

## **Inside Al-Anon Family Groups**

### **Celebrating Our Service Gifts**

Growing up in a Hispanic home affected by alcoholism, leadership was, at best, elusive. The louder, raging voice ruling with fear and control was the means for leading. I became a good people-pleaser, but I balked at any direction, and I froze at the thought of initiating anything. I rejected these things in my upbringing, believing they were simply a part of my culture.

I visited a couple of Al-Anon meetings at the urging of professionals when in crisis, but at the time, there were many other issues drowning out my patience and trust. I had the ongoing voice of the untreated disease dictating my self-esteem, and I had quite a few socioeconomic barriers blurring my vision. I looked at the [Steps](#) and [Traditions](#) hanging in the rooms and asked condescendingly how these things would help me pay my bills, find a healthy relationship, or improve my life.

Thankfully, my Sponsor recognized how badly I needed to “Keep Coming Back” and asked me to be of service. She asked me to help interpret at our District meeting for a couple of Spanish-speaking groups that wanted to learn about the links of service. As I started my Steps, I began to see that good personal leadership began with admitting to God, to myself, and to another human being the exact nature of my wrongs. Never had I had such a framework of accountability and loving support—things I yearned for in my upbringing. One meeting at a time, one service commitment at a time, I began to show up. I showed up for myself, for my group, and our District.

When my father came up on my list of amends, I was angry. I needed to start a fresh relationship by not dwelling on what he did not provide and being grateful for what he *did* provide. Not only would I have to communicate this, but I would also have to do it in my native language, which required more vulnerability than I felt willing to show him at the time. I was angry because I’d have to use language that he never used with me. I was

furious because I had to “Let It Begin with Me.” But the God of my understanding prepared me. The experience interpreting at our District meetings gave me more than enough willingness to thank my father for what he had provided for me, and, in doing so, I closed the distance between us.

Imagine my surprise when the God of my understanding nudged me to stand next for the position of Spanish Area Coordinator. I thought that surely if they knew who I was, they would not want me to serve them. But the God of my understanding wasn’t only interested in restoring me to sanity; it was interested in restoring all the qualities that made me uniquely me, such as my language and culture, so that I may fully show up in all my relationships. Having built on my foundation of accountability and support, we helped connect our Spanish-speaking groups to our links of service and created a second District where this participation and support has continued.

In September, various campaigns in the US celebrate the contributions made by Hispanic and Latino cultures. Reflecting on my own journey, I can share that the disease of alcoholism does not discriminate, and it often escalates in communities where there may not be access to information about Al-Anon. Having representation and support in these areas can help open the doors to the help, hope, and healing that Al-Anon can offer. As I continue to serve, I am honored to be part of the trilingual Al-Anon magazine offerings, which include [\*The Forum\*](#), [\*Le lien\*](#), and [\*En acción\*](#).

In 1969, there were only three Spanish-speaking groups registered in the United States, and 160 groups registered in countries such as Mexico, El Salvador, Costa Rica, Spain, and Argentina. Today, there are approximately 568 face-to-face Spanish-speaking groups with 952 Spanish-speaking meetings and 125 electronic groups with 335 meetings in the [World Service Conference](#) Structure. Based on the information currently available, there are approximately 3,291 Spanish-speaking groups worldwide.

I believe there are as many characteristics of God as there are people, and I look forward to each sharing contributed to our magazines, especially from those who speak languages we would typically not hear from. I am often oblivious to the gifts my Higher Power has curated for me, and I am even more blind to the skills and abilities I foster when I “Let It Begin with Me.” Still, thanks to the spiritual muscle of service, I am only limited by my willingness to participate, and I have come to bask in immense gratitude for this growing spiritual intelligence that enriches my recovery.

*By Elizabeth M-R., Magazine Editor*

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