

## Poem

### Paper Monster

Is it because my Great  
Depression-era parents  
seemed to never throw  
anything away?

Is it because I've always  
had a poor memory,  
so I always wrote  
everything down,  
never throwing a paper  
away?

Is it because in my career  
as a secretary  
I wrote dictation all day?

Is it because my least  
favorite task at work  
was filing every day?

(See "[Poem](#)," page 3)

## Decluttering During the Pandemic

Well, it all started during the pandemic in the year of 2020. Shelter in, stay home, stay in...yes, here I was sheltered in with all my clutter! Living alone, isolated with no one else except myself and all my things. COVID-19, they were calling it...so, I wrote a saying for it:

**C**learing  
**O**ut  
**V**arious  
**I**tems  
**D**aily  
**19** things a day



This was fun! I was creative enough to write a mnemonic for the virus. Now, was I energetic enough to clear out various items, and could I fill a bag with 19 things per day to donate? It seemed simple enough; and I sure had the time now that the whole world, it seemed, was told to stay home—and I might as well make good use of this time. This was before I even heard of CLA. I was not aware that a program for clutterers was even in existence. So, with my own self-will, I

(See "[Decluttering During the Pandemic](#)," page 2)

## When Is Enough Enough?

I heard a CLA member present a question for discussion: "How do I know how much is enough?" What a great topic! That question baffled me for weeks. I trusted that if I could answer that question for me, it would help my recovery in CLA.

What is enough? Is saving only thirty empty yogurt containers enough? After all, I did get rid of some. And most of these match, and I have the lids for all of them. Is that enough?

How do I know that I have done enough decluttering actions each day? Is five minutes enough? What about the times I work hard for hours when I am participating in a CLA declutterthon. Is that enough? How many, how much, when will I know, and how will I know?

I struggle with anxiety, shame, and isolation due to my cluttering. My true self is buried beneath the stacks and piles of stuff, but I am afraid to look. Eager to learn the Tools of the CLA program and take the Steps of recovery, I come to meetings with an open mind. I share about the embarrassment and pain of being a clutterer. In CLA, I learn I am not alone.

I struggle with letting go of the objects with which I have surrounded myself because they have been filling a huge, empty hole inside me. Until I face the deep meaning of my cluttering, I will never feel that I am enough. I will never feel that I deserve to live a clutter-free life. I will continue to surround myself with things, to build that wall, to keep people out, to try to numb the pain that led me to CLA. I may make progress, but I will continue to clutter, physically and mentally, because I have not admitted that I am truly powerless over this disease

(See "[When Is Enough Enough?](#)," page 3)

## Inside This Issue

- 1 [Poem  
Decluttering  
Enough](#)
- 2 [CLArity Box  
News Flash](#)
- 3 [My CLA Toolbox](#)
- 4 [Group Stories  
Letter from the Chair](#)
- 5 [My Favorite Saying  
7th Tradition  
About WSO](#)
- 6 [Puzzle](#)
- 7 [Cartoon](#)
- 8 [Intergroup News  
Convention News  
In Appreciation  
Welcome to CLArity](#)

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### Decluttering During the Pandemic


*(continued from page 1)*

gathered up 19 things per day and put them in bags to donate. Some days I was either busy (staying at home) or didn't feel the energy to declutter again, so I would see how many things I could collect to donate in 19 minutes. It was a great goal, and it kept me busy...until I tried to donate the items! Everything was shut down. No one was accepting donations. The agencies that usually sent trucks to pick up donations weren't in operation, and I was tripping over bags filled with 19 things each to donate.

As any clutterer would do, I started rethinking some of the things and taking them back out of the donation bags...if only I had known about CLA phone meetings at the time!

But now I do, and I'm sharing my mnemonic with you to challenge yourself to this goal: Set a timer for 20 minutes (easier to set than 19), see if you can fill a bag with 19 things (don't second-guess the items), and put it in your car right away to donate! Or don't set a timer, and just make a goal that for the rest of

this pandemic you'll donate or throw away 19 things per day. That's doing something positive during a very trying time; and, prayerfully, this pandemic will be over soon. Happy decluttering!

Cathy C., NJ 

## CLArity Box

*I hear people talking in meetings about the "completion cycle." What is it?*

*Curious in Connecticut*

Dear Curious,

There are four parts to the completion cycle: get it, use it, clean it if necessary, and put it away. Not finishing the cycle is often a big contributor to clutter. Procrastination is often a factor in this.

*(See "CLArity Box," page 5)*

## News Flash


### WSO

- Elections for officers of the Clutterers Anonymous World Service Organization (WSO) were held on March 26, 2022. For a list of officers elected, see "About WSO" on page 5.
- A mistake was made on the official name of WSO with the State of New Jersey and the IRS when it was first incorporated. The name has been officially changed to Clutterers Anonymous World Service Organization, Inc., which is a more accurate rendering.
- All meetings (recovery groups, business meetings, activity sessions, and special events) are listed on the CLA website calendar. To find a meeting, go to [ClutterersAnonymous.org/meetings/calendar-of-all-events](https://ClutterersAnonymous.org/meetings/calendar-of-all-events). Select the toggle for "meeting type," and then select the category of your meeting. Scroll down to the calendar, which will list all events in that category, along with dates and times and access information. If you have information on a meeting, send an email to [IT@ClutterersAnonymous.org](mailto:IT@ClutterersAnonymous.org).

### Phone Groups

- Five declutterthons per year have been tentatively scheduled for January, Memorial Day, Fourth of July, Labor Day, and Thanksgiving—although they will not be named after American holidays. Due to recent problems with an intruder on the phone lines, declutterthon contact information will no longer be included on the CLA website.

### CLA-East

- The latest Clutter-Free Day was held via phone on May 14, 2022. Check the Fall 2022 issue of CLArity for an article about the Clutter-Free Day. 

CLArity is produced entirely by members for the CLA Fellowship, upholding all 12 Traditions. Names on articles submitted will be withheld upon request, and only first names and last initials or pseudonyms are ever used.

MD denotes the state of Maryland, not medical doctor.

**When Is Enough Enough?** (continued from page 1)

and that a healthy, open relationship with a loving Power greater than me is necessary if I am to find relief.

It turns out that the idea of "enough" is not about the stuff; it is about me. It is about my insides, my self-condemnation, my shame, my deep feeling that I am not enough. Although I still need to find my way though my physical clutter, I realize that my progress will be hampered until I can face and accept that I have a disease over which I am powerless and that the Steps of CLA are the key to my recovery.

I am worth more than a bunch of now neatly-stacked matching yogurt containers. Until I face my own emptiness and hang onto the CLA program like my sanity depends upon it, and it does, those empty yogurt containers will remain a symbol of the way I feel inside; and I will never know anything about enough.

Leah C., CA 🗳️

**Poem** (continued from page 1)

Is it because when I have an inspiration for a poem  
or a story that I grab the first napkin or paper  
I see?

Is it because I write down everything I do all day  
because I'm a little OCD?

Is it because I have a hard time focusing  
because I'm a little ADD?

Or is it all the above reasons why my paper clutter monster  
keeps growing and growing? OMG!

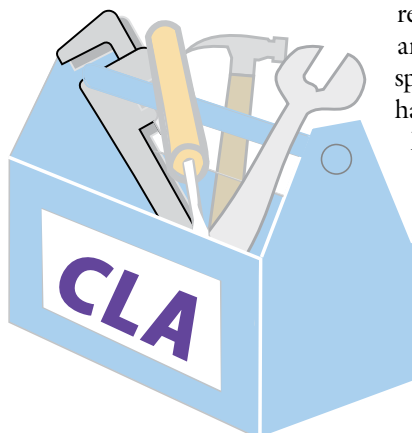
Ruth, FL 🗳️

## My CLA Toolbox—Sponsorship

CLA is a relatively young 12-Step program—33 years old. When I first came into CLA, there were very few sponsors. There may have been some in face-to-face meetings in New York and California but not on the phone meetings. This was a problem because in order to truly recover, it is essential to work the Steps.

A little over four years ago, one of our members invited me to join a Step group that was forming. She wanted to work the Steps, and a group seemed like the best way, since there weren't many sponsors. There were six other members she had invited, and in February of 2018, we began. We have worked the Steps several times using various Step guides created by different CLA groups, as well as the Alcoholics Anonymous *12 Steps and 12 Traditions* and *Alcoholics Anonymous* (the Big Book). Our Step group worked so well that CLA decided to help members network and organize their own.

I recently was talking to someone who had been in CLA for about two years. She said she really wanted an individual sponsor and had been looking since she started. I also spoke to another CLA member whose



Step group hadn't worked out for her. She, too, was upset that she hadn't been able to locate an individual sponsor. Both of these women were in other 12-Step Fellowships and were adamant that individual sponsors were the best way for them to recover. Higher Power told me that, since I had been in CLA for so long and had now worked the Steps several times, it was time to step up.

As I began to work with my sponsees, I noticed several things. First, our relationships were more intimate than the ones I had in my group because there was only one person to focus on. I was able to listen better, and I had time to give much more feedback. I also noticed how much my sponsees were getting out of it. They were having insights that they felt were happening because of the one-on-one relationship. Then I noticed how much my life was changing because I was working with them. I started to hear my Higher Power more clearly and was willing to release more clutter.

This has led me to believe that individual sponsors are the next step in CLA's evolution. If everyone who has been or is in a Step group took one sponsee, many people in CLA would have one. It would help CLA grow and change in a wonderful way. It would help all of us to learn more about ourselves. And there is no reason we can't have Step groups, too. They can be another form of support.

The main reason sponsors exist is to work the Steps with people who haven't yet done so. I would urge anyone who has worked, or is working, the Steps to try being a temporary sponsor. You don't have to be totally decluttered, and you don't have to have worked through all 12 Steps yet. This is a tool in every 12-Step Fellowship for a reason. It works. I would also urge a new member to ask someone to be their sponsor. There have been so many Step groups in the past four years that there are many people who qualify. And now I am looking for an individual sponsor myself. So, don't be surprised if I ask you.

Ruthe S., PA 🗳️

## Group Stories

One of my favorite service positions is leading the 30 minutes of CLArity reading session once a week. I join in on other days as my work schedule allows. I look forward to 3:00 p.m. Eastern Time because of this treasure in our daily line-up. For 30 minutes, we take turns reading from the book. There's no discussion or sharing during the 30-minute reading. We just read. When we get to the end of the book, we start over. There's a different moderator for each day, and we support one another as needed. Most of our moderators are persons who see the value in this time together and want to make sure it's there for others.



It's a simple, but powerful, session. As we know, *Ten Years of CLArity* is our first published book. Within its pages are articles about Steps, Traditions, Tools, service opportunities, and—of course—recovery. It's an ideal publication for newcomers. When I was new to the Fellowship, I ordered all the literature, including *Ten Years of CLArity*. I admit I didn't set out to read the whole book by myself. I believe I'd planned to use it as source material for declutterthons, Step work, and the like.

Fortunately, I was introduced to the 30-minute reading sessions that happen every day on the Divine Decluttering line. I'm a person who follows the old adage, "When life gives you lemons, make lemonade." I've looked high and low for any good news to have come out of the pandemic. The *Ten Years of CLArity* reading session is one such gem. It was the brainchild of Ben C. and Adrienne W. in May of 2020. The book had been calling out to Adrienne, "Read me!". She enlisted her CLA buddy, Ben, to help start a reading of the book in fellowship. They brought Will P. on board and, having secured a time and spot on the Divine Decluttering line, they were off. We've been reading ever since. In the beginning, the trio of Ben, Adrienne, and Will were doing all the reading. Slowly, others started to add their voices, and that's the format we have now.

Another benefit we experienced was the shift from  
(See "[Group Stories](#)," page 6)

## Letter from the Chair

### My CLA WSO Chairperson Experience

Hi. Many of you know me from CLA World Service Organization (WSO) video conference meetings. Others might just know my voice from moderating at many of our events and sharing at meetings, as well as moderating some of them. Service in CLA is what brought me out of my years of isolation, when I was just buried in all my clutter.

Once I began knowing others in our global Fellowship, and I showed some of my capabilities, I was approached to run for the WSO Chairperson of CLA. Others believed in my capabilities when I had my doubts about them.

In CLA, we have rotation of leadership guidelines, so everyone can have a chance to experience giving service in many different ways. Service is a major tool to help bring ourselves out of our own limited world of clutter. I knew taking on this position would challenge me to do my best possible job. I was guaranteed to be taught and assisted by all the

creative, talented, and exceptional members of WSO at present, as well as those who stepped up to service in the past. That promise was more than fulfilled!


I learned much more about myself and about the teamwork and hours of gifted service that goes into the terrific Fellowship that we have here in CLA!

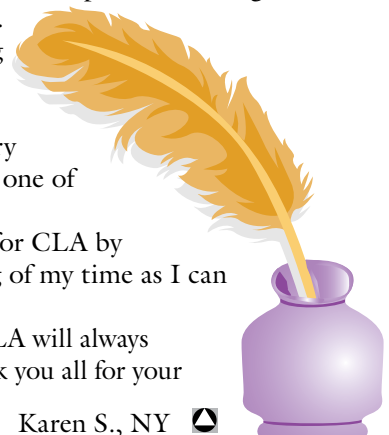
I also am grateful for all the virtual friends I now have in CLA. And all of you have graciously acknowledged my service. That has assisted me greatly in claiming back some of my self-esteem. I now live a more grateful life, daily.

I hope this article will give others a spark of wanting to share of themselves in service to CLA. I have learned that it is in giving of myself that I actually receive, so I know that giving service to CLA will improve my recovery journey always. That is why it is one of our suggested Tools.

I will continue to do service for CLA by moderating, sharing, and giving of my time as I can as time goes forward.

Being WSO Chairperson of CLA will always be a treasured time for me. Thank you all for your acceptance of me in this position.

Karen S., NY 



## My Favorite Saying—Let Go and Let God

This slogan applies to so many areas of my life as a clutterer. First and foremost, it summarizes the first three Steps.

Before coming to CLA, I tried everything to control the clutter, but nothing worked. I deluded myself into thinking that my plans and actions would work. I invited people over—surely the pressure of embarrassment/humiliation would motivate me. Instead I found this overwhelming, and I ran through the house tossing everything into the spare room: papers, books, magazines, shoes, dirty dishes. After a time there was too much clutter to do this, and I had to cancel my invitation and event. It was CHAOS—Can't Have Anybody Over Syndrome.

Another attempt to control and conquer clutter was to make an elaborate plan of daily action, covering every six square inches over four to six months. It never helped, but I felt better for an hour or two.

Other strategies included staying busy, avoiding the house, and trying to close my eyes to the clutter. Nothing worked. I couldn't control the clutter. Nothing could change until I admitted I was powerless over clutter. This was Step One, the beginning of the process of Letting Go.

I wanted relief from the pain and shame of clutter. If I couldn't fix it, what was left? CLA folks told me that they did it with the help of their Higher Power. Maybe, just maybe, it could work for me. Maybe, just maybe, God cared enough to help me. This was Step 2, the beginning of the process of Letting God.

Asking for help, asking for the willingness and ability to turn my will and my life over to Higher Power, was Step 3. It's Letting Go and Letting God.

When I feel overwhelmed by a mountain of clutter, or don't know how to proceed with a complicated task, or can't let go of some items, I can Let Go and Let God, and ask for help to declutter.

To Let Go and Let God is to use the CLA Tool of Trust. I can turn my clutter over ([See "My Favorite Saying," page 8](#))

## About WSO

Elections for CLA World Service Organization (WSO) officers were held on March 26. All positions were filled. The term for each begins on April 1.

Officers are elected for one-year terms, except for the position of treasurer, which has a two-year term. The officers elected are:

- Chairperson: Sheryl B., Michigan
- Vice-Chairperson: Terri J., Ohio
- Recording Secretary: Cathleen C., New Jersey
- Corresponding Secretary: Lisa G., Florida
- Treasurer: Marge S., North Carolina
- Assistant Treasurer: Mary C., Arizona
- Voicemail Correspondent: Mickey M., Arizona
- Webmail Correspondent: Lisa E., California
- Archivist: Laura P., California/Washington

## 7th Tradition

The 7th Tradition states that all 12-Step groups should be self-supporting through members' contributions. Whenever possible, groups make contributions to World Service and/or CLA-East.

How does CLA use these funds to meet its expenses and to stay in operation?

They pay for:

- Literature printing
- Meeting starter kits
- Meeting lists
- Web site
- Webmaster
- Phone cards
- Phone service
- Postage
- Post Office box rental
- Literature storage unit
- 501(c)3 annual filings
- Incorporation fees
- Various office supplies

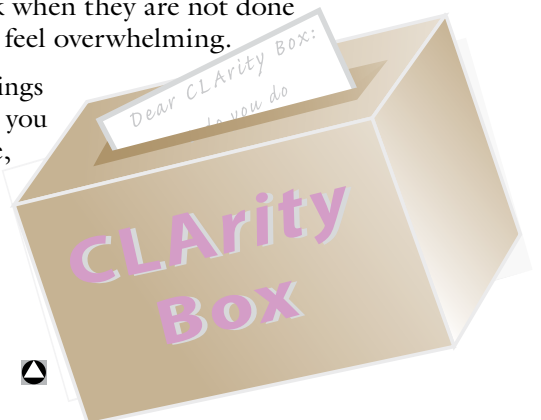
### CLArity Box (continued from page 2)

Let's give some examples.

- Suppose you have a screw that needs tightening. You get the screwdriver and tighten the screw, but the job is not complete until the screwdriver is back where it belongs.
- Some people feel that the laundry is done when it's clean and use the laundry basket as a closet or drawer. But the laundry is not complete until it's put away.
- We hear in meetings about dishes piling up in the sink. It feels like the meal is done after you eat; however, it is not complete until the dishes are washed, dried, and put away. They pile up in the sink when they are not done daily, and that makes it feel overwhelming.

Shopping of any kind brings up another example. When you bring items into your home, the process is not complete until they are put in their designated place.

In other words, no job is done until everything is put away. This ensures less clutter.




**Group Stories** (continued from page 4)

publishing the book ourselves to having it printed on demand by an outside vendor. This has reduced the cost and shipping time significantly. [Note: In order to get the lowest postage rate and delivery time, be sure to order the book from this vendor in your country.]

Adrienne, Bill, and Will are sharing their names—not for recognition, but in the hopes that readers of this article will be inspired to do likewise. What started as Adrienne hearing, “Read me!” became a valued component of our daily schedule. What ideas do *you* have? I’ll bet you have some. Most of us do, but we often reject them out of hand. Sometimes we

feel it’s a silly idea, and no one else would support it. Other times we don’t know where to start. I believe the first critical step is to say it aloud—in a CLA meeting or session, Step study group, a co-sponsoring group over coffee (when that’s possible), or just on a phone call. Chances are someone else will have had the same idea and perhaps the same doubt. Yet, if two are interested, there are bound to be more. This was the case with the *Ten Years of CLArity* readings.

I’m continually amazed by how much I’ve learned over the past year from the many articles in this book. It really is a CLA treasure trove, and I’m grateful to all those who work on the CLArity Committee. It’s a labor of love and I, for one, wouldn’t want to ever stop reading. Many thanks to Ben, Adrienne, and Will for following a simple idea through to completion. We hope to hear you on the line at 3 p.m. Eastern Time one day soon!

Cee Z., MD 

## Puzzle

### A CLA Sampler

We hope you enjoy this puzzle based on CLA concepts and terminology. (P.S. Most words are in the Index to the *CLA Literature Collection*. The Glossary at [ClutterersAnonymous.org](http://ClutterersAnonymous.org) also includes some terms.)

See page 8 for [answers to the puzzle](#).

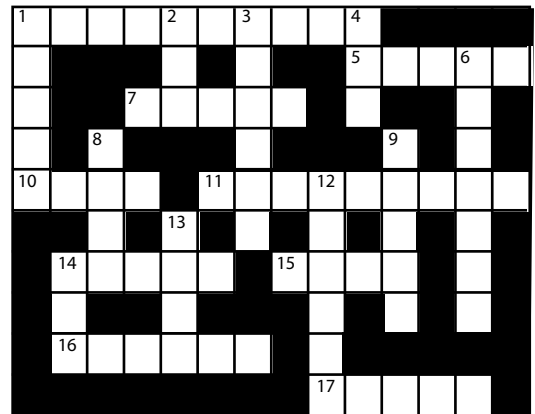
### Definitions

#### Across:

1. A CLA Tool: We do this when we talk to other CLA members before and after doing a task.
5. ...what we really yearn for are surroundings of beauty, \_\_\_\_\_, and serenity—from “Recovery from Cluttering: The 12 Steps of Clutterers Anonymous”
7. Sorrow. “Am I able to display sensitivity when dealing with trauma and \_\_\_\_\_—from “Sponsorship in CLA”
10. In Step 7 we request God to remove this.
11. The Threefold Disease: Mental, Physical, and \_\_\_\_\_
14. Methodical or harmonious arrangement. We seek divine \_\_\_\_\_.
15. We work at a comfortable \_\_\_\_\_.
16. \_\_\_\_\_s about the past: part of the fog we create in our heads.
17. We work the \_\_\_\_\_s to recover from cluttering.

#### Down:

1. We keep the focus on ourselves, instead of placing \_\_\_\_\_.
2. A CLA Tool: \_\_\_\_\_marking
3. The more we live our \_\_\_\_\_, the sooner we detach from our clutter.—from “Finding Your Life Purpose”
4. A specific Higher Power
8. Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our Traditions, \_\_\_\_\_ reminding us to place principles before personalities.
9. Our Higher \_\_\_\_\_
12. Gratitude.
13. Despite this pain, we \_\_\_\_\_ throwing things out.—From “What Is Clutter?”
14. Sought through prayer and meditation to improve \_\_\_\_\_ constant contact with God.

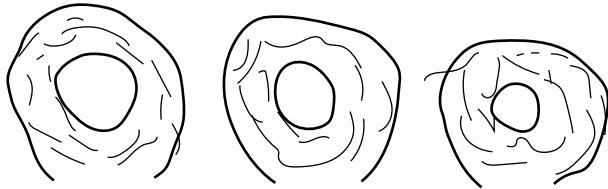


# Cartoon

## Where I am AT

### THE COST OF SERENITY

I'm energized today. Time to clean out the garage. It's a Declutter Day! These tires are old. They have to be recycled, but the garbage men won't take them. I'll bring them to the local tire shop.



Hmm, they're going to charge me \$3.00 a tire. I'll just drop them near the shop at night to save the money. This is so stressful, hope no one sees me.

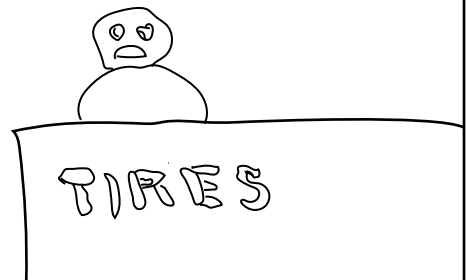
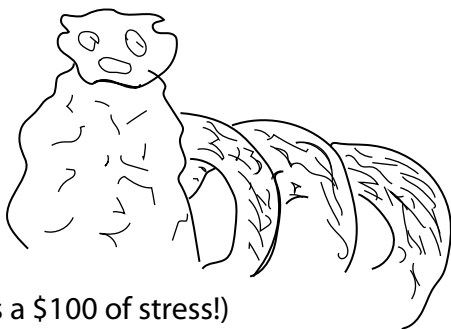


I'll drive by the shop today. Oh, nuts. They didn't remove the tires. I feel so guilty, will have to go get them. Now someone may think I'm stealing tires.



Can I leave three tires for recycle?

Yes, that will be \$9.00.  
Put them against the wall.



(This was a \$100 of stress!)

## Intergroup News

### CLA-East Intergroup

Do you belong to a CLA face-to-face group (that may now be meeting via video conference) in the northeastern or southeastern part of the United States? Then your group could send a representative to CLA-East Intergroup—the group where we support each other’s groups!

We held our 27th Clutter-Free Day over the phone again this year. Since COVID, it has been impossible to meet in person, but the good news has been that the phone conference has allowed people from all over the country, and even from different parts of the world, to enjoy our event.

The CLA-East Intergroup meetings are held on the second Saturday of each month at 2:30 p.m. Eastern Time. If you would like to attend, please call (866) 800-3881 to leave a message with your email address, and you will receive an agenda about two days before the meeting.

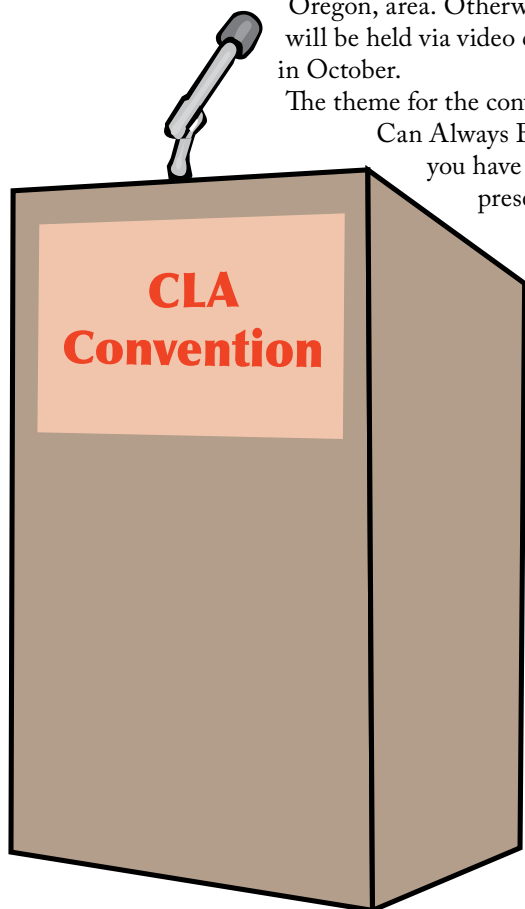
Alison B.,  
CLA-East Chairperson

## Convention News

Due to the pandemic, the Convention Committee will be making the decision sometime in May about how to hold this year’s convention. If the committee feels that holding the event in-person will be safe, it will be held in September or October in the Portland, Oregon, area. Otherwise, the convention will be held via video conference, probably in October.

The theme for the convention is “You Can Always Begin Again.” If you have suggestions for a presentation, especially one related to the theme, send it to [convention@ClutterersAnonymous.org](mailto:convention@ClutterersAnonymous.org) by the end of May.

Please check the CLA website periodically for updated information regarding the convention. All information can be found at [ClutterersAnonymous.org/events/convention](http://ClutterersAnonymous.org/events/convention).

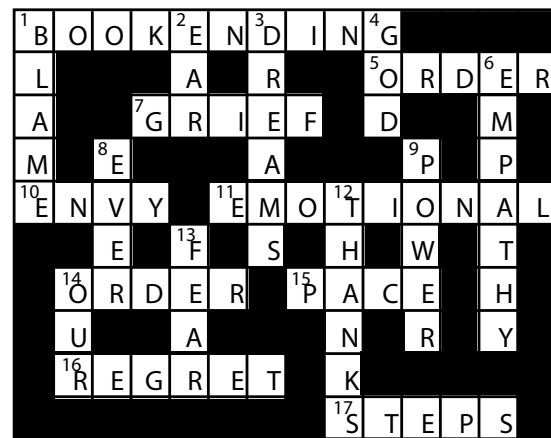


### My Favorite Saying (continued from page 5)

and let it go, knowing that when I need a fact or an item, it will be available to me.

Some days I do better or find it easier. Recovery is a process of learning and growth. It’s said that growth is the opposite of control. I can’t control my clutter, and I’m learning to Let Go and Let God. Debbie M., NC

## Puzzle Answer



## In Appreciation

The CLArity team thanks everyone for supporting the newsletter. Our appreciation goes to our latest subscribers from California, Missouri, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, North Carolina, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Washington, and Wisconsin. And thanks also to those new subscribers to eCLArity.

And a special thank you to those who are spreading the word about CLArity while doing service in CLA, in face-to-face and phone meetings, and by other means.

## Welcome to CLArity

CLArity is a forum where you can exchange your ideas and your experience, strength, and hope with others in the CLA Fellowship. Take action to be heard in our community:

- Send a “letter to the editor” to CLArity, 184 South Livingston Ave., Suite 9-203, Livingston, NJ 07039 or an email to: [Clarity@ClutterersAnonymous.org](mailto:Clarity@ClutterersAnonymous.org). All requests for anonymity will be respected.
- Share CLArity with a friend.