

# ROADS TO RECOVERY NEWSLETTER

Created by Dual Recovery at Warren Washington Association for Mental Health to support individuals in recovery

A NEWSLETTER FOR YOU  
AND ABOUT YOU

## SPOTLIGHT TOPIC

### Random Acts of Kindness



BY GINGER MILLER

Did you know February 17th is Random Acts of Kindness Day? I love that! Although, personally I think every day should be filled with random acts of kindness...wouldn't that be wonderful?! One person at a time, one step at a time. I wondered how this holiday came about so I did a little research.

It all began after Anne Herbert wrote, "Practice random acts of kindness and senseless acts of beauty" on a placemat at a restaurant in Sausalito, California back in 1982. Obviously, Anne recognized the significance and power that a small act of kindness can have. A small act can have a big impact. Her book, titled with the same phrase, was published in 1993. Now, Random Acts of Kindness Day is national.

A small non-profit organization, Random Acts of Kindness Foundation, was formed in 1995 in Denver, Colorado. This organization created an opportunity for individuals and communities to spread acts of kindness by providing resources and materials to help people "make kindness the norm" - fantastic idea, right?

New Zealand established September 1st as "Random Acts of Kindness Day" in 2005. In 2016, a Cleveland reporter named Brenda Cain declared February 17th as Random Acts of Kindness Day in the United States. This year, our country even declared a whole week for Random Acts of Kindness, February 13th-19th. Canada followed suit, also in 2016, and named November 4th as their day to celebrate. The idea continues to spread around the world in many countries.

I'm guessing that you have performed random acts of kindness as well, perhaps without even thinking about it; held the door open for someone else, let someone in line in front of you at the store, smiled and nodded or said hello to a stranger as you pass them on the sidewalk, put a small note in a lunch you prepared for someone going to school or work, or donated some canned goods to a food bank. What about a time that someone did an act of random kindness toward you – can you think of some? Maybe someone sent you a thank you card (especially if it came snail mail!), complimented you in the morning and gave your day a bright start, gave you an unexpected gift for no specific reason, or made you laugh or hugged you when you needed a little lift.

I'm sure at this point you can see the idea behind random act of kindness to cultivate

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## Random Acts of Kindness (Cont'd)

feelings of kindness and brighten up someone's day. It is so heartwarming when I get a glimpse of one happening. You could probably see them every day if you were looking for them. What a wonderful community it would be if we saw these and other types of random acts of kindness as the norm instead of something we might have to look for! Maybe, we - the individuals in our local communities of Warren, Washington, Saratoga, and Essex counties - could make 2022 a year to be mindful of and intentional in spreading random acts of kindness. Here are some ideas we might be able to try on a larger scale: Participate in a coat drive and put encouraging notes in the coat pockets, create a care bag for an unhoused person with some gloves, scarf, treats, hygiene products and a gift card, offer free hot chocolate and/or hand warmers to those working in the cold, volunteer to feed the hungry at a shelter or assist in a local food drive, collect baby clothes and supplies and donate to new parents who need them, donate blood, or become an organ donor.

Get the youngsters in our lives involved to! They could try something like mow the lawn, rake leaves, or shovel a driveway or sidewalk for a neighbor, help a senior carry their groceries, babysit for free one night, call a loved one (like a grandparent or favorite aunt or uncle) for no other reason than to let them know you are thinking of them, paint some rocks pretty or with positive sayings on them and leave them around town for others to find, or offer to help someone without expecting anything in return.

The habit of giving and wanting to provide a helping hand or encouragement to others is kindness. According to Psychology Today, being kind can have an impact on your psychological, physical, and spiritual health and is linked to happiness and contentment. Kindness means a behavioral response of compassion and actions that are selfless; or a mindset that places compassion for others before one's own interests. In performing the selfless act, a person may undercut their own selfish interests. Interestingly, the simple witnessing of others being kind can release the same "feel good" chemicals that engaging in an act of kindness can produce. Kindness can promote empathy and compassion, which in turn, leads to a sense of feeling connected to others and strengthens a sense of community and belonging. Compassion and kindness also reduce stress, boost our immune systems, and help reduce negative emotions such as anger, anxiety, and depression. Dopamine, serotonin, oxytocin and endogenous opioids are released by kind behavior. Kindness can even reduce pain. The miracle of kindness is that it is contagious and something we should all try to pass on and spread to others.

♡♡♡ Be kind to all kinds ♡♡♡

Here are a few entertainment ideas that reflect Random Acts of Kindness:

### **Movies:**

Patch Adams, Little Miss Sunshine, Forest Gump, Evan Almighty, Kindness Matters

### **Songs:**

A Random Act of Senseless of Kindness by South Sixty Five, Humble and Kind by Tim McGraw, Streets of Gold by Lost Dogs, People Are Crazy by Billy Currington, Try A Little Kindness by Glen Campbell, Man In The Mirror by Michael Jackson





# UNDERSTANDING THE DIAGNOSIS

## Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD)

BY GINGER MILLER

Here in upstate New York, most people I know do not like the shorter daylight hours that begin in late fall and continue through winter. Many of us leave for work before the sun is up and head home after the sun has set, leaving us with less sun exposure. As seasons change, people experience a shift in their biological internal clock or circadian rhythm that can cause them to be out of step with their daily schedule. According to Johns Hopkins Medicine, the lack of sun exposure signals the brain to create too much of the sleep-regulating hormone, melatonin. That overproduction can lead to what's known as "Seasonal Affective Disorder", which affects an estimated 10 to 20 percent of the population, men and women alike. Andrew Frank Angelino, M.D., Director of Psychiatry at Howard County General Hospital states, "The classic crying and melancholic depression is more the norm of expression in women. But men express things differently, showing depression with more irritability, anger, or frustration." John Hopkins Medicine goes on to explain that although the symptoms and mood changes of SAD are similar, or even identical, to those of Major Depression, they are different. Major Depression is a disease in which your brain's pleasure responses are broken. You may have a loss of appetite, fatigue, trouble sleeping, and feelings of hopelessness. Depressed people often have a harder time managing their symptoms in the winter. But when depressive symptoms are *only* affecting you in the winter and usually improve with the arrival of spring, it's considered SAD. The most difficult months for people with SAD in the U.S. tend to be January and February. While it is much less common, some people experience SAD in the summer.

The American Psychiatric Association (APA) explains that SAD is more than just "winter blues." The symptoms can be distressing and overwhelming and can interfere with daily functioning. However, it can be treated. About 5 percent of adults in the U.S. experience SAD and it typically lasts about 40 percent of the year. SAD may begin at any age, but it typically starts when a person is between ages 18 and 30. Common symptoms of SAD include fatigue, even with too much sleep, and weight gain associated with overeating and carbohydrate cravings. SAD symptoms can vary from mild to severe and can include many symptoms similar to major depression, such as feeling sad or having a depressed mood, loss of interest or pleasure in activities once enjoyed, changes in appetite- usually eating more and/or craving carbohydrates, change in sleep- usually sleeping too much, loss of energy or increased fatigue despite increased sleep hours, increase in purposeless physical activity (inability to sit still, pacing, handwringing) or slowed movements or speech (these actions must be severe enough to be observable to others), feeling worthless or guilty, difficulty thinking, concentrating or making decisions, or even possible thoughts of death or suicide. For less severe symptoms, Dr. Angelino offers some helpful recommendations such as keeping your expectations realistic, especially in relation to the holidays, practicing daily wellness by getting at least 7 hours of sleep a night, exercising 30 minutes, getting 15–30 minutes of sunlight (if done in the morning can help regulate your internal clock), and cultivating some winter/indoor hobbies.

The American Psychiatric Association lists several types of treatment can be considered, including light therapy, antidepressant medications, talk therapy- particularly CBT, or some combination of these. Taking care of your general health and wellness can also help—regular exercise, healthy eating, getting enough sleep, and staying active and connected through volunteering, participating in group activities and getting together with friends and family. On a personal note, I have found light therapy to be pretty helpful. Light therapy involves sitting in front of a light therapy box which is very bright (don't worry, it filters out harmful UV rays). I sit with it on for about 15-20 minutes in the morning, sometimes while I am eating breakfast. I usually start using it in mid-October and continue until late April.





## Seasonal Affective Disorder (Cont'd)

If you feel you have symptoms of SAD, please consider seeking the help of a trained medical professional. Just as with other forms of depression, it is important to make sure there is no other medical condition causing symptoms. SAD can be misdiagnosed in the presence of hypothyroidism, hypoglycemia, infectious mononucleosis, and other viral infections, so proper evaluation is key. A mental health professional can diagnose the condition and discuss therapy options. With the right treatment, SAD can be very manageable.

**If you feel your depression is severe or if you are experiencing suicidal thoughts, consult a doctor immediately or seek help at the closest emergency room. National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 1-800-273-TALK (8255)**

## HEALTH & WELLNESS

### Comparing Yourself to Others



BY GINGER MILLER

Have you ever admired something about someone and thought, "I want to be like that!"? Sometimes that can be an inspiration that can help us create a healthy, achievable goal. However, I know it can also be very common for people to play the unhealthy comparison game. When we compare ourselves to others it can leave us feeling 'less than' or inferior, neither one contributes to an emotionally balanced and healthy person (and for those of us in recovery from substance use, it can feed that ego we need to keep in check). Your sense of accomplishment and pride can be diminished when you compare yourself to what others have done or are doing. When we compare ourselves to someone else, we are focused on the wrong person. If we find ourselves headed down that road, there are a few things to keep in mind that might be helpful:

1. Genetics play a part - Remember that our genetics play a large part in things. So, if you are comparing something like how athletic, artistic, or creative you are, or a specific field of academics such as math or science, you might not be comparing "apples to apples" as they say.
2. Struggles are inevitable – Out of everything I've achieved or done, the things I am most proud of were the ones that I struggled through the most. Frustration and discouragement are normal emotions, but they can also lead to hatred of the very thing you initially admired or decided to set a goal for. For example, a person could admire a long-distance runner, set their own goals for training and start making some progress toward becoming a runner. Then, when they start experiencing injuries or challenges, become frustrated and discouraged. This can lead to thinking things like 'I suck at this' or 'Why am I even trying?' Then before they know it find that they are beginning to feel like they hate the idea of becoming a runner. So, keep in mind that there are good days and hard days, and there will be amazing ones – it is all part of the process. Stay positive. Keep trying. Remember that getting to the goal is a journey. Don't let comparison rob you of the joy of each successful step or accomplishment that you have had and can continue to have; imagine the excitement and joy you will have when you make it to your goal.
3. Be honest and realistic - Another thing to look at is, are the goals you've set achievable? We all have different learning abilities and growth processes. Be realistic and honest with yourself as to whether the goals you have set include steps that are within your means. Set yourself up for success- even small, baby steps are steps in the right direction! (By the way as a Peer Specialist/Advocate, working on goals is something I can help you with! Just contact me and we can set up an appointment.)
4. Look for progress, not perfection - Life happens. Acceptance is important, things won't always be perfect. When we compare ourselves to another person, we are using time and energy we could be devoting to our own goals or talents. Celebrate your successes along the way; each one is a necessary step toward our ultimate goal. Be grateful for your 'runs and races'. Run your own race looking forward in your own lane.





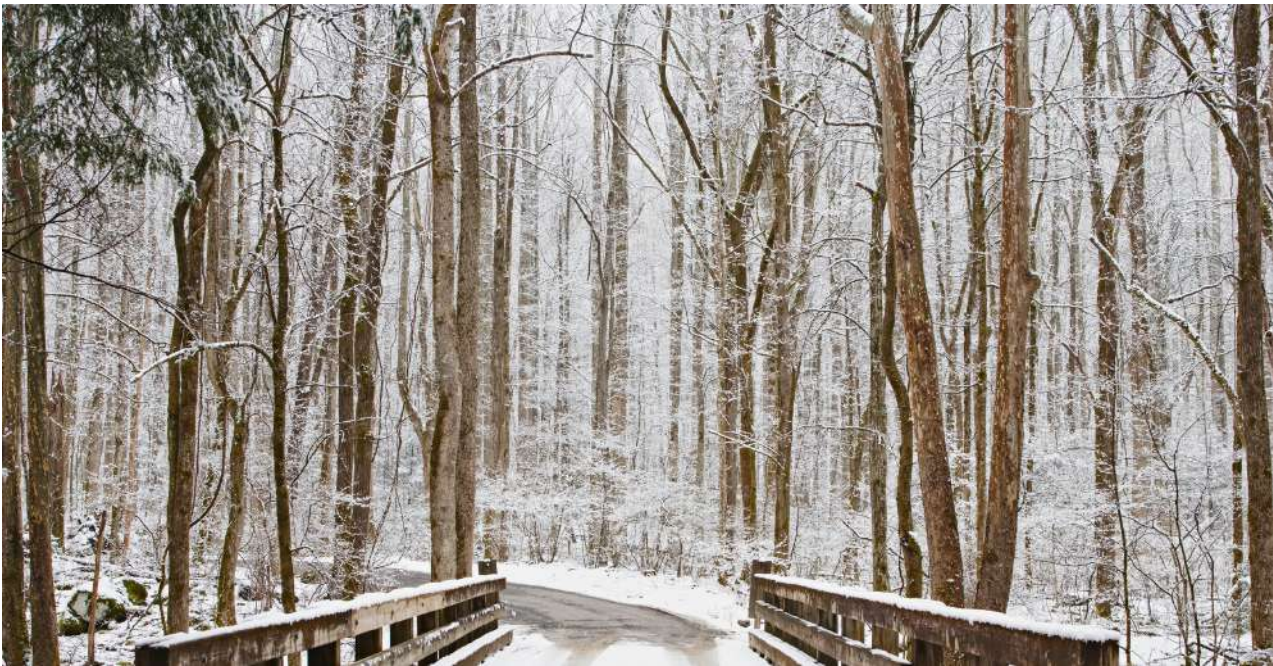
## Comparing Yourself to Others (Cont'd)

5. Stay focused – What is your why? Keep in mind why you started to begin with! I find that keeping my ‘why’ in front of me helps me stay focused. Sometimes it is a picture I will keep on my fridge – maybe of a vacation spot I’m looking forward to, like camping I’ve even done vision boards and hung them up to help me stay focused on my goals and my ‘whys’.

So, when we see someone else achieving their goals, be joyful with them and happy for them. If they hit road bumps or feel like a failure, be a support and encouragement for them. We can learn lessons from someone else’s successes or failures, maybe even make a new friend along the way. Each of us are unique and will have our own journey.



*“Comparison is the thief of joy” ~ President Theodore Roosevelt*



# THE FEBRUARY CHALLENGE

There are **THREE** challenges this month! The first challenge relates to the "Random Acts of Kindness" article on pages 1-2. Share with us if you participated in any random acts of kindness this month. What did you do? How did it make you feel? The second challenge relates to the "Comparing Yourself to Others" article on pages 4-5. Do you find that you compare yourself to others? How do you overcome the comparison trap and were any of these tips helpful? How do you celebrate your achievements? The third challenge is to attend either event on page 6 and tell us how it made you feel and what part you liked most.

Everyone who chooses to participate in February's challenge and writes to us before March 25th will win a gift card to Dunkin Donuts! You will also see your response next month in our "Your Voice" section! If you want it to be printed anonymously, just let us know when you send it in that you don't want your name on it. Email us at: [gmler@wwamh.org](mailto:gmler@wwamh.org) to participate.







# THE FUN SPOT

## Hidden Picture Puzzle



Even in the middle of winter we can find some reminders of summer.

### CAN YOU FIND:

- bottle of sunscreen
- straw hat
- ice cream cone
- popsicle
- pair of sunglasses
- cool drink
- pair of shorts
- the sun

ANSWER KEY ON PG 5





# INSPIRATION & MOTIVATION

## Fighting for My Life: Finding Recovery and Serenity

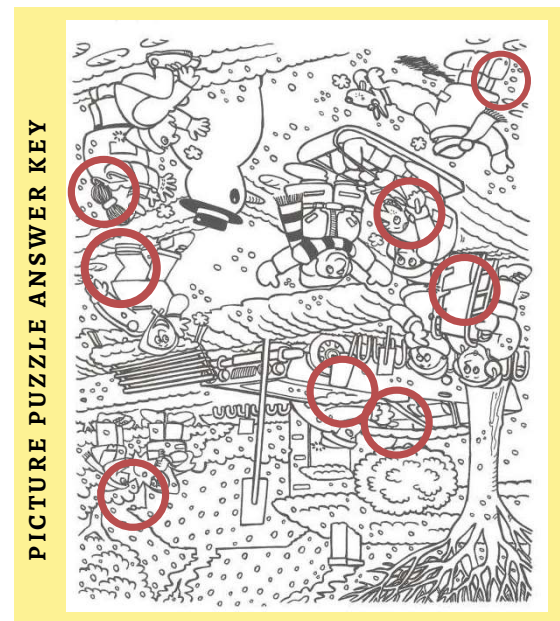
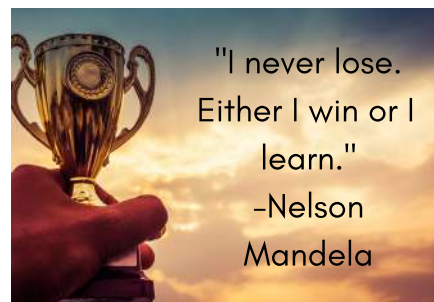
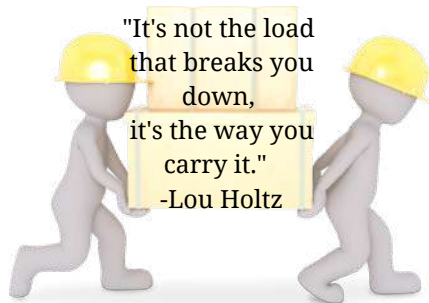
UPCOMING EVENTS

BY KATELYN BRADWELL

Jonesville United Methodist Church STAHL Ministry Addiction Recovery Education Series is excited to host Guest Speaker Michael Blanchard on Wednesday February 16, at 7:00 PM, at Jonesville United Methodist Church located at 963 Main St., Clifton Park, NY, 12065. Michael Blanchard is an award-winning photographer, philanthropist, and author/writer. Michael's story of recovery includes 4 DUI's, a suicide attempt, and over 3 months in a rehab facility to address his escalating battle with alcoholism.

Michael's award-winning books, "Through a Sober Lens" and "Fighting for My Life", tells the story of his journey through his powerful words and extraordinary photographs. By blending photography and writing, Michael has become a voice of hope and inspiration for thousands of individuals and families impacted by addiction to alcohol and drugs.

This event will be livestreamed via the church website: <https://jonesvilleumc.org/jumc-church-services/>



## STAND UP FOR RECOVERY DAY

What is "Stand Up for Recovery Day"? It is a day in which recovery warriors from various recovery community organizations throughout the State of New York gather in order to both celebrate recovery from addictions, but more so, to educate decision-makers and the general public about the recovery movement. For more information, visit <https://for-ny.org/surd-registration/>.



# RECOVERY

## Resources

### WEBSITES

- Al-Anon and Ala-teen Groups** – Hope and help for families and friends of alcoholics: [al-anon.org](http://al-anon.org)
- Alcoholics Anonymous (AA)** - Local group schedule and information: [district13.aahmbny.org](http://district13.aahmbny.org)
- Celebrate Recovery (CR)** – Celebrate Recovery is a Christ-centered, 12-Step recovery program for anyone struggling with hurt, pain or addiction of any kind: [celebraterecovery.com](http://celebraterecovery.com)
- Debtors Anonymous** - Debtors Anonymous offers hope for people whose use of unsecured debt causes problems and suffering in their lives and the lives of others: [debtorsanonymous.org](http://debtorsanonymous.org)
- Digital Recovery Support** -Online recovery support groups are available daily. They are open to anyone who is dealing with substance use, mental health conditions, and any other quality of life concerns. Meetings are led by peer recovery support specialists who have firsthand experience and understand what you're going through: [www.recoveryanswers.org](http://www.recoveryanswers.org)
- Gamblers Anonymous (GA)** – Online services for anyone struggling with a gambling addiction: [gasteps.org](http://gasteps.org)
- Grief Recovery After a Substance Passing (GRASP)** – For those who have lost someone to substance use or addiction: [grasphelp.org](http://grasphelp.org)
- In the rooms** - A global online recovery community who share their strength and experience with one another daily through live meetings, discussion groups, and other tools in the rooms: [intherooms.com](http://intherooms.com)
- My Recovery** – Online 12-step meetings: [myrecovery.com](http://myrecovery.com)
- Narcotics Anonymous (NA)** - local group schedule and information: [narcotics.com](http://narcotics.com)
- Overeaters Anonymous (OA)** – Online support groups for anyone who wants to stop eating compulsively: [oarecovery.com](http://oarecovery.com)
- The Phoenix** – Recovery community organization offering daily live stream cross-fit, yoga and meditation every two hours through the COVID Crisis: [thephoenix.org](http://thephoenix.org)

### PHONE NUMBERS

- The Trevor Project** - Support for youth in crisis: [thetrevorproject.org](http://thetrevorproject.org)/hotline: 866-488-7386
- International Bipolar Association Crisis Line**: 1-800-273-TALK (8255)
- National Association of Anorexia Nervosa and Associated Disorders Helpline**: 630-577-1330
- National Center for PTSD Helpline**: 1-800-273-8255
- National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI)**: Hotline staff are prepared to answer any mental health questions you may have. You can also text NAMI to 741741 for free support. (800) 950-NAMI (6264)
- Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA)**: Available 24/7, 365 days a year: (800) 662-HELP (4357). The professionals on the phone can provide treatment information and referrals in English and Spanish.
- MentalHealth.gov**: Available 8am to 8pm EST to provide mental health information and treatment referrals: (877) 726-4727
- National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH)**: Available 8:30am to 5pm EST: (866) 615-6464 or (866) 415-8051 (TTY). Professionals can answer any mental health related questions in English or Spanish.
- Boys Town**: Specially trained counselors are available 24/7, 365 days a year to provide crisis support specifically for children and their families: (800) 448-3000

### PODCASTS

- This Naked Mind** - Some of the episodes discuss alcohol withdrawals, the link between drinking and binge eating, how to deal with loneliness, and more.
- Recovery Rocks** - Our varied paths show listeners that there are a myriad paths to recovery and countless songs to rock out to along the way.
- Mental Health - Hope and Recovery** - They share inspirational true stories and a host of recovery skills. You'll learn about treatment options, coping skills, goal setting, relationships, and mindfulness.
- Mental Illness Happy Hour** - Weekly interviews with comedians, artists, friends, and the occasional doctor.; exploring mental illness, trauma, addiction and negative thinking.

### APPS

- Addiction Apps**: Twenty-Four Hours A Day (Free), Quit That! Habit Tracker (Free), NoMo (Free)
- Counseling Apps**: TalkSpace (\$\$) BetterHelp (\$\$) Larkr (\$\$) ReGain (\$\$) TeenCounseling (\$\$)
- Suicide Prevention Apps**: MY3 (Free) notOK (Free)
- General Mental Health Apps**: What's Up (CBT; Free) Mood Kit (CBT; \$)
- Anxiety Apps**: MindShift (Free), Self-Help Anxiety Management – SAM (Free), CBT Thought Record Diary (Free)
- Bipolar Disorder Apps**: IMoodJournal (\$), EMoods (Free)
- Depression Apps**: Talk Space Online Therapy (\$\$), Happify (Free), MoodTools (CBT; Free)
- Eating Disorder Apps**: Recovery Record (Free), Rise Up & Recovery (Free), LifeSum (Free)
- Obsessive Compulsive Disorder Apps**: nOCD (Free), Worry Watch (\$), GG OCD (Free)
- PTSD Apps**: PTSD Coach (Free), Breathe2Relax (Free)
- Schizophrenia Apps**: UCSF Prime (Free), Schizophrenia Health Story Lines (Free)
- Mindfulness & Meditation Apps**: Headspace (\$), Calm (\$), Ten Percent Happier (\$)

### WWAMH DUAL RECOVERY SUPPORT GROUPS

EVERY TUESDAY FROM  
4:00-5:00 PM AT THE  
HOPE & HEALING  
RECOVERY CENTER:  
2 MAPLE STREET, HUDSON FALLS  
ATTEND IN PERSON OR  
VIRTUALLY - ZOOM MEETING ID:  
844-2214-0148

PLEASE VISIT [WWW.WWAMH.ORG](http://WWW.WWAMH.ORG) FOR  
MORE INFORMATION & COPIES OF  
OUR NEWSLETTERS

THANKS FOR READING! :)

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AT [RRYAN@WWAMH.ORG](mailto:RRYAN@WWAMH.ORG)

