encouraging everyone to share their thoughts and opinions about family matters and truly listened to the differing perspectives. We found our way to common ground, and our family grew stronger. Unity offers strength. I practice this in volunteer groups in which I participate. Keeping the purpose of the group and its mission in the forefront allows more progress to be made.

I thought this was a program of steps, and then I would finish. Instead, this is a program of ideas, of equity, of faith - and there is no finish. We just keep growing. Together.

Anonymous



TOGETHER WE GET BETTER: WE NEED RECOVERY EVENTS!

Our Intergroup hosted several successful Zoom recovery events during 2021 – a retreat, holiday booster, and more. The 2022 Calendar is mostly OPEN at this time. Please talk with your group(s), and let's get our calendar filled up with Recovery! Intergroup has a Zoom account available, and technical assistance is also available.

Find guidance on hosting a recovery event on our website [HERE](#). For more info or to list your event, please contact our Vice Chair, Christina D, at: vicechair@stlouisoa.org.

Region 4 Intergroup Renewal Kick Start – We need you!

This is an expanded Community Conversations & 12th Step Within event facilitated by Region 4 elected officers. Come and hear, share, brainstorm with your fellow OAers how to regroup & re-energize.

A day of fellowship, strategy planning, and hands on activities is planned. You will walk away with ideas and support on how to reach those within and outside the rooms, to spread the OA message. Bring yourself and a carload of program friends. All are welcome!!

Mark the dates (the most driving is about 4 hours one way – scholarships available):

- **March 5** – Kansas City, MO – Greater Kansas City, Mid-Continent, Sunflower, St. Louis Bi-State, Greater Ozarks
- **May 7** – Des Moines, IA – Central IA, Hills & Plains, Greater Heartland, Promises of Eastern Iowa, Heart of Illinois, Quad Cities
- **May 14** – Bemidji, MN – Heart of Canada, Red River Valley, Northern Serenity, Unity

Outline of the day:

- 8:45 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.
- You will be working in small and large groups – meeting other Intergroup fellows
- Bring your lunch
- Locations to be determined – *please contact Meg & Mary with suggestions*

Planning Assistance requested - Calling on Kansas City, Des Moines and Duluth: Please help Meg and Mary with location venue. We are looking for a church, hospital, school or center that will house about 60 people and lets us bring our own lunch or offers an onsite cafeteria style

lunch. We would like access from 6:00 a.m. (for setup) until 4:00 p.m. (clean-up).

Contact information:

Meg – r4trustee@gmail.com

Mary - flow2growr4@gmail.com



Region 4 Game Night: January 29, 2022, 7-8:30 p.m.

Back by popular demand – with fun and prizes on Saturday, January 29, 2022, 7–8:30 p.m. Central – it's Region 4 Game Night.

Need tech help? Log in at 6:30 p.m. Central

Winners also receive a Golden Ticket to attend the Intergroup Renewal coming to your area in the Spring 2022.

Let your home meetings and Intergroups know. The more the merrier!!

Link:

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/82453074192?pwd=L1dVaDh6MGJNTHdxQ3BkRDRFL0hhUT09>

Meeting ID: 824 5307 4192
Passcode: 019285

In Case of Emergency, Switch to Plan B:

A Recovery Story Featuring Paddie & Ria

It is the Sunday before Christmas, a holiday important to her family, and Sarah is ready to tackle the challenges of this busy and emotional week. She has been in OA and abstinent for years yet knows how the stress and demands of this holiday can cause the food to call out to her. So, during her morning meditation on Sunday, she reviewed the Tools and constructed a plan of action:

- ✓ **A plan of eating** - Buy enough food for the week, pack healthy snacks, and cook ahead.
- ✓ **Sponsorship** - Call my sponsor twice this week and check to make sure each of us will be available to talk at the scheduled times. Bookend with my sponsor before and after the family party on Christmas Eve.
- ✓ **Meetings** - Go to at least one extra meeting; look on the meeting list to see the times for meetings that will fit in my schedule.
- ✓ **Telephone** - Make an outreach call.
- ✓ **Writing** - Write every day in the morning and keep my journal in my purse while traveling
- ✓ **Literature** - Bring my OA **Abstinence** and **Voices of Recovery** books with me while traveling.
- ✓ **Action plan** - Organize my time for the week and be sure to include time for my food, rest, and meditation/prayer.
- ✓ **Service** - I am scheduled to lead my home meeting this week.

- ✓ **Anonymity** - "This should be an easy one to keep," thought Sarah, " I never share what I hear at a meeting. " But she also remembered what was read about anonymity at numerous meetings. Anonymity also means remembering that members are all equal in the Fellowship, whether newcomers or seasoned long-timers. There are no stars or VIPs in OA.



Paddie (Progressive and Deadly Disease), seeing an opportunity, slips in a thought. *"Well, of course there are no stars or VIPs in OA, but you certainly are an established and respected old-timer with long term abstinence."*

I
Sarah agrees with this thought as she reads "Plugging the Dam" in her **Abstinence** book while on the plane. The writer of this story describes coming back from relapse. "It has been a very, long time since I have had to deal with that - thank goodness."

Ria (Recovery in Action - The peaceful, calm voice of recovery) *"It's important to be grateful for your life, especially your abstinence."*



Paddie - *"Yeah, right, whatever. You have been abstinent forever. There is no need to be overly anything. The person in the story isn't as strong as you."*

Sarah knows not to not agree with this, but she does not push back on this thought from **Paddie** either.

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As the week goes by, Sarah feels good about her plan for the week. She writes out a plan for the day as she starts each morning with meditation, prayer, and literature reading. She made an outreach call on Monday, led her home meeting on Tuesday, called her sponsor on Wednesday.

While at her sister's house for a large family Christmas, Sarah is blindsided when she learns her brother has terminal cancer, a niece is getting a divorce from her well-liked husband, and an uncle is unexpectedly harsh towards her. Whatever feelings Sarah has must be put on hold because she is listening to her mother, who now is in emotional turmoil and talking non-stop over the illness and divorce. Sarah also cannot find her new, expensive phone, which makes her feel very out of sorts. She is worried about the expense of replacing it and angry with herself for not getting insurance for it.

Dinner time comes and everyone is eating buffet style. Sarah is surprised that trigger foods that have not tempted her for a long time are looking very good. "What is going on?" she wonders.

Paddie: *"Just eat it. No one will notice. You don't have to tell your sponsor."*

Sarah says automatically, *"I have to tell my sponsor."*

Paddie: *"Well, you can't. You don't have your phone. Just blame it on the family drama. You have not eaten this stuff in a long time. Your sponsor will excuse this one time."*

Ria - *"If you have to make an excuse, you are in dangerous territory. Ask for help; borrow someone's phone."*

Paddie: *"Don't borrow the phone. That's rude and you cannot call anyone you know anyway because their numbers will not be in*

the address book of a borrowed phone. Stand on your own two feet!"

Ria - *"You would do this for someone else and your sister will be happy to loan you a phone. Lean into her kindness rather than your self will."*

Sarah's sister is happy to let Sarah use her phone. Sarah cannot call her sponsor because she does not have the number memorized. So she goes to the extra bedroom (the one piled high with everyone's coats) and looks up and reads and rereads [this helpful article](#) from the Seacoast Intergroup in New Hampshire and Maine.

This part of the article especially resonated:

*And the most important support for abstinence during the holidays or anytime - **Trust and Rely on God:** As powerless people, we must seek the power to abstain from a source greater than ourselves. Ask your Higher Power, however you define It, for ease and comfort, the willingness to avoid compulsive eating, and to focus your attention on how you can bring others good cheer during this season.*

The "fog" – the amnesia that inexplicably causes compulsive eaters to forget the pain caused by their overeating - starts to lift. Sarah now realizes with all her careful planning and well-intentioned use of the Tools, she had forgotten the most important thing she needed to do every day to keep her abstinence:

She forgot to turn it over to God.

She forgot to do the Steps 1,2, and 3 review that she used to do every day without fail:

I can't.
God can.
I will let God.

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She takes a deep breath and stays in a quiet place. She pulls her **Abstinence** book from her purse and rereads the "Plugging the Dam" story with more compassion and genuine gratitude. She returns to the get together and eats abstinently.

She finds her phone later that day buried in her overloaded purse that was not ringing because it was still on mute and airplane mode. She checks in with her sponsor and has a discussion that is more honest than usual.

The next morning, she wakes up, feeling grateful for feeling clear and clean in food and mind. She nods as she reads the December 26 reading the **Voices of Recovery**: "All I need to do is read, write, pray, stay close to my Higher Power and OA, and work the steps. The solution is so much more kind to me than the disease ever was."

Paddie slinks back into the hallway, and **Ria** is grateful for the gift of another day of abstinence for Sarah.

Anonymous



Interested in Deep Step Study? Jan. 9-April 24 Workshop Planned

If you are looking to learn and thoroughly work the OA 12 steps - either as a newcomer or seasoned veteran or in between, then I suggest you consider the 15-week Twelve Step Within workshop hosted by the Virtual Region. It is January 9-April 24, 2022, for 90 minutes to two hours each week, starting at 5 p.m. Central.

I have participated in the workshop first as a participant in March of 2021 and as a leader in June. It has changed my life. I now

understand each step and why they lead me to recovery. We all learn from each other!

Need a sponsor? We can help with that! I found my sponsor at my first workshop and now we are co-leading the workshops in January!

Register for the series at [THIS LINK](#). For more information, contact me at amhewh1@yahoo.com. Hope to see you there!

Anne H



January 7, 8, or 9 – OA Lifeline Creative Retreat – see pages 10 & 12 for info

January 9 – Intergroup Meeting**

January 19 – Happy 61st Birthday to OA!!

January 29 – Region 4 Game Night – see page 6

March 5 – 8:45 a.m.-3 p.m. - Intergroup Renewal Session - Kansas City, MO – contact Mary C for more info, flow2growr4@gmail.com – see page 6

****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.

Virtual Workshops Jan.7-9 As Lifeline Blog Prepares to Launch

OA is taking **Lifeline** in a new direction! Coming soon - **Lifeline: Stories of Recovery**, a blog for all of us to share our experience, strength, and hope with each other and to attract those who are still suffering from compulsive eating and compulsive food behaviors and searching for a solution online. Together we can!

Explore writing, video, audio recording and more! Join any of OA's three upcoming virtual workshops focused on the many creative ways you can share your recovery:

- January 7, 2022, from 9 p.m. to midnight, Central
- January 8, 2022, from noon to 3 p.m. Central
- January 9, 2022, from 8 a.m. to 11 a.m. Central

Find the workshop flyer on page 12. Register at [THIS LINK](#).

Each workshop offers plenty of opportunities to find your creative voice by working alone and with others. First, we'll gather in the main room to warm up and take in some fresh ideas for sharing our recovery. Next, we will move to breakout rooms to work alone or in small groups, and throughout the workshop we will return to the main room to share our discoveries and creations.

Want to help OA carry the message online? The original work that you create or get started in creating in this workshop can later be submitted to the World Service Organization, which will make your submission anonymous and use it to support a brand-new way for OA members to carry the message online, the **Lifeline** blog.

Humor Column

Editor's Note: Here's an "oldie but goodie" sung to Alan King's "[Hello, Muddah, Hello, Faddah](#)" based on the classical ballet song "Dance of the Hours".

Hello Muddah, Hello Fadduh!

By Cindy H.

(written on the tool of writing for a convention about 20 years ago)

Hello Muddah, hello Fadduh
Here I am at the Ramada
I am feeling all my feelings
Writing is a big part of my healing

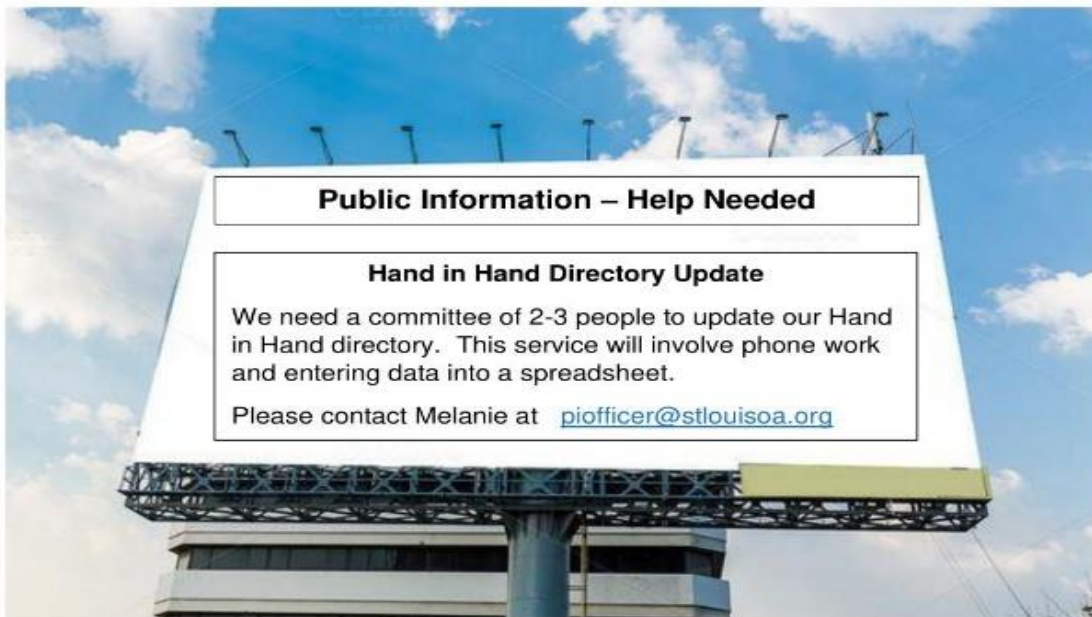
I can work through my resentments
So that I can find contentment
And someday I'll find forgiveness
But today I wish that you would mind your business

I am trying to turn it over
I turn forty in October
My biological clock is ticking
And the last blind date I had it was so sickening


Take my will, oh higher power
I just want to turn it over and let you have all of me not holding back a single part
Take my will I want the promises fulfilled
And help me see the hope you give
And keep me abstinent as I live just in today

Can you hear me higher power
I'm your precious little flower
Give me wisdom as I grow
Help me reap the blessings you will always sow

Wait a minute, I stopped eating
When I'm sad now, I go to a meeting
I feel loved now, gee that's better
Muddah, Fadduh kindly disregard this letter



See article and registration link for OA Lifeline Creative Retreat on page 10.....



The poster features a dark blue background with a large red circle in the center. At the top left, the text 'OA LIFELINE' is in white, with 'CREATIVE RETREAT' below it. To the right is a red ECG line graphic. The central red circle contains the text: 'JOIN US TO CREATE & TELL YOUR STORY IN A NEW WAY OR SHARE YOUR CREATIVE SKILLS TO HELP OTHERS', 'SAVE THE DATE', and 'CHOOSE FROM 7TH, 8TH OR 9TH JAN 2022'. Below the circle, the text 'more details to follow at oa.org/lifeline' is centered. On the left side, the words 'PODCASTS', 'VIDEOS', and 'WRITING' are listed vertically. On the right side, the text 'CREATE ON YOUR OWN OR COLLABORATE WITH OTHERS' is arranged vertically. At the bottom, a black bar contains the white text 'RELAUNCHING IN 2022 WITH YOUR STORIES'.

ARTICLES FOR THE NEXT NEWSLETTER ARE DUE BY January 20, 2022. Please send your submissions to the OA TODAY Editorial Staff newsletter@stlouisoa.org or mail to St. Louis Bi-State Area Intergroup, PO Box 28882, STL, 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