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CLArity

Clutterers Anonymous Newsletter

Volume XVIII, Number 3

Fall 2024

Poem

There's Not Enough

There's not enough
Time from parents for
having fun
Food in fridge, not even a
hot dog bun

There's not enough
Holidays, birthdays,
summer vacations don't
exist
But the hunger, literal and
figurative always persist

There's not enough
Love, attention, hugs, kisses
or celebration of wins
Instead, "congrats, we're
proud of you," are
treated as sins

There's not enough
Life lessons passed down
to prevent repeated
tumbles

(See "Poem," page 3)

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Affirmations

There are 25 different Affirmations, and I like them all. They encourage me to have positive thoughts. At my CLA meeting, each person reads one. Sometimes the same one is read by two people because it is worth hearing again.

My favorite, if I have to pick one, is number 9: "I am entitled to surroundings of beauty, harmony, order and serenity." That's my goal in CLA, something to work towards.

When I hear the Affirmations being read each week, I say, "Yes, I need that" or "I'm doing that." I put myself down every day about my clutter. I can't have people over because of clutter, can't find items because of clutter, and there are rooms I can't use because of clutter.



I'm committing to read one of the Affirmations every day in my morning meditation. Positive thinking is a goal. This is one way to work this program, to change the way I think and feel.

But, as Affirmation number 4 states, "I accept my progress as proceeding in my Higher Power's time."

Thanks to whoever wrote the Affirmations. They are excellent. Jeannie M., PA

Group Stories

When dealing with the frustration of clutter and the often never-ending to do lists, it's easy to neglect our own self-nurturing.

What is self-nurturing, you might ask? For one, it might be a nap. For another, self-nurturing is found by stepping outside and pausing to feel the rain on their skin.

If you have no idea what self-nurturing is (as I once didn't) or struggle to schedule self-nurture into your life, attending a self-nurturing meeting is a great place to start.

Each self-nurture meeting on the Divine Decluttering Line begins with an opportunity to share nurturing actions taken the previous week and ends with an opportunity to commit to something that would be self-nurturing in the week to come.

Self-nurturing activity—no matter how small—is an accomplishment worth acknowledging.

By listening to others' new ideas, encouragement, and understanding, we learn what self nurturing is.

Each self-nurture meeting varies, depending on the moderator. Self-nurturing discussion meetings explore topics such as:

- self-nurturing and the role it plays in your life
- self-nurturing actions you have taken and their impact on your clutter recovery

(See "Group Stories," page 6)

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Focus on Decluttering

We lived in our last apartment for 14½ years. When we moved in, the complex was very nice. There were balconies and terraces, a pool, and a gym; and they were the largest in the area. There were seven buildings with about sixty-five apartments in each. Every building had five floors and an elevator. We were really happy there. We wanted our next move to be to a warmer climate, so we figured we would stay until then.

Over the years, the building has had at least six management companies. As time went by, the apartments became more run down. They weren't being maintained like they originally were. We were beginning to feel that the building was not environmentally safe anymore. For example, management was always shutting down the water, and we could smell odors from other people's apartments, which hadn't happened before. There were also other issues—like kids were breaking things in the gym, we had mice, and we were starting to see trash everywhere.

We decided it was time to move, and we started looking at apartments. One of the things I noticed was that most of the apartments in our area did not have elevators, and I would have trouble carrying groceries and large items up the stairs, due to my neck being injured years ago—so that limited our choices. However, I was nervous to live on a first floor because I was afraid it would be easier to break into.

We looked at one with an elevator, but it turned out to be more expensive than advertised. We looked at another one that we really liked, but there were steps to reach even the first floor, and I would not be able to get my cart over the steps without lifting it.

Then I remembered something. I work with an

(See "Focus on Decluttering," page 5)

News Flash

WSO

- The Graphic Representation Subcommittee of the Literature Committee has held a contest to select a graphic representing the word "Clutter." Three entries were selected, and they can be viewed at https://clutterersanonymous.org/fellowship-announcements/. The purpose for the graphic, and others to come, is to better help speakers of other languages to understand concepts for which they have no specific word.
- A new video has been approved, titled "Only Requirement for Membership." It can be viewed on the Clutterers Anonymous YouTube channel.

CLA Convention

- The 2024 CLA Convention was held on July 20 and 21 in Niles, Illinois (a suburb of Chicago). See page 8 for an article about the event.

CLA-East

- The Clutter-Free Day (CFD) will be held in Metuchen, New Jersey, and virtually, on October 5, 2024. To register, go to CLAEast.org. The intergroup is looking for workshop leaders, topics, and volunteers to help plan the CFD.

CLA*rity* 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. We also include home state or country.

MD denotes the state of Maryland, not medical doctor.

My CLA Toolbox—Earmarking

We provide a place for our possessions and return them there. We create a home for anything before bringing it in. When we add a new item, we release an old one. For accessibility, beauty, and peace of mind, we keep some empty space.

"Earmarking"—it's a funny expression, isn't it? Some people

(See "My CLA Toolbox," page 6)

Poem *(continued from page 1)*

I spin my wheels, trip on my words, experience fumbles

There's not enough
Money to buy things I would deserve, want, or need
At an early age, I learned *no* and didn't bother to plead

There's not enough
Funds for ordering books to keep up with a friend
Satiating those needs for my fragile ego to mend

There's not enough
Allowance to pay for those weekend school trips
Joy for classmates emitting from my lips

There's not enough
Money for braces, neither parent paid a dime
Medicaid paid, but not all in time

There's not enough
Minimum wage to finish paying for that mouth brace
Lost my retainer, I couldn't afford to replace

There's not enough
Clothes shopping, a childhood experience I never had
Hand-me-down boys' clothes, and I should be glad?

There's not enough
Time to hang out, or study or clean my room
Second job at 15, belittled and felt doom

There's not enough
Items I need as a growing teen learns
Neither parent paying for anything really burns

There's not enough
Space in my bedroom to organize my clutter
Or time to clean up, my inner critic does mutter

There's not enough
Room to put random items in their proper place
Now that I'm grown and have more space

There's not enough
Maturity, wisdom or self-esteem in my head
To neaten this apartment, overwhelms me instead

There's not enough
Books, clothes and papers amass on their own
Those piles seem to, overnight, have just grown

There's not enough
Whatchamacallits, thingamajigs, knick-knacks and stuff
I'm not materialistic, but not having necessities sure makes life rough

There's not enough
All my possessions silently scream for my time
"Put us away, we're a constant visual crime!"

There's not enough
Real furniture with storage that will suffice
Insufficient funds have me paying the price

There's not enough
Places to hide things I swear one day I'll use
"Throw us away," my belongings mock me and muse

There's not enough
Time, cheer or peace in my life
Due to worry, strain and internal strife

There's not enough
Time left in life to do as I please
But starting over won't be a breeze

There's not enough
Chances to try again with what I know now
Being on the downhill, preparing for that final bow

There's not enough
Imagine beginning again with a clean slated heart
And a brain so full, it feels like it could fart

There's not enough
Love in this world to give me what I crave
So I ask God for peace in this soul I wish to save

Lisa G., FL

Organized Life Serenity Prayer

Unlike most other 12-Step programs, Clutters Anonymous has three serenity prayers: the universal Serenity Prayer, the Keep and Release Serenity Prayer, and my favorite—the Organized Life Serenity Prayer.

It begins, "God, grant me the serenity of an organized life…"

What would life be like if I had an organized life and I felt serene, calm, and centered? Drawers, closets, pantries, the refrigerator, spare bedroom, master bedroom, garage, and attic *not* overflowing with clothes, expired food, unnecessary triplicate household items, outdated electrical appliances, cell phones, and computers. I would know exactly what was enough before it became way too much. I would have time management skills, allowing for cleaning and picking up after myself. All my bills would be paid in a timely, or rather "on time," fashion.

"God, grant me the serenity of an organized life with leisure time."

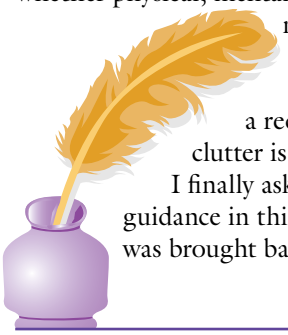
I have leisure time now. Mostly that is the time I take when I am procrastinating on decluttering, paying bills, and just plain cleaning up after myself. But to have guilt-free leisure time, that would be a gift.

Most of the time I do exactly what I want

(See "Organized Life Serenity Prayer," page 4)

Letter from the Chair

As I write this piece, I've occupied the position of chair of the CLA World Service Organization for exactly 138 days. It's been a whirlwind. While I was active in service in CLA, serving in a variety of ways, one doesn't realize how consequential that service is until you experience the view from "above," so to speak. I've composed six different versions of this—my first "Letter from the Chair." As is to be expected from a clutterer, I have many ideas about what I want to say in this inaugural message. Actually, I want to say them all! I am a clutterer, indeed. Fortunately, I know you wouldn't read all of that. If you're a clutterer like me, you would mean to read it and you'd put it aside to read it "later." That's what we do, isn't it? It turns out that as with all decluttering, whether physical, mental, or time, I had to make a decision. What a powerful concept that's been in my life as a recovering clutterer, "All clutter is unmade decisions." I finally asked my Higher Power for guidance in this decision-making, and I was brought back to the idea mentioned above, "The view from above." Having served in leadership capacities for most of my adult life, I'm aware that the best leader is one who understands that they are, first and last, servants to the organization. In my professional life, we used the term servant-leaders. The power of any organization lies in the service being done on the ground in the day-to-day operations and in the commitment of those doing the work. As a 12-Step Fellowship, there is no power from "above" that imposes its authoritarian will upon the body. Our role is to think strategically about how best to carry the message to the suffering clutterer so that they will experience the freedom we have found in working this program to the best of our ability. Having created that strategic framework, we look for the structures that will best support our mission and the people willing to come alongside to make it all happen.



After my election, I started attending as many meetings as I could with my busy work schedule. I've attended phone and Zoom meetings across the country and across the ocean. I am touched beyond words at what I've seen and heard. The message of recovery from clutter is being shared in powerful ways. A fellowship of formerly hopeless, desperate souls is now a lifeline to those who choose to walk with us. As we celebrate our 35th Anniversary as a 12-Step Fellowship, we have much to be grateful for. We have done much. We can do much more. I look forward to working with you and watching our beloved Clutterers Anonymous Fellowship grow beyond our imagining. Let's do this!

Peace to you,

Cee, MD

Organized Life Serenity Prayer *(continued from page 3)*

but have this nagging voice inside me telling me I should be washing dishes, cleaning out the refrigerator, putting laundry away, getting rid of boxes and boxes of papers, etc…To have guilt-free leisure time because I have the serenity of an organized life would be so energizing! To be able to read, write, take a painting class, meet friends for a movie, socialize…Say yes to all of life, guilt-free!

"…the courage to change my habits to ensure these joys." It's an inside job. I have to change.

I must find the courage and willingness to admit my way isn't working through conscious contact with God and our 12-Step program. My desire must be great.

God, grant me the courage to face my negative belief system regarding discipline and organization, to face those character defects that keep me stuck. When I do that, I can ensure the joys of guilt-free leisure time.

"And the wisdom to be flexible" not know the difference but let go of rigidity and over controlling. Be easy about it, not beat myself up. If I back slide into an old negative habit, just forgive myself and get back on track.

Up to this point, the Organized Life Serenity Prayer reminds me of Steps 1 through 7, with the remaining stanzas reminding me of Steps 9 through 12.

"God, grant me patience for the changes that take time." Take an inventory of what is not working but all things in God's time if we walk the walk.

"Appreciation for all that I have." I express genuine gratitude for what's in my life: whether it be good health, a steady flow of income, a job I like, a roof over my head, food, friends, family, 12-Step programs, my spirituality, children, pets, a significant other, nature, and my environment. The list can be endless!

"Tolerance for those with different struggles." Who am I judging? Who am I to judge? God, help me forgive and have tolerance for those who offend me. Help me pray for them to have what I want: love and acceptance.

Lastly, "the strength to get up and try again one moment, one hour, one day at a time." I am not perfect. I will stumble and fall. I can humbly accept that without defeat by praying for God's grace daily, so I may live the best life I can.

You can easily see why, for me, the Organized Life Serenity Prayer is my favorite.

Rosemary F., NY

Intergroup News

CLA-East

The CLA-East Intergroup is, in theory, a monthly phone gathering of representatives of all face-to-face groups east of the Mississippi—that's 32 groups. If your group turned into a phone or video conference group because of the pandemic, we understand. We had only six representatives at the meeting last month. Please send a representative and give each other's groups some support. Each representative gives us a brief report on what is happening with their group, and we offer a safe space for groups to share problems and ask for experience, strength, and hope.

We have learned that some of our groups receive people from all over the country and from other countries, too. Therefore, we are not really CLA-East anymore, and at some point in the future we will have to be restructured.

Our next Clutter-Free Day will be held in person this year in Metuchen, NJ, which is only a half-hour train ride from Penn Station in NYC. We are going to devote one room to hybrid meetings. The date is Saturday, October 5. The theme is "Decluttering: Heart, Mind & Soul," and we are looking for workshop leaders, possible topics, and volunteers to help us plan the day.

Our web page has recordings from our 2020-2022 Clutter-Free Days for sale. You can buy one recording for only $3 or a whole set of seven for $18. Please go to CLAEast.org to order recordings. Once you have bought the recording, please be sure to download it using the simple directions. You can also scroll down and click on the picture of the basket to make a contribution.

The CLA-East Intergroup meetings are held on the second Saturday of each month at 3 p.m. Eastern Time. We are also having Clutter-Free Day planning meetings on Wednesdays at 3 p.m. If you would like to come to either meeting, please call (866) 800-3881 to leave a message with your email address, and *(See "Intergroup News," page 6)*

7th Tradition

Our 7th Tradition states that all CLA 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 service
- Postage
- Post Office box rental
- Literature storage unit
- 501(c)3 annual filings
- Incorporation fees
- Various office supplies

Focus on Decluttering *(continued from page 2)*

organizer who used to take the bus but switched to taking the train. When I picked her up and dropped her off, I noticed a newer apartment complex there. I looked it up online, and there was a two bedroom available around when our lease was up. We went to look at it, and it was on the first floor, but because of the way the building was structured, it was up a little higher than what I would have called a first floor. Also, the manager was lovely, and the apartments were much newer. Although it was more expensive and had less space, we decided to put money down on it.

I spent the next few days being very upset. Should we really move? Did I want to move to a semi-first floor? Did I really want to spend more money for less space? I went back and forth. Then I had an epiphany. This was Higher Power (HP) driven. I would never have known about the apartment if not for my organizer. There was a two bedroom available when we needed it, and it was on the first floor but not totally. That had to be HP giving me a sign. I instantly calmed down and never got upset again. If HP wanted me to move here, then I was going to do it.

So we moved. The apartment was ten minutes from our old one and in the same zip code.

In addition to being smaller than our last apartment, there aren't as many closets and cabinets in this apartment. We have had to purchase our own and put them together. We are still going through boxes. When I wonder why we moved, I remember that it was because HP told us to.

I had done a lot of decluttering in my old apartment. I had also gotten rid of one storage space and most of another. But after we moved, I realized how much stuff I still had. I was baffled because of all the work I had done. I now know why HP wanted me to move. It was because I am supposed to get rid of even more stuff. And I am starting to see what I truly need, use, and love. That is what the cabinets we have purchased are for. Everything else is really not important. It has been an eye-opening realization, although a difficult one.

I understand that it will take a while to get this place totally in order. I want it to be a lovely apartment where we can be comfortable and entertain. As it turns out, having less stuff and having it organized really helps. I like being able to locate things when I need them. It makes life much easier. My organizer said something interesting. She told me that we are actually preparing for our next move. I didn't understand at first, but now I do. There will be very little to move next time!

Ruthe S., PA

My CLA Toolbox *(continued from page 2)*

have told me they don't like the word, and I can see why. It's not exactly self-explanatory. What am I supposed to do—mark my possessions with an ear stamp? I know of somebody who can't quite remember the word. She calls it "bookmarking." Whatever we choose to say, this is one of the most useful Tools for me.

I have an earmarked place for all my items. Does this mean that everything is in perfect order? Well, no! I put a lot of things in their place, and some in the vicinity. And let's just say that some of the "vicinities" are cluttered, but if I have it, I can usually find it, which I understand is pretty amazing for a clutterer.

And then there are those items that have a temporary earmarked place…like when I take my *Ten Years of CLArity* book off the bookshelf to use at my recovery meeting and then leave it on the coffee table. That's actually an earmarked place in my head, although maybe that's just one of my bad habits, and I'm supposed to be returning the book to the bookshelf! It does get to the bookshelf inevitably, at some time during the week, but then I'm just a little bit miffed when meeting night comes around, and it's not on the coffee table!

Another temporary earmarked place is my kitchen table. It's supposed to be a clutter-free zone. It is relatively clutter free these days. It is where I am able to "keep some empty space"—which, surprisingly, helps me to think better. I have learned it is really important to have some empty space in front of me. Did I mention that I like to sit at the kitchen table a lot? I may put things there temporarily, since I order needed items by mail and I open them there; but I know where they are supposed to go, and it isn't long before I put them in their proper spots. Let me note: when I order things by mail, it is usually to replace items I use often.

I try to be sensible about my earmarked homes. I have to admit, it's a struggle. Some objects are crowded into closets or drawers, and many are relegated to my "junk room," where, as I said before, they are in the vicinity of an earmarked place. This basically means I have cluttered surfaces because there isn't enough room to actually put all my needed things away. Most of my apartment is in fairly decent order, though.

When I take things out to use them, many times I return them to their earmarked places, but all too often I leave them out for a while until I have an overall cleanup. I try to remind myself: "Take it out, put it away—take it out, put it away—take it out, *put it away*!"

Alison B., NJ

Intergroup News *(continued from page 5)*

you will receive agendas three days before the meetings.

Alison B., CLA-East Chairperson

The CLA Nighttime Phone-Line Intergroup

In the structure of 12-Step recovery, an intergroup is a service entity that involves a partnership among groups in a specified community or region. Just as the CLA groups themselves are a partnership of individual members, intergroups exist to support the various groups in their common purpose of carrying the message to the clutterer who still suffers. In our case, the intergroup provides service to the 8 p.m. phone-line meeting community.

The CLA Nighttime Phone-Line Intergroup coordinates and addresses issues and concerns common to phone meetings held on the 8 p.m. phone line. It bridges communications among phone groups and between phone groups and CLA WSO and plans and schedules phone events. The Nighttime Intergroup also enlists and supports newcomer greeters, moderators, and meeting delegates for the nighttime meetings.

In addition to the nightly meetings held on the 8 p.m. phone line, this intergroup is best known for producing the declutterthon five times a year. During the January 2024 Declutterthon, we broke the 200-participant mark for the first time. We continue to spread hope through these periodic events. It's important to remember that the purpose of the declutterthons is to carry the message of Clutterers Anonymous. It's not just a periodic virtual housecleaning party, although there is an upbeat sense of camaraderie throughout. It's so much more than that. For many sufferers, the declutterthon is their first introduction to our program. It is their portal from despair to recovery. We take seriously the charge to reach out far and wide to extend the hand of CLA to all who need it. We are thrilled to see how it has grown and we believe it will continue to do so as more people recover and spread the word. To those who are doing that, we say, "Thank you!"

Group Stories *(continued from page 1)*

- ways you take care of yourself
- the role of meditation and other activities that allow us to experience the nurturing contact with our Higher Power

Meditative doodling self-nurture activity meetings

- no art experience or skill is needed, just a willingness to scribble on a page
- creates a shift of perception
- calms the mind

Is self-nurturing an essential part of recovery in a 12-Step program?

Here's what A.A. says (From A.A. *Daily Reflections*): "11 November Self-Acceptance: I pray for the willingness to remember that I am a child of God, a divine soul in human form, *(See "Group Stories," page 7)*

Group Stories *(continued from page 6)*

and that *my most basic and urgent life-task is to accept, know, love and nurture myself.* As I accept myself, I am accepting God's will. As I know and love myself, I am knowing and loving God. As I nurture myself, I am acting on God's guidance. I pray for the willingness to let go of my arrogant self-criticism, and to praise God by humbly accepting and caring for myself." (Italics added)

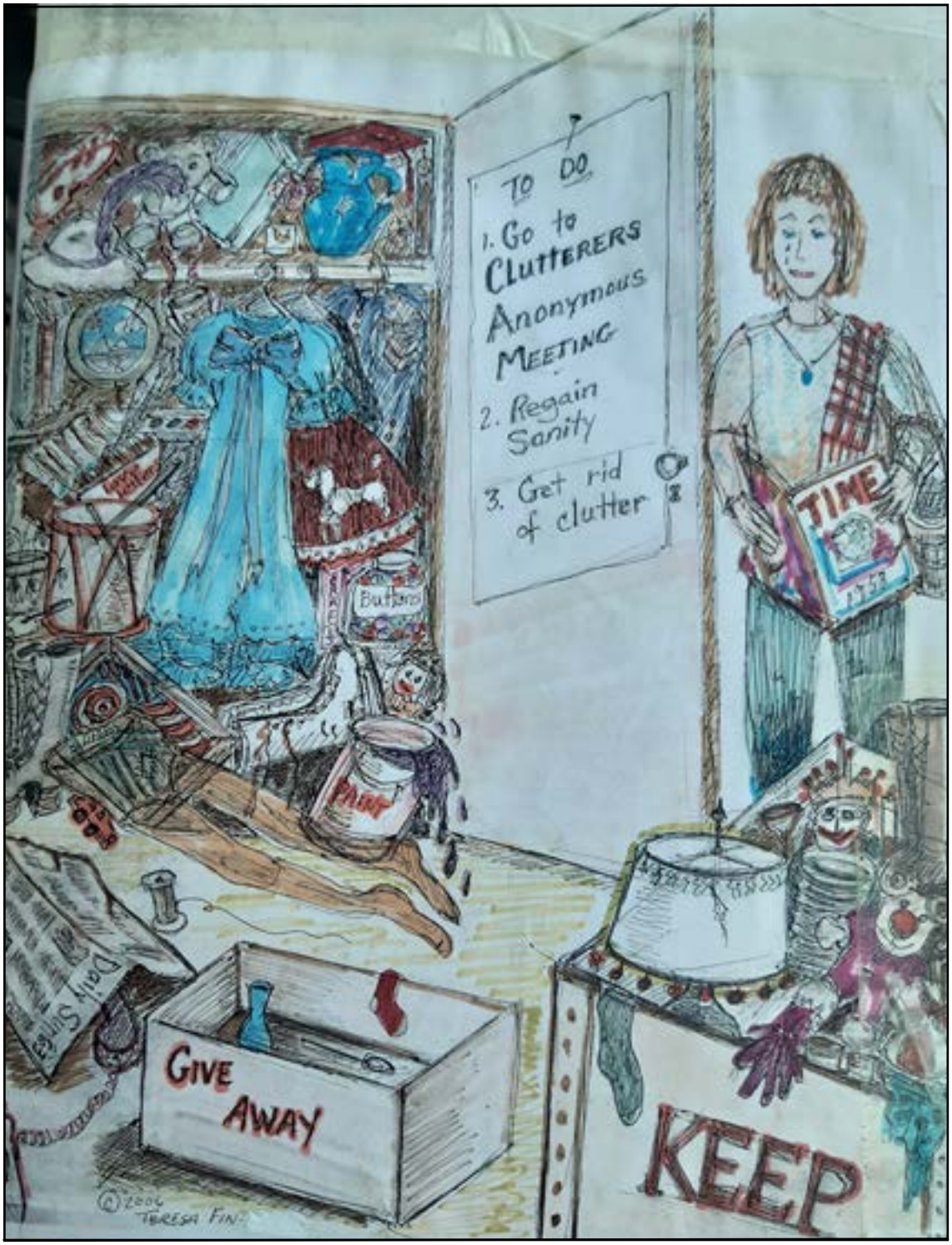
From "Finding Your Life Purpose: "As we nurture ourselves first and give only from our overflow, the proper balance of the heart—of giving and receiving—is restored."

When we take special care of ourselves, procrastination may disappear, conscious contact with our Higher Power can be enhanced, spiritual coincidences could occur, and we gain new energy to declutter our homes and lives.

Nurturing ourselves *is* an important part of our recovery. Self-nurturing often happens by simply being on a call with other nurturing souls also seeking serenity in a cluttered world.

Cydne, NC

Artwork



Convention News

The 2024 CLA convention was held on July 20 and 21 at the White Eagle Events and Convention Center in Niles, Illinois. Sixty CLA members attended; they came from at least 19 US states, one US territory, and one other country.

The convention was considered very successful by most attendees. Below are comments from the evaluation forms submitted.

The sessions were generally appreciated, with several comments being: "All sessions were useful," and another saying she "liked people's stories." One attendee said, "Exposure to ideas and Traditions and Tools and experiences that may be useful and give hope…and the emphasis overall on connection with others," while another said "Speakers were great and many different, important, helpful topics," and one stating "hearing success stories."

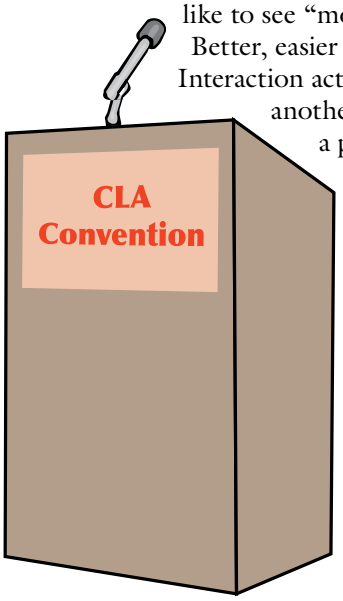
One attendee said, "I am at my first meeting of CLA here today and really enjoyed the friendly welcome. It was very informative. I've gotten a good start."

Several particularly liked the "Rest of Life/End of Life" session by Terri J. and the "Problems and Solutions" session.

One attendee remarked: "I particularly liked the talk on how details matter by Carol N. This encouraged me on how to establish my own priorities." Another stated: "The bookending session was excellent. Myraida's practical way to find bookending, and a buddy to commit to projects."

One commented, "I also loved Mafa's sharing [Clarifying Your Values]—us vs. people 'talking' at us." Others liked the Long-timers' Panel, hearing about "Spirituality and the Tools" by Ruthe S., "Changing My Relationship to Clutter" by Kathy, and the speeches by Sheryl B. and Cee. One appreciated "getting an overview of the whole organization and understanding it more," while others appreciated the presentation by Marge S. on the CLA website.

However, one would like to see "a breakout [session] on trauma and clutter or loss management," while another would like to see "more action tips, like 'how-tos.' Better, easier organization tips, perhaps. Interaction activities with each other," while another wants "how to declutter with a physical limitation," and another wants more sessions on the Steps and Traditions.



One person would like to see a session on "relationships, the effect of clutter on relationships: experiences, information that offers hope, or ideas" and another would like to see a session on brainstorming for new literature ideas." Some would have liked more time for sharing after some of the sessions.

One attendee said "Hard-working, welcoming, and enthusiastic people made it all happen."

The best thing about a face-to-face convention is the ability to fellowship with other CLA members. Several attendees remarked on this, with one saying the best thing was "Seeing old friends. Meeting new ones" and another liked "mixing with people I didn't know." Another stated, "So wonderful to meet and put voices with faces after years on phone lines. Getting to meet people from all over the country, exchange contact information, and find new bookending buddies."

One person said, "The face-to-face aspect is key. The experience, strength, and hope of our elders," while another wished there had been more attendees.

One attendee called the convention excellent, while another stated, "Very informative and supportive and let me feel motivated on my recovery journey."

One member closed with the words "Wonderful, nurturing, and inspiring."

In Appreciation

The CLA*rity* team thanks everyone for supporting the newsletter. Our appreciation goes to our latest subscribers from Colorado, Connecticut, Florida, Georgia, Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, New York, Ohio, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Tennessee, Washington, and Wisconsin.

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

Welcome to CLA*rity*

CLA*rity* 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 CLA*rity*, 184 South Livingston Ave., Suite 9-203, Livingston, NJ 07039 or an email to: Clarity@ClutterersAnonymous.org. All requests for anonymity will be respected.
- Share CLA*rity* with a friend.