

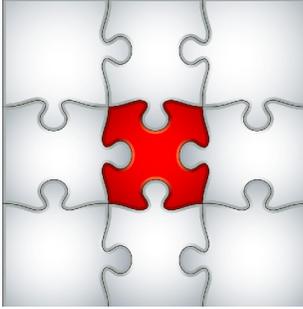
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"Grass Roots Giving from the Heart"

Setting Up and Maintaining a Friends Anonymous Chapter

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Getting Started: Putting the Pieces Together

Starting a Friends Anonymous chapter is not complicated but, like any successful organization, it must be built upon a solid foundation.

Remember as the chapter initiator, you are the most important part of the puzzle. Your enthusiasm and commitment to starting a chapter and seeing it through this initial phase is essential for success. Your

efforts now will be handsomely rewarded in the very near future. You will see lives changed by the good work of you and your fellow chapter members. You will also experience the joy of working with others who share your interest in making your community a better place to live and in finding a way to make your own lives deeper and more meaningful.

Our goal is to see you and the members of your circle create a long-lasting, valuable entity that will satisfy your needs now and into the distant future. Our first chapter is in its fourteenth year and is more vital than ever. We hope this guide will ensure similar success for your chapter.

By following the step-by-step implementation procedure described below, you will be well on your way to a successful startup. You may even discover a short-cut to success. If you do, please don't hesitate to share it with all of us in the Friends Anonymous community. Our online community is only a click away, and we are always available to answer any questions you might have.

Step One: Forming a New Chapter

Although there is no limit to the number of people who can participate in the life of a Friends Anonymous group, it is better to start small and then grow your numbers as you become more familiar with each other and the needs in your community. In the beginning, we recommend forming a small group of eight to ten people. This not only makes it easier to schedule a common meeting day and time, but it also gives you enough members to comfortably share chapter responsibilities. It is also an ideal number for a Story Circle, our favorite "getting to know each other" activity (more about this later).

1. The Informational Meeting: Letters of Invitation to Prospective Members

In your setup kit you will find a set of brochures, invitations, sample letters etc. that can be used to organize your first meeting. They will help you explain the basic principles and processes of Friends Anonymous and answer the most frequently asked questions that a prospective member might have.

But who should you ask to join?

If your own introduction to FAI came through your membership in some other group or organization, a good place to start is right there. Whether you're a member of a



service group, church group or other community organization, it's likely that other members of these groups will share many of your values and will find Friends Anonymous an attractive option. Assuming that two or three people out of ten will respond to your invitation, pick a day and time and send out 50 to 60 letters of invitation to the first meeting. A breakfast or luncheon meeting will work well if you have a location that is not too noisy or crowded. There is no perfect time to hold your first meeting, so be prepared to offer more than one opportunity for people to gather.

On the Friends Anonymous Materials CD, you will find electronic versions of the invitations, letters, brochure etc. in formats that can be used on desktop computers and printers and by print shops. Documentation on how to use these is found on the CD. You can also download a wide range of promotional material (including video clips, photographs, graphics and powerpoint presentations) from the FAI website (www.FriendsAnonymous.org)

(Note: Although all of these can be customized to suit your situation, we ask that you not substitute other graphics or formatting that will materially change what is included.)

2. The Informational Meeting



Your goal for this first meeting is to create a Friends Anonymous Giving Circle. In order for people to become members of the Circle, they must clearly understand and accept the principles of Friends Anonymous and be willing to follow the basic procedures and policies established by FAI.

Although every Circle will have its own unique character or style of being, it is important that the fundamentals of FA are in place before a

chapter can be effective as a representative of Friends Anonymous International.

Here is a suggested agenda for this first meeting. Many other options are possible, but this particular format is tried and true. If you are a seasoned presenter, feel free to amend or modify this approach. Otherwise, using this agenda is a good place to begin.

We have provided you with all the materials you should need to answer the questions that those who attend will likely have. Included is a special DVD video that explains the nature of Friends Anonymous, how it works and some testimonials regarding its effectiveness.

Ten minutes long, it is informative and highly motivating. Between the video and the information that you sent out in advance, you should have answers to most questions prospective members may have about the way FA works and how they fit in.

If those who attend have any questions that you are not able to answer, please contact Friends Anonymous International using the contact information provided in your



materials package. We are here to make this process as easy as possible.

Agenda for the Informational Meeting:

- a) Welcoming Remarks - Present the agenda and the goal of the presentation
- b) Show the FAI video - **“Igniting the Spirit of Anonymous Giving”**
- c) Distribute copies of **Friends Anonymous In Action**
- d) Use the **FAI Power Point** to show how the FA meets community needs
- e) Conduct a Q & A dialogue
- f) Ask for willingness to participate
- g) Schedule your first meeting.

Although the frequency of meeting is up to the group, we suggest that your chapter meet at least once per month. For many years, our founding chapter has been meeting the third Friday of each month at 7:30am. This consistent meeting time has made it possible for members to put the date on their personal calendars well in advance. You will quickly realize that no one time of the day or week will meet everyone’s needs. You might need to experiment with different options. Again, focus on consistency - it really helps with attendance.

3. Your First Chapter Meeting

The first meeting of your new chapter is an exciting one. You have much to accomplish and many decisions to make. Let’s look at the most important areas first. These are as follows:

- a) Chapter Administration
- b) Gifts from members
- c) Sponsor Network
- d) Decision Making
- e) Bridges and Bonds Between Members
- f) Handling Finances
- g) Getting the Word Out - PR





a) Chapter Administration

Although the Friends Anonymous chapter meetings are informal and largely unstructured, there are a few important roles that must be carried out if the chapter is to be an effective agent for change in the community. For example, each meeting has a chairperson.

This responsibility can be shared among the membership on a monthly, quarterly or annual basis. The chair has no authority, just helps to keep the meeting moving along.

Other responsibilities include:

Friends Anonymous International Representative

Each chapter must have someone who serves as the chapter's representative to FAI. This person is the vital link between the national organization and the local chapter.

As such, the member will prepare a short annual report form provided by FAI and periodically share information about the chapter's activities with other chapters via the FAI website.

Treasurer

A member who gathers the donations and deposits them in the chapter's bank account. The treasurer updates the members at the monthly meeting and periodically via email. One of the goals of a chapter is to have quick turnover of its account balances. We've found that a low bank balance is one of the most effective "triggers" for giving.

Community Contact Person

A member who is designated as the key contact person for Sponsors to contact when they have identified an urgent need in the community. The contact person is responsible for emailing or calling members to alert them of the need. When three members agree to fund the need, the contact person will ask the treasurer cut a check and make sure it makes its way to the Sponsor.

Sponsor Ambassadors

These are members who agree to keep in touch with current Sponsors. Once a month an ambassador will contact his or her designated Sponsor to see if there are any needs on the horizon, provide information about the FA chapter, and occasionally invite the Sponsor to a monthly meeting or quarterly event.

Public Relations/Community Liason

A member who agrees to keep the community informed about the work of the Chapter. Submit press releases, attend community meetings, and keep the members up to date about needs in the community. Ideally, the chapter will have a small group of members



working in this area. One person might maintain the chapter's website (provided by FAI), while another might take responsibility for locating new sponsors. An enthusiastic and dedicated commitment to these duties will ensure success for your new chapter.

b) Gifts from Members

A Friends Anonymous Chapter is a giving circle. As such each member is expected to contribute a gift each month. The size of the gift is solely at the discretion of the member. No one will know how much each member gives and no statements are sent regarding how much a member has contributed. This practice is in accord with the principle of **giving without recognition or personal reward**.

We suggest for every meeting that each member put cash (or check if preferred) in a blank envelope and place it in the chapter donation "basket." At the end of the meeting, the treasurer will gather the envelopes and deposit the funds in the chapter bank account.

Remember your chapter is not tax exempt. You may not use these gifts as tax deductible, charitable donations.

We encourage you to contact others in the community who you feel will resonate with the mission and principles of Friends Anonymous. We have sample letters and other materials that you can use to encourage these people to make anonymous donations to your chapter's account. Holding quarterly luncheons, making presentations to service clubs and other organizations in your community, and promoting other outreach activities can generate significant support for your efforts.

c) Sponsor Network



The most important first step for your chapter is to identify potential Sponsors in your community. These are the "eyes and ears" that will help you locate people who are falling through the cracks, the people you will ultimately help with your anonymous gifts.

For example, you may find a school nurse or counselor who notices a child with a specific need. A nurse once contacted our founding chapter about a young student who needed

gym shoes. the child suffered emotionally as a result. Friends Anonymous provided the shoes. It was a small gift, but it was very significant for the child. That child knew that someone cared about him. As he looked around it could have been anyone. It could have been you that cared for him.

Your chapter will be looking for people who are in a position to notice needs: teachers, police officers, counselors, nurses, doctors, ministers or pastors, your friends and neighbors. We have many more examples and suggestions on our website and on your materials CD.

Once you've discovered a potential sponsor, you will need to familiarize the person with your chapter and how Friends Anonymous might help. Suggest an invitation to a meeting, send a copy of your materials, or arrange to meet a potential sponsor over coffee or lunch. It will not be too difficult to find sponsors and to get started using your gifts.



A few things to keep in mind when approaching potential Sponsors:

First, look for seasoned veterans -- people who have been in the community for a long time. They will know when someone has needs that conventional programs or avenues just can't meet. They will usually know when needs can be met by conventional programs and will direct those in need to these agencies before calling your chapter. Over time you will familiarize yourselves with these channels of support and will also be able to direct those in need to them.

Second, remind potential Sponsors that they do not have to make a case for the person in need. Your relationship with Sponsors is one of trust. If they feel there is a need, then there is. If the school nurse says that Jimmy needs a pair of shoes, he needs a pair of shoes. The nurse does not have to explain why Jimmy is in need, or his background, or any other condition that might make his "case" more compelling. Trust the nurse's judgement. The nurse is a seasoned veteran. The sponsor knows.

This is one of the reasons why we fund almost every request we have from our sponsors. If we have the money, we trust the need and provide the gift. No questions asked,

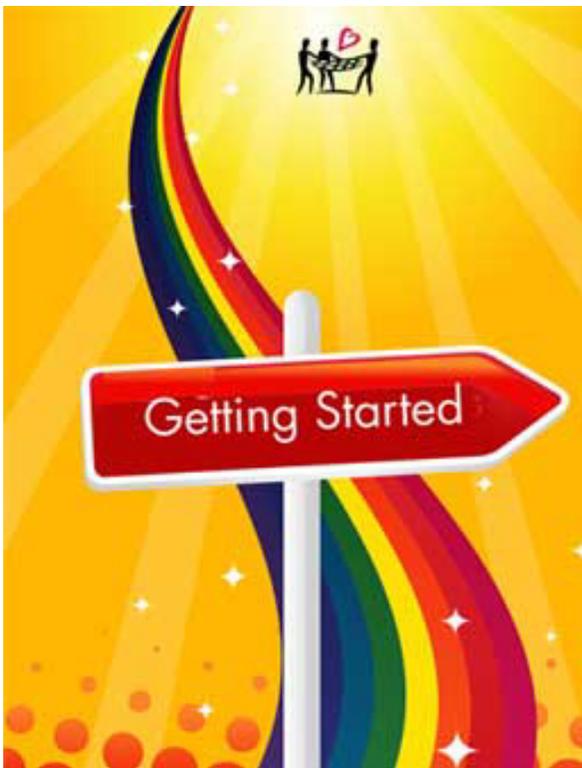


no case made. If the person who receives the gift wants to know where the gift comes from, the Sponsor can simply say, “you have a friend in the community who cares about you.” That is all that needs to be said.

Third, explain to the person that the role of Sponsor is one of an intermediary between the person in need and your chapter. As such, they will receive the gift and will be responsible for making sure it gets to the person or family they are sponsoring. If the gift is for rent, the chapter makes the check out to the landlord. If it is for utilities a check is cut for the utility provider etc. If the situation demands cash, the check is made out to the sponsor. Nine times out of ten, the payment process is simple and straightforward.

Finally, make it clear that Sponsors are an integral part of your Friends Anonymous chapter. Without their “eyes and ears” your money would sit idle. You will keep them informed about your resources and will respond as quickly as possible to the needs they find. In the beginning, you will likely have some mismatch between needs and ability to meet these needs, but over time it all seems to balance out.

d) Decision Making



Although almost every need will be deemed worthy, it is essential that chapter members are asked for their approval or given a chance to comment. We recommend setting up a simple email or phone “tree” to announce the request and to remind the members of the current fund balance.

We recommend that a need be approved if the funds are available and at least three members say “yes.” If you do not have sufficient funds on hand, the call will be out to everyone on your list-serve and, more often than not, money will be deposited. The founding chapter’s experience is that an empty bank account is a powerful motivator for individual giving. Very rarely a request may meet with resistance by one or more chapter members. If time permits, the chapter convener may de-

cide to call a meeting of the membership to discuss the request. Again, this is very unusual. However, even if a request is funded, any issues surrounding the request should be carefully aired and discussed.

For example, we one time had a request to pay a parking ticket. This raised some questions among some of our members as to the legitimacy of paying fines. Once we learned more about the circumstances surrounding the situation that gave rise to



the ticket, we all agreed that the request was a reasonable one. We approved the gift, and the fine was paid.

Over time you will find that your chapter will become more comfortable with “odd” or “unreasonable” requests and will **not pass judgement on the worthiness of the need**. This is an essential principle of Friends Anonymous. Being non-judgemental in all aspects of your chapter’s life will make your chapter stronger and more valuable to the community.

e) Building Bridges and Bonds Between Members

Your monthly meeting creates an opportunity for everyone in the group to get to know each other in deeper more meaningful ways. One tried-and-true method for bridging the differences between people while deepening their bonds is to use the Story Circle Process as developed by Story Circles International In. (SCI)



Sharing the stories of your life with other members of the chapter will help everyone understand how each one came to be a member of Friends Anonymous. There are only a few “rules” to follow in the story sharing process to ensure a successful experience.

Each Story Circle has a specific topic (see your materials CD for a great variety of story topic sheets provided by FAI to help you think of a story to share. Through the use of a kitchen timer you can allocate the time equally (5 to 6 minutes per story) and you are asked not to interrupt the teller. Otherwise, you sit back and respectfully listen to the others as they share their stories. This is easy to do and very rewarding.

Please encourage your members to attend meetings regularly. There is simply no substitute for face-to-face communication when it comes to building a bond between and among your members. As long as your meetings are meaningful and joyful, you will have no difficulty keeping the group vital and vibrant.

f) Handling Finances

Although FAI is a non-profit 501(c)3 corporation, *your individual chapter is not*. This means that gifts from your members and others to your chapter's bank account are not tax deductible.

Although trust is a fundamental value in Friends Anonymous chapters, it is good practice to have two members responsible for the financial life of the chapter and to have financial processes that are open to everyone.

Your treasurer's first task is to open a bank account. Most banks require some tax ID number to open an account. For personal accounts, this is your social security number; for business accounts, a state or federal tax ID number is required.

Since you will not be requesting tax credit for your contributions, you do not need a federal tax ID number. Most states have a threshold for funds received (for example, in Minnesota this is \$25,000 per year*) after which you must register and report annually. Charitable giving has become a hot-button issue in many states, so you need to be aware of your state's charitable giving requirements.

We have

prepared a knowledge base that you can access via our website. Please check this out and share the information with your chapter members.

As a charitable organization, most banks will give you a free account. You will want them to know that money from many different sources will be deposited in the account - much of it anonymously given.

You will likely want to open the account using one of your member's social security number as a tax ID number. Have two signatories for all checks and make withdrawals only by check. Make it a checking account so that no interest accrues to the account holder. This insures that no tax liability is generated by your chapter's activities.

[**Minnesota law requires a charitable organization soliciting or intending to solicit contributions in excess of \$25,000 a year, or having paid officers or staff, or using a professional fund raiser, to file a Registration Statement.* - Attorney General, State of Minnesota]

If you have any additional questions, please contact us via email or phone.



g) Getting the Word Out - PR

Although the recipient of a gift from Friends Anonymous does not know exactly who contributed, there is no reason not to know that it was from your local FA chapter. It is important to “get the word out” about your good work and to invite others to participate.

We are developing a special PR package for you to use. It will be available by May of 2009. Check out the website for details.

