

Alateen: Help, Hope and Recovery for children of alcoholics

In early days of A.A. and Al-Anon, teenagers often attended open A.A. meetings and family group meetings with their parents. Many found that learning about the disease of alcoholism and learning about the spiritual principles that formed the basis for A.A. and Al-Anon recovery was helpful to them. A.A. and Al-Anon began to recognize that the teenagers had special needs of their own. A special session for teenage children of alcoholics was included at the A.A. International Convention held in St. Louis in 1955. Copies of the talks given by teenage children of alcoholics at this convention were distributed by the Al-Anon Clearinghouse.

In 1957, an article was published in the A.A. Grapevine about a 17 year old teen in Pasadena, California, named Bob. Bob's father was an A.A. member and his mother was an Al-Anon member. Bob had found applying the Steps and principles of Al-Anon in his own life was helpful to him, and he formed a group with five other teen children of alcoholics. Bob also wrote to the Clearinghouse stating that he had formed a meeting for teenagers. He suggested forming a special division of Al-Anon especially for teenagers. Teen groups began to grow in number, and many young people wrote to the office requesting literature and/or help. In response, a new section of Al-Anon called "Alateen" as formed, and a pamphlet for teens titled "Youth and the Alcoholic Parent" was printed. The Al-Anon Twelve Steps were adopted verbatim for Alateen, and the Twelve Traditions were modified to meet the needs of this group. A pamphlet, "Youth and the Alcoholic Parent" was published in 1957. An Alateen Committee was formed in 1959, with Wanda R. as appointed chairperson. By 1962, there were 203 registered Alateen groups. Additional literature targeted to teens was developed. A requirement was made that Alateen groups have an adult Al-Anon member sponsor Alateen groups. The sponsor provided structure and support, while allowing the teens to run their own meeting.

Alateen groups began to receive publicity from the mainstream press, and as with A.A. and Al-Anon, as the word spread, membership grew. By 1960 there were about 100 Alateen groups, and by 1963 there were over 200. In 1961 the first conference just for Alateens was held in Philadelphia. Groups were established in other countries as well as in the USA and Canada. Alateen groups began electing group and district representatives to represent the Alateens at Al-Anon Assemblies.

Alateen celebrated its 50th Anniversary in 2007. Alateen groups continued to flourish, and remain an important part of Al-Anon today.

