

Brief History of Alcohol Drug 24 Hour Help Line and its Growth
Memoir of Ann Forbes
2004

We started our phone line in August of 1979 with \$15,000 from King County Alcohol Services under the leadership of Mr. Charles Kester. We located our office in south Seattle at 5405 Rainier Ave for 3 reasons. We were in the middle of a gas shortage and had to line up at the gas stations, and since we were relying on college students, we located on the bus line for Seattle U and Seattle Central. Second reason, the 722 prefix was the first electronic phone system and had the largest toll free area in Seattle, and the third was our rent was most reasonable in Columbia City. The volunteers that had been with Dial-a-Bottle (our predecessor) had met during the summer and wanted to be sure the phone line continued so we wrote a proposal to the county.

The only paid staff was yours truly, and this entailed some long hours. We answered the phone in the office during day and early evening, then a cadre of volunteers would alternate with me taking the rolodex and notebook home at night, and we forwarded the calls into our home lines. The first extra money we obtained, we hired the midnight crew. This method of adding staff continued for 6 months or more. For Board meetings, the Directors brought their own chairs, as we had only a card table and a small settee.

The first three years, we had very slim pickings. We needed to prove to the county that we knew what we were doing and I was called back from vacation to justify our referral system which included private counselors and private outpatient programs. We began to call daily for a bed count from treatment centers, charging a small fee, and this generated some revenue to help fund our agency. We also took the after hour phones for Sea-First Bank for their EAP program for more revenue and later added the Rainier Bank line also.. When the Governor's Alliance Grant was awarded we began our mail-out system. Paul Templin at BASA (Bureau of Alcohol and Substance Abuse) headed up the Prevention Programs and was interested in us sub-contracting with WSAAC to do this. After 5 months, we turned the contract over to them, as it was not working for our agency.

We put in a toll free line with help from BASA in 1982.. This line has never been turned off in the 23 years it has been in operation. Also we worked with "Brother's Keeper" a project that collected household items for resale thru their thrift shops. This generated \$800 a month to help fund us and stimulated our growth.

In 1983 we left our location, as we had grown out of the space, and moved to 3700 Rainier Ave. S which had parking and more room. Phone # and address stayed the same and this seemed to be a good sign. In 1984 we added the "Generic Line" which supplied support group information for our callers which ACOA was one of our main funders for this. .

1987 we took the after hour phones for Sea-First Bank for their EAP program for more revenue. The agency was awarded the Governor's Alliance Grant which was the beginning of the mail-out system. Paul Templin at BASA headed up the Prevention Programs, and after about 5 months of this grant and contracting to Washington State Substance Abuse Council we relinquished the contract to them.

1988 we worked with the city ombudsman's office to handle calls from King County jail. Our phone number was on their speed dial, and it was an interesting 18-24 months project. It did increase our volume considerably by 16,000 or more a year, but the jail system did not have any money to help defray the cost, and this additional volume was breaking our back so we discontinued the free service.

Governor Booth Gardner gave the welcoming address at the Northgate theatre for the film "Looking Good" and Kathy Goertzen of KOMO-TV was the MC. We were involved with supplying addresses, invitations, and personnel at the Oct. 1988 event. We followed this up in March of '89 being involved with the Chamber of Commerce, DEA, and ADHL hosting a "Breakfast with Gov. Gardner and CEO's concerned about drug problems.

We were awarded an AIDS Grant in 1990 to promote the use of clean needles, testing, and resources in the King County area. In the summer we worked with the Sonics in their "Jammin-Seafirst/ Sonic Hoops Camp by supplying information and speakers for their camp.

"Straight Talk" radio program for recovering community started in 1991, and I was their first guest interview. We were on the program 3-4 times more during their tenure.

January of 1992, we supplied the 55 phone volunteers for the mass media awareness called "Northwest Crackdown". This took a lot of work with the media, and we were in the Channel 9 studios for the event. We also established the "Margaret Burris" award for outstanding nurses in the CD field in honor of our long time nurse trainer. We worked with the CD nurses association on this project.. For fun in the summer we floated the Yakima River with a guide and 3 boatloads of staff and volunteers.

In 1993 the agency received the "Alvrita Little" award from Therapeutic Health Services for outstanding contribution to the city.

Fundraiser in 1994 was to have J.A. Jance book signing evening at the Center for Wooden Boat facility. We also were offered a sailing cruise on the Odyssey in the Tacoma waterways with our volunteers and staff. On the serious side, we began the Domestic Violence Outreach Project working with chemically dependent women in the DV shelters. .

The Simpson Timber Company gave us \$2,000 grant to work with interns that were minority. This was a successful adventure and helped many volunteers with books, car batteries, etc, so they could continue in school. This was in '95

1997 was busy, with Ackerley Advertising giving us a large billboard that moved around the city. We won a state wide award for “contribution, dedication to the citizens from DASA, We also participated in lobbying efforts in Olympia as well as a Boeing grant to start the “Seattle Professional Assessment” program.

Division of Alcohol and Substance Abuse contacted us in June of 1998, wondering if we could take over the management of the WSSAC contract which was the mail-out system. We would need to move the materials and equipment in 2 weeks and have it operational by July 1, 1998. This was the start of our Washington State Clearinghouse. This added workload came with an adequate budget so that was a good fit in many ways. We also began working with HIDTA (High Intensity Drug Trafficking Activity) which is a Federal program that watched the crystal meth activity in 7 counties. This year that has expanded to 14 counties to provide data and reports to the Feds as well as to the U.W.with their Epidemiology work group.

Year 2000 we added the ADATSA bed count line (called ABU). This kept a running total of the beds available for low income and Medicaid clients that needed this access We were faxed the openings in all the state funded beds for adults. Also added to our contract was to manage the Chemical Dependency Job Line for agencies looking for personnel and for employees to post job resume. The state DASA program funded this. We also had Ackerly Sign Co. choose us for 2 years of free advertising on their billboards in King, Snohomish, Pierce and Clark Counties.

2001 Teenline was given a \$15,000 grant from Seattle and K, C, Health for Tobacco Prevention program. They were very busy with youth events all over the county and getting teens involved with smoke-free events. We started to work with Children’s Administration in distributing the material on fetal alcohol syndrome. We were supplied with books, cd’s, posters, and printed material to distribute on a cash-reimbursable project. Taping of a promotional film for “Journey through the Healing Circle” was done at Evergreen College in Olympia with staff being part of the audience.

Corporate compliance program was implemented for staff and volunteers. In 2003 began the search for a new location since South End Effective Development was buying our rental site. We moved the office in September to our now location.

2004 was a very busy year with several new projects coming on board, as well as the celebration of 25 years of maintaining a phone line.

Now I would like to list the programs and their descriptions, so you will have a feel for them when we discuss them at board meeting.

Access To Recovery—ATR is a grant to expand capacity, and support client choice and increase the array of faith-based and community-based providers for clinical treatment and recovery support. We are to design and maintain web page, be available 24/7 for creation of voucher numbers for clients.

Stigma Reduction Project-efforts are directed toward removing the stigma surrounding alcohol/drug addiction by putting a human face on recovery.

Domestic Violence Outreach Project—funded by the county to provide outreach services to substance abusing women of child-bearing age affected by domestic violence in order to identify and link them with assessment , treatment and recovery services for chemical dependency.

Where we go in the future remains to be seen as funding and needs are constantly changing. It should be interesting.

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