

April 2024 OA TODAY NEWSLETTER

St. Louis Bi-State Intergroup of OA
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Courage

STEP FOUR

**Made a searching and fearless
moral inventory of ourselves.**

Ready for the Promises

I currently sponsor five folks, one of whom just finished Steps 4 and 5, and the other has finished 4 and is in the middle of 5. I find it hard to separate these two steps. They work together as part of a process that concludes the look back part of program.

What I have found on the other end of this process is the growth through these two steps is amazing to watch. There is such fear and pushback when we start 4. I tell my sponsees, there is no time limit. Everyone's journey is taken at their own pace. And they will take their time – I know I sure did. They just don't want to answer some of the questions - or the answer feels incomplete to me. When that happens, I ask them to do more work, and we'll circle back around to it.

There is no judgment in this space, at least for me. My first sponsor was so accepting that I took a leap of faith, and I told her everything. I answered each question as thoroughly as possible. I didn't want to do this more than once.

(continued on page two)

Newcomers Corner The Power of NOT Part 1

Editor's Note: For the next several issues, the newcomers corner will include excerpts from a long article by a contributor who has lost several hundred pounds – and found a new way to live - since coming to OA. The article includes some of the ways the writer reacted as a newcomer to OA's invitation to think in new ways – like working the Twelve Steps.

When I started in program, almost 14 years ago in April of 2010, I figured I would give it a year, see what it could teach me, and get on with it.

Way on the other side of those years, program is what keeps me grounded on a daily basis; and it continues to sneak up on me how well I have replaced my unhealthy behaviors with new ways of acting on life, rather than reacting to absolutely everything that came my way with anxiety, frustration, anger and denial.

I recently made a huge change to my food plan because of a new medical regimen. 14 years ago, I would have panicked, stewed over it, and tried to figure out a way to do the same things and get different results. Today, however, all my first steps came back quickly, like a good friend calling just when you need to talk. That got me to thinking how hard it was to build those new habits. How I still think of the first two-three years in the rooms as the “**Great NO YOU CAN'T Time.**” Now I am grateful I had those experiences to draw on. *(to be continued in May 2024)*

(continued from page one)

(I have done a few more, focused on specific areas of concern. It's a good process for continued growth.)

Sitting in the other chair, I know how much courage it takes to say the things that they are ashamed of. The monster in the closet is so huge, it is sometimes hard to get the words out. We often cry together. There is grieving to start. Having said the BIG UGLY AWFUL to your sponsor, it is such a relief to have them say to you, "Yes, I have done the same thing, I have had the same thoughts, I understand. I judged myself, and through this process I learned to forgive - both myself and those who hurt me."

I hear from sponsees –

- I didn't think I would say, but I do feel better!
- In re-reading this, I am seeing patterns I never saw before!
- I don't feel as angry anymore.
- I no longer react the way I used to.
- I am calmer.
- I have learned so much.
- I never let myself look at this (thing, person, situation) before. I am glad I did.

I can think of no greater joy than the service I give each week with my sponsees. Just sitting there loving them when they think they are the most unlovable is such a privilege. I am grateful that these rooms were open for me to find. I am grateful that I get to keep giving away the gift of life that is all the promises* showing up in my life. To help others find those promises is awe-inspiring.

12 Steps is not for everyone. There are many people who are not yet ready to do the hard work involved with Step 4. Searching and fearless inventories are not for the faint of heart. You come out the other side ready for the 2nd part of this program – Action. We

move from looking back to looking forward and deciding who we want to be. Just like we learned world history in school, and hopefully learned lessons that we as a species choose not to repeat, we hold up a mirror to ourselves and learn the lessons that were waiting for us before we silenced them with the food and the illusion of control.

Addicts lose the ability to trust others. We learn to trust again in these steps. We take our most vulnerable self, the ugliest bits we can find, and we share them with another human, and that human gives us back acceptance and love. When you find yourself at this point with your sponsor, trust the process, and trust that person listening to you. Courage is truly the right principle for this step. When you are done, you will know yourself better than you ever have. You will have an idea of who you don't want to be anymore. More importantly, you have an idea of who you WANT to be moving forward.

Lean in, no half measures. The rewards are life changing.

Anonymous

* **The Promises** referenced are in Chapter 6, Pages 83-84 of **Alcoholics Anonymous (The Big Book)**



Responsibility Pledge

Always to extend the hand and heart of OA to all who share my compulsion; for this I am responsible.

TRADITION FOUR

Each group should be autonomous except in matters affecting other groups or OA as a whole.

In reading **The Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions of Overeaters Anonymous** a deeper understanding of Tradition 4 became clear. I love definitions and the book tells me "Autonomy means that OA groups can have no affiliations other than with OA. It also means that no other groups or service body - even inside OA - can dictate group action. There is only one limit to group autonomy in tradition four: Groups should not do anything which will injure other OA groups or OA as a whole." (**OA 12&12**, 1st edition, page 137)

My recent experience with this Tradition ended with me leaving a meeting I had been attending where the traditions were not being upheld. There were no business or group conscience meetings even though I (and others) had asked for this to happen.

Some of us started a new meeting, and we are having group conscience and business meetings so we all can be a part of making a healthy group that supports the principles of the traditions.

Reading the chapter on Tradition Four in our **OA 12&12** helped me understand how we must not be misleading or harming to the Fellowship as a whole. We will want to be about harmony, not discord.

What I have heard from others is - the Steps keep us from killing ourselves and the Traditions keep us from killing each other. "Groups which ignore one or more of the twelve traditions bring discord to the Fellowship." **OA 12&12** page 138

Many blessings, love and respect,
Michaeline



Tool of the Month: Telephone

According to [a helpful factsheet](#) on the *OA.org* website, as we work the *Overeaters Anonymous Twelve Step* program of recovery from compulsive eating, we have a number of Tools to assist us. We use these Tools—a plan of eating, sponsorship, meetings, telephone, writing, literature, action plan, anonymity, and service—on a regular basis, to help us achieve and maintain abstinence and recovery from our disease. This month we highlight Telephone.

Greetings Friend,

Let me start my letter by remembering how fortunate we are to have so many tools in program, most of all the phone. It is priceless!

How many times have I thought, "I don't want to bother another with a phone call." NONSENSE. I ask myself, "Was I ever bothered by answering a call?" NO. I am encouraged, lifted, and strengthened. In all honesty it is my lack of humility, and unwillingness to admit my neediness that makes me think I am bothering someone. I hang up the phone with a big smile on face whether I pick up the phone, or I am the caller.

The phone has given me almost three years of clean abstinence. With instructions from my spiritual director, I began making the

(continued on page four)

(continued from page three)

phone calls after the meal is on the table, but before I take a bite. WOW. It worked. But after about two weeks, I went back to thinking "I am bothering people."

The outreach list saved me. I know these folks understand my problem and they say they are willing to take a call. So, I started with A, Amy, made a checkmark. At each meal, I went to the list. When I got to V, Val, I turned the list over and went back to Amy. WOW! It works.

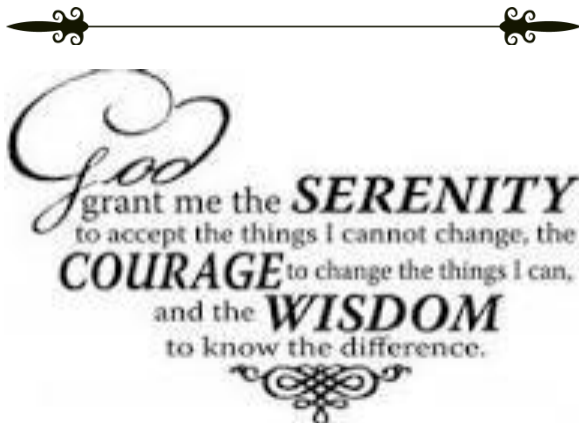
How do I know it works? A few times I didn't use the phone. What happened? I went back to compulsively eating until I was miserable.

So, friends, don't be afraid of the phone. It is a scientific fact that hearing ourselves say something out loud reinforces our ability to do it. I find it interesting, and it makes me smile, that talking out loud to a telephone pole doesn't work, but talking to a phone message machine of another OA person does work. Try it!

For those of you on the list reading this, "Thank you for being on the list, I'll be talking to you again in about five weeks."

Best Wishes from your OA Friend,

Marie B.



Trouble Practicing Self-Care? You Are Not Alone!

I have always had a problem with self-care. Lately it's become acute, as consequences have started catching up with me. For instance, exercise. I have several health conditions that need extra amounts of movement and exercise. But do I exercise? Not very often.

Another example is teeth. I have a dental condition that needs scrupulous tooth cleaning at least twice a day. Recently the dentist told me how serious it was. But do I brush my teeth in the prescribed, time-consuming way? Not very often. The day after that dentist visit I went to bed without brushing my teeth at all. How can I explain that?

It feels like defiance. Excessive willfulness. Self-will run riot. And there's nothing I can do about it, at least not by myself, on my own.

This situation reminds me of how I came into OA unable to stop overeating. By working the program, I am in remission from that, one day at a time. But now here I am again desperate over actions I can't control. I keep having meltdowns, when I go through a lot of drama, sobbing out loud.

So, I am turning to the program in two ways around my inability to consistently practice self-care. First, in the immediate moment. Second, for long-term growth.

In the immediate moment, say when I pick up the toothbrush, can't make myself bring my hand to my mouth and start crying, I use the Tools. In a crisis I turn to the telephone and sponsorship. Just the act of calling someone helps to break the impasse. I call my sponsor, and I have several other people I call too. Often, they can talk me down.

(continued on page five)

Sometimes they can even get me to do whatever I have to do right then. That relief lasts me for a while, but the underlying problem with self-care is still there.

To deal with that on a longer-term basis, I need the Steps. Here's how I am 12-Stepping my self-care issue:

Step 1. (It starts: We admitted we were powerless...) As I said, I am powerless over my actions and inactions around self-care, and I am desperate about it. I can't solve that problem myself, and no human power can. For any kind of lasting relief and change, I need a power greater than myself, which brings me to Step 2.

Step 2. (It starts: Came to believe that a power greater than ourselves could restore us...) Here's a big problem for me. I started as a hardened atheist. My whole family was. And all the bad things that happened to me and that happen to others around the world proved to me that there was no God. At least no loving and powerful God, no God with a master plan who makes everything happen for a good reason! I wish there were, that a supreme being could keep us all safe from bad things ever happening, but the world doesn't seem to work that way, and I get bitter about it. That bitterness stands in the way of my accepting and trusting what I am becoming more open-minded about – some kind of life force, energy or power with total love and support no matter what happens. That's what I want to "act as if" there is.

Step 3. ("Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood Him.") What does that mean? To me, it means surrender. But what does surrender mean?

I love self-help books. Motivational books. Pep-talk books. Informational books. Books about how to change habits – with suggestions like "Make it easy; Make it fun."

Sometimes all these books help for a while, but ultimately they are just ways to bolster my own willpower, and my own willpower is not reliable. At best, it works for a while and then wears off. At worst, it turns against me, into dangerous defiance, the opposite of surrender.

How is it different if I surrender to a greater power's care? I can't explain it, but I can tell the difference. First, am I doing what I know is bad for me or what's in my best interest? A loving Power wants what's in my best interest. Second, am I tense or relaxed? After I ask for guidance and help, I can relax. I can peacefully flow into doing the next right thing. Sometimes I even have the feeling of being carried along in loving arms or being like a boat carried along by the current.

That's it for the quick summary. Now I'm off to do the real work, in the sure and certain hope of real change. I can't wait!

Elizabeth C



April Question: What's Your Favorite OA Slogan?

*Editor's Note: In 2024, **OA Today** will include a question of the month. One or more OA members will provide their thoughts on the question, and then we invite readers to offer their own thoughts in a letter to the editor which you may address to: newsletter@stlouisoa.org.*

One day at a time.

It works when you work it.

SERENITY = This exact moment minus my opinion of it.

Do the next right thing.

An expectation is a premeditated resentment.

I Need Abstinence To Help Me Bear the Pain

It was one of those gob-smacked moments when you see something you have never seen clearly before.

An OA friend with whom I have a daily check-in wrote that she “needs abstinence to help stay present, so that I can bear the pain.” This had never occurred to me! I had thought that the most I could hope for was to gradually raise the ceiling on how much pain I could stand before I turn to using food!

So often I have not reached out for support before compulsive eating because (I have believed) I would then simply be left with my unbearable pain. But even though food numbs the pain (very briefly) it does not actually help me bear - or move through - it. It only adds to the suffering by piling on self-harm.

I know from my life experience that the only thing that has ever reliably worked for me to relieve suffering is coming back into felt connection with my Higher Power and truly turning it over. When I eat compulsively seeking help to bear the pain, I am cutting myself off from the very source of relief I need!

Two things happen when I eat compulsively to manage pain:

First, I'm cutting myself off from feeling comforted and held. I am allowing myself to be thrown back into the old childhood story that I am all alone with my suffering. I'm not. But God cannot comfort me if I do not turn to God, and I cannot turn to God while I am drugging myself into numbness.

Second, I'm cutting myself off from the guidance that I need, guidance which comes from “asking *only* for knowledge of God's will

for me and the power to carry it out.” I can't do that while I'm numbed out on food either. I am also forgetting what a vast relief it is (another recent realization!) to ask *ONLY* for knowledge of God's will for me and genuinely turn the rest over to God.

Yesterday, while the life of someone I dearly love hung in the balance of whether or not she is able to reach out for help, I recited to myself over and over, “I need my abstinence to help me stay God connected so God can help me bear the pain.” I stayed abstinent. I found a real measure of peace. I knew I was not alone.

Cat C.



Giving Away Fears Produces Remarkable Results

As a child, I had many fears. I had the usual kid fears of being scared of the dark, strangers, bugs, etc. Without consciously being aware of it as a child I also had fears of abandonment, not being loved, not being good enough, not being smart enough, being rejected, and taking a risk. As a child, I felt there was something wrong with me, that I was a mistake.

My inability to face my fears/feel my feelings contributed to my obsessive compulsive overeating. I have early memories of being a three- or four-year-old and eating until I was stuffed to the point of lying in bed in such physical pain I just wanted to die. That scenario became my way of life for decades. At that time, I had no idea I was overeating due to fears or other issues such as feelings of being tired, lonely, anxious, angry.

(continued on page seven)

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I knew at that young age food was filling a void I couldn't identify. I was a very chubby toddler, and for many decades, I was a morbidly obese, adult woman living in constant shame, guilt, and self-hatred. It was impossible to build friendships, be available to my husband or children because I was committed to my disease of compulsive overeating, although I loathed it. At that time, I didn't know another way.

Ten years ago I lost almost 100 pounds, but went into relapse more than three years ago, gaining half the weight back. I came out of relapse two years ago, but I am struggling to reach a healthy body weight.

My husband and I have been raising our almost six-year old granddaughter for the past four years. We are currently working to get custody of our granddaughter. She has supervised visits with each of her parents. It was so scary to take the risk to hire a lawyer and move forward with the process of getting custody. All of the "what ifs" marched to the front of my mind and shouted continuously in my head, giving me pounding headaches:

- What if I make my son angry?
- What if this drives my granddaughter's mother truly mad?
- What if they try to take our granddaughter from us?
- What if we don't have enough money to pay the lawyer?
- What if I tell my sponsor I'm sick of writing these inventories?
- What if I tell God how angry I am?
- What if my granddaughter hates me down the road for doing this?

Believe me, I had many more what ifs. Eventually I came to realize that I was self-absorbed with me and my fears.

I have had to keep reminding myself that getting custody of our granddaughter has

nothing to do with me. It has to do with an innocent child - an almost six-year-old child who needs someone to love her, care for her, advocate for her.

Through a lot of prayer, I have been able to face my fears with the help of my HP, my loving sponsor, and other OA friends. There were moments I just wanted to throw it all away and cave to the food. I was beyond scared and anxious. Thank God for constantly giving me one blessing after another so that I can keep putting my foot forward on the right path.

Sometimes it was a gut feeling that I'm doing what I'm supposed to be doing. Many times, I receive a call or text from my sponsor or OA friends or an outreach text from an OA member that is just what I need to hear. Sometimes this happens in a share at an OA meeting or when I am reading from my OA literature. It speaks directly to me.

My sponsor has kept me busy, suggesting I keep writing inventories of the numerous resentments and fears I have about our situation. I was willing to write because I could tell how sick my fears were making me, that I was in danger of relapse. As I wrote, it felt like toxins were purged from me. I wrote so much that I truly felt cleansed after I read them to my sponsor.

I used to hold onto a resentment/fear at least a couple of days. This usually led to a cyclone spinning in my head, twisting the story into the most incredible lies. The other day I didn't hesitate. I called my sponsor immediately when I became aware I was peeved at someone. In my twisted mind surely they meant to do me wrong, and in my head I was really giving them a piece of my mind. Within five minutes of talking to my sponsor I was praying to God and writing out the resentment and fear inventory. Then I shared with my sponsor.

(continued on page eight)

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The next day I couldn't even remember what I had been upset about. Apparently it is good for me to "promptly admit" when I am wrong.

I am grateful to have the Steps, a set of Tools, and for all of you, OA friends. God provides everything I need today.

Sue S.

Region 4 Dissolution News – From Our New Intergroup Chair

The final Region 4 Assembly was held virtually on Saturday, March 23. Our St. Louis Bi-State Area Intergroup was represented by Amy G. and me along with Cyndy L., one of our current World Service Business Conference representatives. Cyndy had taken on the Vice-Chair position for Region 4 during this transition period. Of course, the Region 4 board members were there and representatives from eight of the thirteen intergroups in the region. We learned that of those thirteen intergroups, seven are affiliating with Region 5 (including our Intergroup).

It was confirmed that 7th Tradition donations would no longer be accepted after March 31. The official date for joining new regions is June 1 and effective June 30 the Region 4 website will be taken down. Vital records of the region's history, including the dissolution process, will be housed through the World Service office. There will be two more virtual Community Conversations, April 21 and May 19.

Meg M., Region 4 Trustee Liaison, led a wonderful reflection in which we wrote and shared about major changes in our lives since coming to OA. Fellows spoke about physical ("buying clothes I like, not just the ones that fit"), emotional ("I'm not an angry person anymore" and "learning to stick up for

myself") and spiritual transformation ("actually have a prayer & meditation practice"). It was a bittersweet occasion, and I was grateful to be a participant.

So, we practice perseverance as our intergroup joins our Region 5 neighbors. Let's get to know them! One way we can all do that is to sign up for region emails at:

<https://www.region5oa.org/forms/sign-up-for-region-5-newsletters/>

In grateful service,
Eileen M.

St. Louis Bi-State Intergroup Chair



7th Tradition FAQ: Changes in How We Contribute to OA

Q1. Since Region 4 is ending, will they return my check?

A. YES! After March 31, donate to Region 5 instead.

Q2. How do I donate to OA directly? Or as a group treasurer?

A. Our Contribution Information page is for you! (***See page 10 of this newsletter***)

- See how to donate to Intergroup, Region, and World Service Office (WSO).
- For donating online, see links to each contribution section, and how to fill in the fields.
- For mailing checks, see payee and comment info, mailing address, and a link to which form to send with the check.

Q3. Where can I find these instructions if I forget they are in this newsletter?

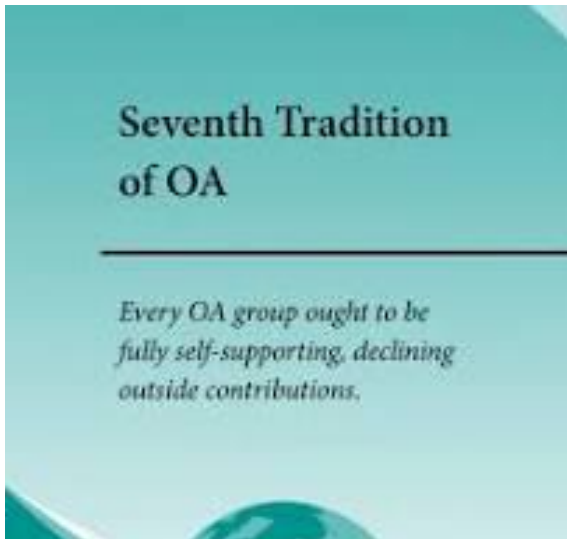
A. The "Documents and Forms" part of our website stlouisoa.org is in the home page box "Member and Intergroup Information."

(continued on page nine)

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- Look for “Contribution Information.”
- Note that documents change from time to time. Always find the most current version on stlouisoa.org.

Marina F, treasurer
Elizabeth C, vice-chair



October 13 – 1:30 p.m. - Intergroup meeting**

Note: There will be a Fall Retreat; details to be announced

November 10 – 1:30 p.m. - Intergroup meeting**

****Note:** Each Intergroup Meeting is 1:30-3 p.m. via Zoom. **The meeting number is 940 5580 8391. The password is: Serenity.** It's also possible to join by telephone: Dial-in: 312-626-6799, meeting ID 940 5580 8391, and password 75183374. Those in elected service positions and Intergroup Representatives are expected to attend. All other fellows are welcome.

For more **events** happening throughout the worldwide Fellowship, click [HERE](#).



April 20 – 9:30 a.m. - 12:30 p.m. - Recovery Event hosted by New Me and New Horizons - "Refresh, Renew, Recover" - See flyer on page 11

May 5 – 1:30 p.m. - Intergroup meeting**

June 9 – 1:30 p.m. - Intergroup meeting**

July 14 – 1:30 p.m. - Intergroup meeting**

September 8 – 1:30 p.m. - Intergroup meeting**

ARTICLES FOR THE NEXT NEWSLETTER ARE DUE BY April 20, 2024. 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.

Contribution Information

Donating to our intergroup (09029), to OA, Inc.(World Service), and to Region 5.
OA guidelines suggest groups distribute 60% to Intergroup, 30% to World Service & 10% to Region.

ONLINE DONATIONS

The hyperlinks below will take you directly to the donation page of each website.

Note: enter the 5-digit OA group number if donating on behalf of an OA group.

St. Louis Bi-State Area Intergroup (60%): <https://stlouisoa.org/?product=7th-tradition>

OA World Service Office (30%): <https://oa.org/contribute/>

Region 5 (10%): <https://oaregion5.regfox.com/region-5-7th-tradition-campaign>

DONATIONS BY CHECK

Note: put the 5-digit group number in the comment line if donating on behalf of an OA group.

Send the appropriate contribution form along with the check.

St. Louis Bi-State Intergroup (60%)	OA World Service Office (30%)	Region 5 (10%)
<p><u>Make check payable to:</u> St. Louis Bi-State Area IG</p> <p><u>Mailing Address:</u> St. Louis Bi-State Area IG P.O. Box 28882 St. Louis, MO 63123-0082</p> <p><u>Contribution form:</u> https://stlouisoa.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/Group-Contribution-Form27.pdf</p>	<p><u>Make check payable to:</u> World Service Office</p> <p><u>Mailing Address:</u> World Service Office PO Box 44727 Rio Rancho, NM 87174-4727</p> <p><u>Contribution form:</u> https://oa.org/mail-in-contribution-form/</p>	<p><u>Make check payable to:</u> Region 5</p> <p><u>Mailing Address:</u> Region 5 Overeaters Anonymous P.O. Box 221224 Shaker Heights, Ohio 44122</p> <p><u>Contribution form:</u> https://www.region5oa.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/B09_Region-5-2023-Spring-Assembly-Updated-Contribution-Form2023.pdf</p>

Revised March 2024



Refresh **Renew** **Recover**
The Steps Our Commitment Our Abstinence

 **OVEREATERS ANONYMOUS**[®]
ST. LOUIS BI-STATE INTERGROUP

Where and When
Saturday April 20, 2024
9:30A - 12:30P
Registration Begins at 9A
Concord Trinity United Methodist Church
5275 South Lindbergh Blvd,
St. Louis, MO 63126
(Between Gravois and Tesson Ferry)
ADA Accessible Building and Parking with Elevator

Suggested Donation: \$7
Cash or Check
Please don't stay away from any OA event because of financial reasons.



Oasis Table and Literature Provided by New Horizons

Questions?
Call or Text Marilyn F
314-401-2552
(leave voicemail if no answer)

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New Me and New Horizons