

May 2026 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



Spiritual Principle: Integrity

STEP FIVE

Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.

Seeing My Part

When I arrived in OA, I was full of anger, resentment, blame, guilt, and a lot of other negative emotions. When someone did a “wrong” to me, it was his or her fault and never mine. Everything that happened to me was not my fault.

Life wasn’t good to me; I was always the innocent person being hurt. When I found out that in Step Five I had to look at my part in the pattern, I was confused. I wasn’t responsible for people treating me badly and doing the wrong thing; I had no part in what they did to me.

(continued on page two)

NEWCOMER’S CORNER: Step Into Our Welcome Room

Did you know that the OA.org website has been refreshed and has many new features? One of these is a Virtual Welcome Room. This webpage is an interactive document found in the Document Library where newcomers and OA members may find essential information about Overeaters Anonymous in a visual format.

For example, the Virtual Welcome Room includes clickable OA items that take the user to OA web pages for more information.

Among items you may explore are:

- The OA Quiz (which can help you assess whether OA is right for you and your compulsive eating issues);
- The **Lifeline** blog (a magazine of recovery literature written for and by our members);
- OA-approved literature, pamphlets, books, and more; and
- The Twelve Steps and Traditions of Overeaters Anonymous.

When visiting an OA meeting for the first time, a newcomer will usually be invited to talk with an experienced member or a small welcome committee after the meeting ends. Some meetings may also invite you to look at the website together and use this Welcome Room to help you know about resources that are available to support your recovery from compulsive overeating.

Newcomer, keep coming back! It works when you work it, and you’re worth it!

(continued from page one)

My sponsor helped me work that Fifth Step. I looked carefully and saw selfishness, self-centeredness, dishonesty, and other character defects. At the end of my work, I felt so much lighter and freer. As the promises state: "We will not regret the past nor wish to shut the door on it" ([Alcoholics Anonymous](#), 4th ed., p. 83).

Afterward at meetings, I kept sharing about how much that Step meant to me. It taught me so much about myself. I had been blind to my defects. Through this process I learned to accept and love myself for who I am, not a bad person but a very sick person recovering in this program.

Step Five has helped me find natural happiness – I used to rely on others to make me happy and felt resentful if they did not fulfill my expectations. Now I have a great big smile on my face and just want to bounce all the time like a bubbly cartoon character.

Now when I feel angry or resentful at a person or situation, I sit down and ask myself what my part is. I have a very honest HP who never fails to let me know. Then I can make amends if I need to. If I have trouble letting go, I turn to page 417 of the **Big Book** and read about acceptance. Until I accept everything as it is and not how I want it to be, I have to keep praying to my HP for acceptance. I can't change anyone except myself.

I have worked all Twelve Steps now, and I still maintain that Step Five was the best Step I ever worked. It was a real eye-opener to the true me. It also gave me freedom, peace, and serenity. I can let go of the past and live in each minute of the day, enjoying life to the fullest.

Julie B.
Adelaide, South Australia
[Lifeline, June 14, 2016](#)

A Member's Experience, Strength, And Hope with Step Five:

We Are Only as Sick As Our Secrets

The AA **Big Book** tells us on page 73 that "More than most people, the alcoholic leads a double life. He is very much the actor. To the outer world he presents his stage character. This is the one he likes his fellows to see. He wants to enjoy a certain reputation, but knows in his heart he doesn't deserve it."

I was very much like this when I came into OA in 2010. I had a wide variety of personas that I would put on depending on the situation in which I found myself. I was not consciously aware of this, not until OA, but it played a part in every area of my life. I acted like what I thought a wife/sister/daughter/ friend/ employee/mom/lady in a minivan/ person at a fair/mom out shopping SHOULD be. I was never just me – not anywhere in my life.

I had no idea who I was. I felt constant tension. Would my worlds collide? Would someone catch me being some way they had never seen me before? My behavior out in the world consisted of being who I thought other people wanted me to be, so I made sure all encounters would be over quickly. Then I could isolate and eat.

Because of this compartmentalization, I always had too much to do (more pressure), impossible deadlines (loved the drama and the victim story), and was never ever able to focus on myself (justification). Everything provided a reason to eat. Step Two in the **OA Twelve & Twelve** addresses this on page 11: "*Too much of the time we had lived in fear and anxiety. More comfortable with food than with people, we sometimes limited our social lives. We closed the curtains, stopped answering the phone, and hid in the house.*"

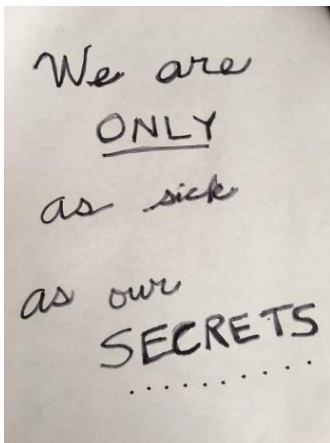
(continued on page three)

(continued from page two)

Then I found a sponsor and began working the Steps. It took me a couple of times before I found someone with whom I was comfortable. Once I started, I did fine right up to Step Four. Then the real procrastination began.

I couldn't answer all those questions! What would she think of me?? I wallowed in fear and anxiety. Then we set a date to meet for the Fifth Step. OMG. I would actually have to do the Fourth Step! I had put it off and put it off, lying to my sponsor that I was doing it. She knew, she had to know, and with hindsight, I can now see that her gentle encouragement to find a date, get my train ticket, make hotel reservations, etc. was exactly what I needed.

I took the number of days until my trip, counted the questions, divided them up by the days left minus 1, and finally set to work. For three solid weeks all I did was answer questions and cry. I HAD to save face; my reputation was on the line.



On the day we were to meet in Kansas City, I went to the Kirkwood (Missouri) rail station and boarded the train. I was sick with anxiety. What had I gotten myself into? Was I really going to read all the secrets, all the shame, all the guilt, all the trauma to another human being? Yes, I was.

In this moment I found my fledgling integrity. The **Oxford Dictionary** says Integrity has two possible definitions: **1. The quality of being honest and having strong moral principles; moral uprightness; and 2. The state of being whole and undivided.**

For once I had finally given my word, and I had kept it. Nothing was left unanswered; nothing was left unfinished. I had been honest. Searching? Check. Fearless? Well, probably still fearful, but with courage I truly didn't know I had, I had done it.

Over the course of the many hours during which I gave away that first Fifth Step, my sponsor was unfailingly kind, exceedingly fair, and very gentle. She would suggest that in one area perhaps I was being too hard on myself and give me examples from her experience. In another area, she would ask questions and help me see things in a different light. Giving away my secrets to another human and having that human reflect love, acceptance, and hope to me was life-changing. I learned to separate what was my responsibility (my own actions only) and what was not (anyone else's behaviors, problems, drama, life).


Just recently, I had the honor of hearing a sponsee's Fifth Step. Because I had been accepted, I was accepting. Because I had been shown kindness and understanding, I could be kind and understanding. Because I had been guided to see what was on my side of the street, I was able to offer suggestions that allowed my sponsee to do so as well. When we give away our secrets, we lose more than weight. We gain a clearer understanding of who we are. From this point we learn to make better choices, no longer weighed down by all our secrets. "*We are neither cocky, nor are we afraid*" (page 85, Tenth Step promises, **Big Book**).

Melanie T
St. Louis



TRADITION FIVE

Each group has but one primary purpose — to carry its message to the compulsive overeater who still suffers.



We work the Twelve Steps in order, from Step One to Step Twelve. The Twelve Traditions, however, are not written in any particular order. They are a set of spiritual principles which represent the experienced wisdom of OA groups on how OA groups govern themselves. They also are not rules. They are traditions based on experience, guidelines for the spiritual life of OA groups.

Tradition Five is at the heart of all the other Traditions. It applies to all OA service bodies, from individual groups to the World Service Business Conference. Each one of those groups exists for one primary purpose—to carry its message to the compulsive eater who still suffers.

What is the message? There is only one message. It is found in Step Twelve: *"Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these Steps, we tried to carry this message to compulsive overeaters."* **Working the Twelve Steps results in a spiritual awakening.**

What is a spiritual awakening? Step Two spells that out. It is the state of being restored to sanity.

And what does sanity mean? It means that we are sane about our addiction. We are not tempted to indulge in compulsive eating behaviors and foods. We do not want to return to that which has caused us so much grief. We can watch others do things and

indulge in things with complete indifference: ***Why would we indulge in those things if it meant we would return to our horrible compulsive eating addiction?***

Each individual member of OA, therefore, ***must*** carry their message of recovering their sanity through working the Twelve Steps of Overeaters Anonymous. There are many reasons we must do this, but it is an absolute must.

OA was formed in order to help each individual carry their message. Each group within OA is formed in order to help each individual carry their message. An OA group is not an end-in-itself. It is a medium for each individual to fulfill their Step Twelve obligations. The message of each group is to carry a message of recovery to those who still suffer from our addiction. Our meetings should therefore focus on recovery through the Steps, and on those who still suffer. Do our meetings do that? When a newcomer comes, does the meeting make certain that newcomers know about the Steps and the hope of recovery from our addiction? Do we have sponsors available for those who still suffer? Do our meetings focus on the solution to our addiction rather than our problems?

To reemphasize the importance of Tradition Five, our World Service Business Conference Policy Manual (2005c, amended 2017) requires, in part, that: ***All submissions of proposed New Business Motions, policy motions, and/or amendments to [Subpart B](#) of the Overeaters Anonymous, Inc. Bylaws shall include..... f) an explanation of how this motion will help carry the message of recovery to those who still suffer.***

OA suffers, at times, from members who interpret the Traditions as **RULES** and are certain about how to interpret those "rules."
(continued on page five)

(continued from page four)

Their certainty can affect other members who might have some hesitation or different interpretation. This sometimes results in division within groups about issues that are not really essential to carrying the message of recovery to those who still suffer. In fact, sometimes those divisions can make members who are still suffering feel so uncomfortable that they leave the rooms.

What if we focused on our primary purpose when we interpreted the Traditions? When asking ourselves whether an action “breaks Traditions,” what if we took a moment to remember that Traditions are guides, not rules? What if we then asked ourselves the simple question: “Does this action help or hurt our primary purpose – to carry the message of recovery to those who still suffer?” Instead of arguing about what the Tradition says, we could be discussing our primary purpose in a spiritual way.

Anonymous



Intergroup Chair’s Column: OA Is in Bloom!

This lovely spring weather is such a pleasure, a time of renewal and growth. OA is also in an exciting time of revitalization.

I hadn’t been to our World Service website OA.org much in the early part of this year. Thankfully due to the **WSO Monthly Bulletin** that appears in my inbox each month, I

learned about a couple of wonderful new developments.

As of April 17, OA.org has undergone a major redesign and looks fantastic. According to the announcement: *“After years of planning, development, and the dedicated volunteer effort that makes Overeaters Anonymous so remarkable, we are proud to announce the launch of our completely updated OA.org website. This is not a small refresh...and we think you’re going to love what you see.”*

We now have a Virtual Welcome Room created to help newcomers learn about the program. It looks like a cozy living room and in it are links to the 12 Steps, 12 Traditions and 12 Concepts, to the OA Responsibility Pledge, and to the OA Promise. Visitors can click to Take the OA Quiz, to Find a Meeting, and to see OA’s worldwide region map. Search “Virtual Welcome Room” at OA.org (or use [THIS LINK](#)) and take a tour.

I especially appreciate the recognition offered for the massive amount of service it has taken to make all this happen. I’m so proud of our fellowship, to be learning and growing together.

Our next Intergroup meeting is on Sunday, May 17, at 1:30 p.m. Check page nine of this newsletter for details, and please join us. Visitors are always welcome!

In grateful service,
Eileen M., Intergroup Chair

Editor’s Note: There’s more about the Virtual Welcome Room webpage in the Newcomers Corner column on page one of this newsletter. It’s such an important new resource that we wanted to draw your attention to it in more than one way this month!

Member Joins Committee Following Progress Made at Retreat

I have been coming to OA since February 1997 which is half my life. Back then, we had Super Saturdays every month along with a Spring Convention and a Fall Retreat. Everything changed with COVID in 2020. The only things that we can count on now are a few Super Saturdays and a Fall Retreat.

In the Fall of 2024, my life had become unmanageable, and I was in the throes of compulsive overeating. I knew that I had to go to the Fall Retreat for three reasons. 1) I was into the food. 2) I needed to be honest with fellow OA members about what I was doing with food. 3) The topic of the retreat – ***Are We NUTS? Not Using the Slogans*** – was awesome.

One of the many things that I learned that weekend was the slogan “Not My Food.” I used it several times that week when I went to the conference room in my workplace where tons of food was on the table. It was very helpful. After the retreat I got a sponsor and started working the 12-step green workbook with other compulsive overeaters.

This year I am on the committee for Fall Retreat. Our theme is ***“Rooted in Spiritual Principles.”*** Here are three principles that we will be experiencing at the retreat:

- **Spiritual Awareness** – attending the two-way prayer workshop.
- **Honesty** – sharing our experience, strength, and hope with fellows who understand.
- **Love for others** – hearing encouraging words with the whisper walk.

If you want to know or learn more about the principles, please join us at Toddhall Retreat Center Sept. 25-27. (See flyer on page 11.)

In service,
Ellen W.

How My Fear of Making Mistakes Has Changed as I Recover

All my life, I’ve been paralyzed by the fear of making mistakes. I was raised by my mother who was a perfectionist, judgmental, and critical, and she thoroughly inspected every task I performed (or at least that’s how I remember it).

The first thing I noticed in my later years of growing up was how often my mother did not do things, even things that needed to be done. Her mantra was: *“Never do a job unless you do it right.”* Decades later I developed a replacement belief: *“The best person to do a job is the one who is willing to do it.”* Me coming to believe that made a huge difference for me, but the fear of making mistakes was still very powerful in my life.

When I first entered the program, I said what the program teaches: *“God’s will, not mine, be done.”* Then, I read in the ***Big Book***, page 53, *“... either God is everything or else He is nothing.”* In my own words, that meant that he’s either all powerful and in total control of everything, or he’s not God at all. Theoretically, I affirmed that, but what I actually believed was that I had the power to mess things up with my mistakes; otherwise, why would I be so afraid of them?

When I came to truly believe that God was God and I was not, I changed the saying to ***“God’s will WILL be done.”*** Then, I grew some more in the program, and I started living in the present rather than the past or future. That’s when I made another change to the saying which is ***“God’s will IS being done.”***

That unlocked a new thought – that there is actually no such thing as a mistake. Isn’t the word “mistake” just an opinion word? It has to be! One person says, “That’s a mistake.” The
(continued on page seven)

(continued from page six)

next person says, “No, that wasn’t a mistake at all.” If “mistake” is an opinion word, whose opinion am I following? Whether mine or someone else’s, it’s a human opinion.

Does God have the opinion that something is a mistake? How can a God who is all powerful and in total control of everything be viewing (as an opinion) something as being a mistake in a world of his sovereignty?

Most of the time, what I consider a mistake is actually negative consequences. I don’t like to suffer, have loss, experience pain, and be tormented with guilt, shame, and remorse. It’s those consequences that I judge as bad.

Mistakes are only in our world, in our opinion, not God’s. I do a job incorrectly and must do it three times to get it right. Mistake? No, that’s a lesson in determination and perseverance. I mess up paying too much money for something. Mistake? No, that’s a lesson in not living in fear of financial hardship and being financially helpful to a neighbor. I get fired for being late too often. Mistake? No, that’s a lesson in punctuality and being a dependable considerate laborer. I lose a friend because I gossiped about her. Mistake? No, that’s a lesson in valuing friendship and guarding the reputation of others.

God uses my mistakes to grow me. They are the fertile ground to move me forward to change for the better. Do I not want to grow? Do I not want to become a better person? Do I not want to please God more with my life? So why am I fearing these events, viewing them as mistakes, when I can view them as opportunities for my progress?

When I turn my will and life over to the care of God, I’m no longer living in my own self-centered, self-preserving, self-pleasing camp, and I am now living in God’s world. His will is being done in everything that happens today,

and in his camp, there is no opinion of something being a mistake because he uses everything that is happening today for my good and the good of those around me.

So, here’s the latest new way I say it: **“What I used to call mistakes are actually what God uses to grow me.”**

Anonymous



Two Service Positions I Highly Recommend

At the end of 2026, I will conclude my rotation of service as newsletter editor, so I hope you will prayerfully consider whether this is a position for which you might apply. This has been my favorite service position since joining OA in 2010. Because I was a journalism major as a community college student, it was right up my alley, but my gratitude for having held this position is about far more than that.

My service as newsletter editor began during the early days of the COVID-19 pandemic. Since we could not meet in person for many months, our Intergroup decided we should expand the newsletter to offer more support to our members since we would not be printing it for distribution. In the “old days,” we had a goal of holding the newsletter to four

(continued on page eight)

(continued from page seven)

pages to keep costs low. (We also paid for an office at the time, and it felt like money was always short.) If we had flyers for recovery events, letters from World Service, etc., we had a stuffing party and inserted them in the newsletter.

Along with the members of the Intergroup Board of Trustees who suggested going to a longer format, I came to see how our newsletter was a wonderful “Twelfth Step Within” resource. It offered support to still-suffering compulsive eaters in our fellowship and expanded the lifeboat for every person in recovery in our meetings. It was clear to me that the newsletter helped keep me in the lifeboat while I was also firmly grasping the sometimes still wet hands of the people next to me. (Sometimes it was my hands that were wet, not theirs!)



Being newsletter editor strengthened my recovery. Due to my duties, each month I read at least one article about the Step and Tradition of the month. This allowed me to learn from the experience, strength, and hope that members of our Intergroup and the wider fellowship freely shared. Often their suggestions were worth trying. At times, their raw honesty caused me to become determined to kick my own up a notch.

Sometimes a writer would “break” a Tradition by how they stated something; for example, they might appear to be praising or condemning a particular religion – which Tradition 10 reminds us is an outside issue. This helped me think about my own language about outside issues. It also gave me a chance to work with the writer on how to carry the message while reducing the risk that a reader might feel insulted or assume

OA is only for “certain people.” Thinking through these writing challenges kept me from being “a mental loafer” (to borrow a phrase from our ***Just for Today*** pamphlet). It’s been a wonderful experience being the newsletter editor, and I’ll be glad to have you shadow me for the rest of this year if you’d like to have some practice in the tasks involved. You can reach me by texting 314-775-3261 if you’d like to ask questions or discuss this. Find the application on our Intergroup website at [THIS LINK](#).

At the November Business Conference in 2026, I plan to offer my application as a candidate to serve as a Region 5 Representative. I previously served as a Region Representative when we were part of Region 4, and this was also a wonderful experience, so I am anxious to try this again in a different regional setting.

Here are some things I particularly enjoyed about service as a Region Representative:

I was able to travel to Manitoba (in Canada), Minnesota, Iowa, and South Dakota for Region Assemblies. This gave me a chance to meet members of the fellowship face-to-face who had experiences both like and very different from mine. For example, I met members who had to drive more than an hour or two to reach a meeting because of the very rural area in which they lived. This allowed me to count my blessings as a person who can find a meeting near me most days and meet an OA friend for coffee within five minutes of my home on the other days.

Often our regional gatherings were timed to coincide with recovery events hosted by an Intergroup or with a Regional Convention. This allowed me to participate in a full day or more of speakers and panels, workshops, literature-table browsing, and even talent shows, skits, and dances with my OA fellows. As one of the Region 4 chairs used to say,

continued on page nine)

(continued from page eight)

“OA puts the FUN in dysFUNctional.”

Traveling to and from regional events also gave me a chance to build strong ties to the other OA representatives from our Intergroup. Sometimes we traveled together in a rented car. Sometimes we booked the same flights. Often, we shared a room to reduce expenses to our Intergroup. Some of my closest OA friendships originated in sharing service at the Region level. I also learned a lot that’s been helpful about staying abstinent when traveling.

Due to the number of meetings that we have, the St. Louis Bi-State Intergroup may have **three** Region Representatives. I hope you’ll consider joining me in applying to offer this service. The term of service is two years, and the qualifications for service are on the application which may be found [HERE](#). I welcome any questions you have about this position, and I’m sure others who have served will be glad to speak with you as well. I can help you connect to these wonderful OA fellows.

In gratitude for recovery,
J-MO



May 17 – 1:30 p.m. – Intergroup meeting**

June 1 – Deadline for submissions to the Secular Reader Project (see page 10)

June 7 – 1:30 p.m. – Intergroup meeting**

July 12 – 1:30 p.m. – Intergroup meeting**

September 13 – 1:30 p.m. – Intergroup meeting**

September 25-27 – Fall Retreat – “**Rooted in Spiritual Principles**” – at Toddhall Retreat Center, Columbia, IL (see page 11)

October 11 – 1:30 p.m. – Intergroup meeting**

November 8 – 1:30 p.m. – Intergroup meeting and Annual Business Conference**

****Note:** Each Intergroup Meeting is 1:30-3:00 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 are welcome.

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

ARTICLES FOR THE NEXT NEWSLETTER ARE DUE BY May 20, 2026. Please send your submissions to the **OA TODAY** Editor c/o info@stlouisoa.org or mail them to St. Louis Bi-State Area Intergroup, P.O. 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.



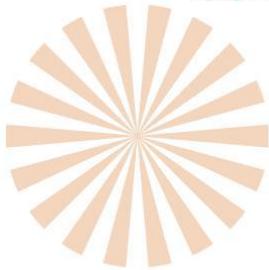
CALL FOR SHORT STORIES FOR OA'S NEW DAILY READER!

Hey there! We're excited to create a new daily reader that reflects the wide range of beliefs in our OA community. If you come from a secular or non-traditional background—whatever that means to you—we'd love to hear your voice.

We want to create something that can inspire anyone, regardless of belief or non-belief. Share a meaningful quote from OA literature and let us know how it supports your recovery journey in your own words. Just keep it under **two type-written pages** and **leave out any religious references**, and you're all set.

We can't wait to see what you contribute!

**SUBMIT VIA JOTFORM BY
JUNE 1, 2026:**



<https://form.jotform.com/220035565825050>

Please note: Submissions are assumed intended for publication, are edited for length and clarity, become the property of OA, Inc., and will not be returned. All languages welcome!

Rooted in Spiritual Principles

St. Louis Bi-State Area Intergroup of Overeaters Anonymous

2026 Fall Retreat

Dates: Sept 25 - 27, 2026
Check in: 4pm Sept 25
Check out: 11am Sept 27

Location: Toddhall Retreat Center
320 Todd Center Dr
Columbia, IL 62236

Included with Registration

- MEALS: 5 meals (Refrigerator/microwave available if you prefer to bring your meals.)
- ROOMS: Single or double occupancy with 2 ADA compliant double rooms
All rooms have a private bathroom with shower - linens, towels, soap, and shampoo are included.
- TENTATIVE ACTIVITIES: session topics on the spiritual principles, two-way prayer workshop, and transforming our lives through the 12 Steps. Other possible activities are evening bonfire release ceremony, morning meditation, whisper walk, yoga, games, journaling, fellowship and more!

ADVANCED REGISTRATION REQUIRED - Two ways to register:

ONLINE at stlouisoa.org or MAIL the form below with check to the Intergroup treasurer: Julie J., 5124 Deerfield Circle Dr. Apt 4, St. Louis, MO 63128.

Make checks payable to St. Louis Bi-State Area Intergroup.

For financial assistance from the We Care Fund, please contact Julie J. at grateful100x@gmail.com. No one should stay away for financial reasons!

QUESTIONS? Contact Mary C. (913)406-5010 or Pat M. (314)581-9960

First name: _____ Last name: _____

Email: _____ Telephone: _____

Emergency Contact: _____ Telephone: _____

Early Bird Registration by June 20, 2026 (Price is per person):

- single \$272 (limited availability)
 double* \$210 ADA room needed

Regular Registration from June 21 - Aug 20, 2026 (Price is per person):

- single \$287 (limited availability)
 double* \$225 ADA room needed
 Saturday only (includes lunch & dinner) \$100 (limited availability)

*Name of roommate: _____ (must register separately)

**If you do not specify a roommate, one will be assigned.*

Optional We Care Fund donation: \$ _____

Are you willing to do service to be on the outreach list of participants?

Registration fees are non refundable