

**District 12
Sarasota / Manatee Florida
Public Outreach
July 2008**

Driving to work I couldn't help notice the billboards at each of the covered bus stops was empty of the usual advertisements. In their place, a simple ad identifying that the space was available and a phone number. My mind wandered thinking this too is a sign of the economy. I thought what a great place for the *Crying House* I pondered who I should I call in the district with my idea?

At the final red light before my turn I dialed the number into my cell phone and held it on my lap. As I parked I hit the send button. Please know this kind of assertive activity is not in my immediate comfort zone. I had no planned speech. I just thought it was a shame that those spaces were empty.

I asked to speak to someone in charge of the ad space and was quickly put through to an affable quick talking sales rep. I can only imagine the look on his face when I asked if the company had a budget that supported non-profits advertising in vacant spots? A simple "No we don't " was the answer.

There was quiet.... an awkward long quiet. I am not sure if it was my disappointment, my HP or my sponsor who has me practice not always having something say when I don't hear the answer I want.

The silence was broken when he asked, "What did you have in mind?" My response was simple. "I represent Al-Anon Family Groups in Sarasota/ Manatee counties. We are a fellowship of family and friends of Alcoholics."

He responded immediately "Sure we can do that. Send me two signs and I will put them in up for you no charge. Laminate them and I can move them if somebody takes the space". He gave me all the necessary specifications and I thanked him.

Whoaaaaa in a two minute conversation we had an opportunity. I was so psyched and also so proud of my self for the courage to take action. I immediately called Tina from my home group. She is young, artistic and computer savvy. Without hesitation she got on to the project at hand. With a few calls to WSO and some effort reaching out for tech assistance Tina had the *Crying House* print ready with our local contact info in a matter of hours.

I moved forward calling printers and sign makers getting quotes. We needed two 6 feet by 4 foot color laminated posters. My stomach dropped when call after call I was told no one can print that size. How is that possible? Signs are in bus stops everywhere. I was referred to a sign maker that quoted me \$500 each. My stomach was sick. I continued making calls. I had several more similar quotes when out of nowhere one kind printer referred me to a local place. Their quote \$88 each. Excitement returned!

Next would be to arrange for the shipping. I was told that the size would require special packing, which would cost about \$100, and because of the size it would have to go by carrier, which would cost about \$1,000. My stomach was on the floor. The poster had to travel about 60 miles. I decided I would drive it! After checking in with the printer I was told the posters would be ready the next day and THEY would ship them. Total cost with tax and shipping of \$198.00

Next we would have to go to the District GR's for approval from the groups. The next District meeting was a month away. An Assembly would occur within a week. After talking it out with panel officers it was agreed that the timing in responding to the generous offer might be sensitive. So a motion was prepared and emailed to the district GR's. Questions were documented and votes were cast. Responses were printed and all the documents were brought to assembly and shared with GR's that hadn't voted by email. The vote was unanimous. This experience gives new meaning to a 'Do it in a Day' project.

I returned from our wonderful convention and an extended stay in beautiful Pittsburgh. As I drove home from work the first day back I nearly ran off the road as I saw for the first time our poster in place at a bus stop. I pulled over and admired 'our little guy'. He looked great. I stood in amazement. This was not just a bus stop. This is on the busiest road at one of the busiest intersections of our town. Tens of thousands drive by this intersection every day. Here he stood, across from the airport and at the entry of a busy newspaper plant. This was an awesome location the 'little guy' had a big job ahead of him.

Emails were sent out through out the district announcing the arrival of 'the little guy' and warm well wishes were exchanged by all. Members are reporting in that are seeing the newest member of the family and the elation continues. A request was sent to everyone in the district to forward a personal thank you card to the company expressing our gratitude.

My drive to work will never be the same. I see my friend twice a day. I truly am never alone.

Kathy H.
District Representative
District 12

