

VOLUME LVI | ISSUE 2 | MAR-JUL 2020

# SERENITY MESSENGER



THE  
NEWSLETTER OF THE  
FAMILIES ANONYMOUS  
FELLOWSHIP

FOR RELATIVES AND FRIENDS  
CONCERNED ABOUT ANOTHER'S USE  
OF DRUGS, ALCOHOL, OR RELATED  
BEHAVIORAL PROBLEMS

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**SERENITY MESSENGER**

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Editorial Team: Elizabeth S., Bob S.

**EDITOR'S NOTE**

Life as we know it has changed. No matter which corner of the world we are in, we are grappling with the sudden shock of the pandemic – and with its circumstances that challenge how we have learnt to live our lives as human beings.

A key aspect of this change is isolation, of being on our own or having lesser access to our support systems as before. Can we take this time we have with ourselves to look within? Instead of being afraid of self reflection, it may be a good time to make a 'searching and fearless moral inventory' as Step Four encourages us. Perhaps the way we have reacted to the pandemic and isolation will reveal a little something about ourselves.

Life has also changed in how we experience community. Those simple ways of living that didn't need a thought before – just talking to a neighbour, meeting friends, going out for a walk, celebrating with family...now could pose a serious threat of infection if done without precautions. We have to keep ourselves at a distance from those we love. But though we could not meet in person for weekly FA meetings, many have connected with their FA groups as well as with members in other parts of the world online.

Collectively as the world is at a place where it needs to 'accept' this new reality, the program has taught us to ask the higher power for courage to change the things we can. Let us also remember at this time that for many FA members, coping with addiction of a loved one might bring worries about their safety from the pandemic. Times that we feel isolated may be the times we need to reach out to each other. To tide over these new strange dangers, we need each other's shoulders to lean on more than ever. How grateful we are to have found the support of the fellowship in these uncertain times.

We'd also like to remind readers that submissions to the newsletter have reduced greatly in recent years and we encourage members to share their stories with each other through the newsletter.

**In fellowship,  
Elizabeth**

## Losing a Child during a Pandemic

*Though you can never get over losing a child, FA member Leigh Y. finds strength from the program one day at a time*

On February 21, 2020, our family lost our precious daughter to a heroin overdose. She was 25 years old and this was not her first overdose, but it was her last. While the initial shock was devastating and we experienced out of this world trauma that no parent expects to, we were not totally unprepared or ill-equipped to start dealing with the loss.

Once the fog of my reality started to lift, I was surprised what started to come into focus.

First, we were starting the isolation of everyone's reality of the

covid19 pandemic. We were not able to be with family and friends. They say that in a period of grief and mourning, you must be careful not to isolate yourself too much and yet here we were, facing months doing that very thing. I adopted the attitude that this could be a blessing in disguise. A chance to reflect, to be quiet with my thoughts and perhaps to process our tragedy. We of course talked to family and friends on Zoom and were able to participate in our weekly Families Anonymous meetings by Zoom.

Soon after our daughter's death, the first feeling that came into focus was gratitude. Gratitude for all the tools I had learned from the beginning of our journey of recovery after first learning that our daughter was using drugs. The tools of acceptance, powerlessness,

detaching with love, setting boundaries, and getting support from people in different groups that we have participated in. All these tools had led me to a place of true serenity, knowing that my daughter had her own journey to go on and I had mine. I realized that if I had not worked on my recovery for the last seven years, my daughter's death would have put me in a very dark and unhealthy place. Not to say that I have not felt true pain in losing her, or cried so many tears,

but I know I will get through this even though you never completely get over losing a child.

Being in our Families Anonymous group has been amazing... with such supportive people who have surrounded us with love. I have reflected many times on my journey of recovery and

how in the beginning (7 years ago) I had to figure out my new normal. Now I am faced once again with figuring out my new normal after the death of our daughter. I have never questioned that I will get there. My toolbox of what I have learned will sustain me going forward. This pandemic has given me time to reflect and conclude that I will always need to be in my support group. Even though our daughter's journey has ended, my journey of recovery goes on "ONE DAY AT A TIME."

***They say that in a period of grief and mourning, you must be careful not to isolate yourself too much and yet here we were, facing months doing that very thing.***

## **"I Wonder Where I Would Be if I Had Never Met You"**

*Regret is an emotion that grips us all sometimes. FA member Sydney K. articulates, with heartbreaking tenderness, the possibilities that could never be.*

I wonder where I would be if I had never met you. The thought races through my mind every waking hour of each day. I wonder where I would have been and what I'd have done. Would I have fulfilled my childhood dream of becoming an astronaut and soared above the sky, reaching out for the stars? Would I be sitting at home with my three kids, teaching them how to do math the best I could? Would I have played sports in high school and made the honor roll just to put a smile on my mother's face? Would I be normal? The truth is...I won't know, not now, and not ever. The truth is...I did meet you. I met you when I was young when I felt alone. The world seemed bleak and I felt abandoned. I met you in my own neighborhood, a place they always said was secure, guarded, trustworthy even. I met you when I needed a helping hand, a friend. I needed someone, and I found you instead. The rollercoaster we have been on has taken me to tremendous places, uplifting me above the clouds and sunken beneath the earth, we were on this expedition together. I will not forget how you came; sought me out while I needed guidance when it seemed like no one else would...but in the darkness, at twilight when my head starts to pound and the thoughts come rushing to my head like waves crashing on the shore, I lay awake and wonder...where would I be had I never met you. Would I have caused my family this much pain and anguish? Would I have betrayed my friends just for a moment with you? Would I have watched my life, my friends, and my family all slip away...just for the moments of "sanity" you had given me? Would my life be full of chaos and strife? Would I look in the mirror with animosity and resentment at the reflection staring back? The truth is if I had never met you, I would be truly happy. If I had never met you, I would have my family at my side, I would have my friends in times of need. If I had never met you I would have never lost my world in what seemed like an instant, overnight. I wish, when we meet again I could say all this, but in honesty...I cannot. For you are my only family, my only friend. You hold me together when I break and shatter. You catch me when I fall. Because of you, I have fallen for the last time, with no one there to catch me. As a glaze washes over my bitter, lifeless eyes I begin to wonder...when did you drain me of my light? Because of you, I lay here cold, alone. No one is coming, and no one will. Although I am fading, growing dimmer now, my mind finally becomes clear, pure. I am no longer drowning in your shadow. I wonder where I would be if I had never met you, but because I did, I will never know. Because I did, I left this world alone, and alone with you is all I ever was.



## Working the Steps during a Pandemic

*“I am powerless over the pandemic, but I know I am not helpless over my actions,”*  
writes Dan T-R from Madrid

My name is Dan and I am a grateful member of the Families Anonymous Family Groups.

There are currently no English speaking Famanon meetings where I live.

Nevertheless, given these tough times, I have taken advantage of the situation to ‘travel’ the globe to attend many different meetings from multiple groups. I could

attend an FA meeting out of Falkirk, Scotland, which really helped broaden my horizons. I heard stories of others experiencing the quarantine, confinement and pandemic in different ways.

Since there are regular online meetings, it has been lovely to connect with the fellowship via this medium. I am really thankful for the amazing technology that makes this possible. I dread to imagine how I would be coping with this crisis, without the program. Thanks to it, I am doing my best to live one day at a time. The *Just for Today* card gently reminds me that *I can do something for twelve hours that would appall me if I felt that I had to keep it up for a lifetime.* That is a wonderful lesson that helps me to keep working on myself, minute by minute, hour by hour and reminds me that I don’t have to

***I am grateful in the knowledge that this too shall pass and that I have plenty of homework, in the form of my step work, to keep me focused on myself.***

project or worry about when all this will end.

A part of me enjoys that life is simpler; I am confined to my home, except when I have to go out for food and medicines. I don’t feel the pressure that I ‘should’ be out and about, doing more things, being more productive. I enjoy relaxing at home, particularly during weekend mornings. Thanks to this experience of isolation, I am learning to feel more comfortable in my own company,

which is a real blessing.

When everything kicked off, I was in the midst of working Step 8 with my wonderful Sponsor. I am now on Step 9, and in spite of the confinement, I have been able to make direct amends. It is an extremely healing, humbling process.

Especially when I clean my side of the street, take responsibility for my actions, but make no attempt to explain or justify them and merely hear the other person out. These are true amends in my eyes.

I went through the stages of awareness, acceptance and action when I found out that we were in a lockdown. It was a process, which began with shock, but then I understood and accepted the situation. I now do my best to work hard, eat healthily, exercise, stay clean, dress well, keep my flat

clean and tidy, have fun and maintain a daily routine. This helps keep me sane. Staying in touch with family, friends and attending regular meetings is vital for my well being.

Each morning I wake up, meditate, pray, read the *Just for Today* bookmark and a daily reader. Going to bed after enjoying a recovery story helps me rest well, with great words of wisdom from the program. I am grateful in the knowledge that this too shall

pass and that I have plenty of homework, in the form of my step work, to keep me focused on myself. Step 1 reminds me I am powerless over the pandemic, but I know I am not helpless over my actions, behavior and attitude, thanks to the help of a Higher Power.

Yours in grateful recovery,

Dan T-R (Madrid, Spain)

### *Some FA Slogans*

- *How Important Is It?*
- *Easy Does It*
- *Keep an Open Mind*
- *Think*
- *Progress Not Perfection*
- *Keep Coming Back*
- *But for the Grace of God*
- *One Day at a Time*
- *Listen and Learn*
- *Together We Can Make It*
- *Keep It Simple*
- *First Things First*

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up, and join the  
conversation!*

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Calling all members! We need your voice to keep the newsletter going. Submissions to the newsletter have reduced in the last few years, we encourage FA members to send us your articles, poems, photographs and art works that you'd like to share with the fellowship. Send your submissions to [newsletter@familiesanonymous.org](mailto:newsletter@familiesanonymous.org) (Articles must be at least 450 words)

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## *THE TRIBUTE* by Judy K

I have been an FA member for over 5 years and have found great comfort and help from all the caring members. Thank you for all that you all do! And thank you for helping me find the strength to also help newcomers.

I recently lost a very close friend of more than 8 years to opioid addiction. She was 30 years young, with two small children and our family is devastated. For a time, this woman was like a daughter to me and a sister to my own daughter. We are heartbroken that she could not find her way out of this terrible disease. And because of the COVID 19 shutdowns, most of us were unable to go to the funeral, and those that could found the funeral to be so consumed with COVID protection processes that it greatly hindered any ability to bring comfort to the immediate family or self.

In my own need to find a way to express my sorrow, I wrote this poem and gave it to the bereaving immediate family. I share it now with you and all of our FA members and readers in hopes that if you also have been burdened with this type of grief and sorrow, that you too will find some comfort from it in the days that come. I did.

### *THE TRIBUTE*

*God's plan for you was not our plan, more grand than mind can grasp  
Your earthly death yields celestial life, to this I cling and clasp*

*Released from pain, your heartache gone, the struggle finally freed  
All anguish, shame, laid to rest, your soul can now proceed  
Reunited with those who went before, jubilant in hallowed song  
Celebration of life, new journey ahead, vibrant, resounding, strong*

*Transformed are you, an angel now, adorned in robes of white  
Dazzling beauty, profound peace, your angelic wings take flight*

*We find you now in other ways, more subtle than before  
You're in the breeze, hovering o'er, like winds that blow ashore  
Your smile is in the sunshine's rays, your love found everywhere,  
On hiking paths and snowy slopes, in wafting candlelit prayer  
In fragrant blossoms and crisp red leaves that crunch and life renew  
In collected droplets on fresh green ferns that come from moonlit dew*

*We feel you in the nuzzle of a furry devoted friend  
Your children's eyes reflect your love and passions that transcend  
Your kisses in the drops of rain, the ocean waves that break  
The rustling leaves that whisper love, new life you shall partake*

*Your eyes gaze down to earth below, no longer look above  
Give solace and strength in our grief and loss, a rainbow reveals your love  
God, help us in our helplessness, our pain and grief abound  
Dear Higher Power, bring us peace in arms that wrap around*

## BEREAVEMENT, HEALING & HOPE

### HEARTFELT STORIES OF HOPE AND COMFORT FROM PARENTS WHO HAVE LOST CHILDREN TO THE DISEASE OF ADDICTION

Death. Scary subject. We share often at our meetings about our attempts to 'get out of the way of our loved one's recovery'. Rarely do we admit that there is a fear we all have that he or she may die from the disease of substance abuse. We know it, but we don't dwell on it. We don't discuss it. We hope, instead, for health and recovery for them and for us. This is a positive attitude to have, but sometimes our loved ones pay the ultimate price for their addiction, and they are gone.

FA's newest book is about this very subject; facing and surviving the loss of a loved child to the disease of addiction. It has been written by parents who have courageously shared their stories to help others. The writers, rather than being forever devastated by their losses, tell of how healing can begin, as they journey toward peace and serenity. It is clear from their stories that the FA fellowship is an important part of their recoveries, just as it is for all of us, no matter what our current circumstances may be. This makes it relevant to everyone who has been helped by FA.

*Bereavement, Healing & Hope* contains heartbreaking life stories that are real; we all can relate to the writers' struggles. But in addition, each writer describes something unexpected and heartening: a feeling of gratitude and hope for the future! Yes, these inspiring stories show us the strength of the human spirit and the loving guidance of our Higher Power. This book is not only for those who have experienced the death of an addicted child, it is for all of us. With uplifting quotes and personal accounts, many FA principles unfold, one being the healing power of *accepting the unacceptable* and another that *we can and must choose to go forward in order to recover*.

May this book shine with the light of acceptance,  
truth and compassion for all.

**Order: *Bereavement, Healing & Hope* #1035 from the WSO (\$3.75)**



## FA Spotlight

### A Recovering Addict Comes Home

Your loved one completes rehab treatment and is ready to come home. It's great that this major and critical step has been completed by the alcoholic or drug addict, but this journey is not over.

Now what is the next step for a father or mother or both to take? How do you handle the next step of living with your son or daughter who is soon to arrive? Is this a question which you have asked yourself? If so, this pamphlet may be a very useful tool for you.

This pamphlet tells the story of one set of parents and how they coped with the ups and downs and challenges associated with a recovering addict. It covers their excited anticipation of their child's return and how the FA program helped them successfully deal with the challenges of their addict's return home

Does this situation "hit home" with you? Do you face the same scenario? Could you use some guidance and wisdom from the FA program for help? If so, *A Recovering Addict Comes Home* (#1013) can be a very useful starting point in assisting you to address this critical situation in the best possible manner.

Copies of this pamphlet can be ordered from FA's website, priced at only \$.40 per pamphlet. Help could be in your hands quickly, so please consider purchasing a copy to provide you with guidance in this critical, parental, next step. Take this opportunity to be encouraged!

## Gratitude Prayer

We end as we began with hope for courage one day at a time. May we equally accept the serenity we are granted and the shortcomings that persist. Our lives, our love, our happiness is ours to behold. May our loved ones find peace in their choices as we try to provide unconditional encouragement, faith, and acceptance. We are grains of sand on a vast shore. Alone we start out as tiny, imperfect specks. Together we form a safe and serene beach on which to rest. We are grateful for a higher power that brought us together so that we may help ourselves and each other. Vinnie C Baldwinsville NY

## DONATIONS

### *Commemorative Donations*

*In Memory of Andrew, son of Alan B., Lynn B. and Barbara H.,  
by Jake and Barbara S.*

*In Memory of Josh L., son of Rose and Eric L., by Jake and  
Barbara S.*

*In Memory of Bob V., by Michael and Karen B.*

*In Memory of Dennis, brother of Board Member Donna D., by  
Jake and Barbara S.*

*In memory of Dan R., former Intergroup Board Member and  
former World Service Board Member, by Kathy S.*

*In memory of Dan R., husband of Angel R. and former World  
Service Board Member, by Jake and Barbara S.*

*In memory of Dan R., husband of Angel R., by Ann and Howard P.*

*In memory of Dana B., daughter of Alan B., Lynn B. and Barbara H., by Ann and Howard P.*

*In memory of Dennis, brother of Donna D., by Ann and Howard P.*

### *Group Donations*

*In Memory of Dan R., former Chicagoland Intergroup Board Member, former World Service  
Board Member and Member of Group 171, by Group 171, Arlington Heights, IL*



As per the Seventh Tradition, each group should be self-supporting. Your donations help support the activities of the World Service Office. For more information on how to donate, please visit [www.familiesanonymous.org](http://www.familiesanonymous.org) and click **DONATE NOW!** Thank you for supporting the many activities of FA World Service.

Your contribution is tax-deductible.

**FAMILIES ANONYMOUS VIRTUAL MEETINGS DIRECTORY JUNE 26, 2020**

State	City	Group #	Virtual Meeting Day/Time	Login Details
FL	Fort Myers	1996	Thursday 7:00 pm	Contact (914) 954-9617 or ftmyersfa@gmail.com for further information.
FL	Bradenton	2056	Tuesday 7:30 pm	Online meeting conducted via Zoom. Contact Cindy S at (813) 997-9558 or csparky90@gmail.com, or Maureen G. (201) 562-6250 for further information.
GA	Buckhead	1639	Thursday 7:00 pm	Contact Amrita at (404) 518-1158 or amrita1015@gmail.com for further information.
GA	Marietta	1598	Tuesday 7:30 pm	Contact EastCobbFAInfo@gmail.com for further information.
GA	Roswell	1906	Monday 7:15 pm	Contact (404) 213 - 0604 or FA.Roswell.Georgia@gmail.com for further information.
IL	Westmont	1820	Wednesday 7:30 pm	Contact Matt B at (630) 235-9816 or nwbearcat80@yahoo.com for further information.
IL	Winnetka	494	Wednesday 7:00 pm	Contact Carla L. at (847) 721-1951 or carjaz@aol.com for further information.
KY	Louisville	1989	Wednesday 7:00 pm	Contact Kevin Judd at (502)744-3622 or kevinjudd@bellsouth.net for further information.
NJ	Andover Township	2005	Thursday 7:30 pm	Contact Susan Ferny at Faandove@gmail.com for further information.
NJ	Colts Neck	976	Wednesday 7:30 pm	Contact Karin Thomas at (908) 461-7133 for further information.
NJ	Englewood	1152	Friday 7:45 pm	Go to <a href="https://us04web.zoom.us/j/992668259">https://us04web.zoom.us/j/992668259</a> . Use Meeting ID 992668259. Contact Constance C at <a href="mailto:connieclark717@gmail.com">connieclark717@gmail.com</a> for further information.
NJ	Lawrenceville	665	Monday 7:30 pm	Contact Sandy O. at (609) 865-7216 or slogg51@gmail.com (Secretary) or Carol H. at <a href="mailto:mchecky@verizon.net">mchecky@verizon.net</a> (meeting host) for further information.

NJ	Mount Laurel	2119	Monday 7:15 pm	To access meeting click link below from computer, tablet or Smartphone: <a href="https://global.gotomeeting.com/join/879603853">https://global.gotomeeting.com/join/879603853</a> ->Click Download app or Go to opener. You can also dial in using your phone: --> +1 (571) 317-3112 879603853# Contact Stacey (856) 745-7843 or FA_MtLaurel@hotmail.com for further information.
NJ	Cherry Hill	1345	Wednesday 7:15 pm	To access meeting click link below from computer, tablet or Smartphone: <a href="https://global.gotomeeting.com/join/879603853">https://global.gotomeeting.com/join/879603853</a> ->Click Download app or Go to opener. You can also dial in using your phone: --> +1 (571) 317-3112 879603853#. Contact Peter (609) 442-5830 or sjfa1345@gmail.com for further information.
NJ	Voorhees	1972	Saturday 10:45 am	To access meeting click link below from computer, tablet or smart phone: <a href="https://global.gotomeeting.com/join/879603853">https://global.gotomeeting.com/join/879603853</a> ->Click Download app or Go to opener. You can also dial in using your phone: --> +1 (571) 317-3112 879603853# Contact Patti G at (856)783-0148 or huprn@comcast.net for further information.
NY	Garden City, Long Island	262	Thursday 7:30 pm	Go to Zoom.us and use meeting ID 509803626 Contact (516) 204 - 3202 or telcoman2600@hotmail.com for further information.
NY	Hauppauge	2068	Wednesday 7:00 pm	Download the GoToMeeting app on your mobile phone, tablet or computer or go to <a href="http://www.gotomeeting.com">www.gotomeeting.com</a> on your computer. When asked for meeting ID type in 115381933. Call (631)335-7706 or (516)451-1479 or email <a href="mailto:fouofus@aol.com">fouofus@aol.com</a> for further information.
NY	Islip Terrace	590	Tuesday 6:45 pm	Download the GoToMeeting app on your mobile phone, tablet or computer or go to <a href="http://www.gotomeeting.com">www.gotomeeting.com</a> on your computer. When asked for meeting ID type in 115381933. Contact Donna at (631)589-3790 or 631-835-8788 or <a href="mailto:donna526@aol.com">donna526@aol.com</a> for further information.

NY	Amityville	278	Thursday 7:15 pm	Download the GoToMeeting app on your mobile phone, tablet or computer or go to <a href="http://www.gotomeeting.com">www.gotomeeting.com</a> on your computer. When asked for meeting ID type in 115381933. Contact Donna at (631)589-3790 or 631-835-8788 or <a href="mailto:donna526@aol.com">donna526@aol.com</a> for further information.
NY	Amityville	279	Saturday 7:15 pm	Download the GoToMeeting app on your mobile phone, tablet or computer or go to <a href="http://www.gotomeeting.com">www.gotomeeting.com</a> on your computer. When asked for meeting ID type in 115381933. Contact Donna at (631)589-3790 or 631-835-8788 or <a href="mailto:donna526@aol.com">donna526@aol.com</a> for further information.
NY	Massapequa	270	Friday 7:15 pm	Download the GoToMeeting app on your mobile phone, tablet or computer or go to <a href="http://www.gotomeeting.com">www.gotomeeting.com</a> on your computer. When asked for meeting ID type in 115381933. Call Janice at (631)647-3946 or Paul at (516)799-4049 or <a href="mailto:paulcl@bellatlantic.net">paulcl@bellatlantic.net</a> for further information.
NY	Pepper Pike	288	Monday 7:30 pm	For further information contact <a href="mailto:pepperpikefa@gmail.com">pepperpikefa@gmail.com</a> .
OH	Lafayette Hill	2105	Monday 7:30 pm	For further information contact <a href="mailto:michael.brajczewski@gmail.com">michael.brajczewski@gmail.com</a> .
PA	Chattanooga	337	Thursday 7:00 pm	Online meeting conducted via Zoom. Meeting ID: 114 964 644. Contact <a href="mailto:drfeldman@epbfi.com">drfeldman@epbfi.com</a> or call 423-886-6425 or 423-580-6203 for further information.
TN	Chesterfield	1096	Thursday 7:30 pm	Online meeting conducted via Zoom. Contact <a href="mailto:famanon@gmail.com">famanon@gmail.com</a> for further information.
TX	Dallas	2085	Thursday 7:00 pm	Contact <a href="mailto:director@twelfthstepministry.org">director@twelfthstepministry.org</a> or call (214) 2656-7192 for further information.
TX	Grapevine	1686	Thursday 7:00 pm	Contact <a href="mailto:dkchapa@verizon.net">dkchapa@verizon.net</a> or call (972) 740-8532 for further information.
VA	Henrico County - Lakeside	1978	Wednesday 7:00 pm	Online meeting conducted via Zoom. Contact Lane at (804) 314-1293 or <a href="mailto:lanestern@gmail.com">lanestern@gmail.com</a> for further information.
VA	Richmond	2120	Monday 6:30 pm	Contact (757) 274 - 1929 or <a href="mailto:dchoudhury@addictionva.com">dchoudhury@addictionva.com</a>
WI	Sheboygan	2034	Tuesday 7:00 pm	Contact <a href="mailto:sheboyganfa@gmail.com">sheboyganfa@gmail.com</a> or call (920) 226-1415 for further information.



Because of the COVID-19 crisis, most FA meetings can't be held in person. As a result, many FA groups are now (and for the foreseeable future) meeting online. We thought it would be useful for the fellowship to know when those meetings are being held, and how to access them. We prepared the above spreadsheet based on information given to us by group secretaries. If you are holding an online meeting and your information isn't here, or if your information is incorrect, please let us know and we'll amend the spreadsheet before the next issue of the SERENITY MESSENGER comes out. Please send your corrections to Bob S. at [pocks954@gmail.com](mailto:pocks954@gmail.com). Thanks, and stay safe!