

GRAPESCCIN

November 2023

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Intergroup minutes and reports are now published on our website:
<https://aasantacruz.org/documents/>

Surfer Girl Sobers Up

By Joan B., Aptos

I used to sit on the beach drinking a six-pack, watching the waves, too loaded to surf.

I was married and the marriage was on the rocks. The kids were acting out and my husband was having an affair. I drank over that.

Then I got a DUI and it rocked my world. I started attending A.A. I met up with a friend, and she helped me a great deal. She took me to Al-Anon and to her A.A. meetings. She gave me a wetsuit and board. She took me for a surf! It had been 15 years since I'd surfed.

I felt like a turtle, slow and out of shape. We went out three days a week all summer. By fall I entered a surf contest and placed in the top three. My friend took me to Maui for a week. We surfed every morning and by noon we were in an A.A. meeting. This woman gave me a good foundation. I knew I would never leave A.A.

I got a sponsor and we went to work. After the A.A. steps, I took the 12 Steps in Al-Anon. What an eye opener. I was a peacekeeping, codependent drunk! And I had a lot to learn. My marriage was over, my daughter was at college and my son was living with his dad. I was left with me.

So I went to work in Al-Anon and went to A.A. meetings four or five times a week. Twisted Sisters became my home group, and those women have saved my ass many times.

After five years sober, I met a man in A.A. named Don. He would wait for me after the meeting. Then he asked me to coffee, then to watch sunsets. He took me around Monterey Bay, sightseeing and beach-combing. We got married and were the A.A. couple, loving each other to the fullest. Full of joy, we made a great life together.

After two years of marriage he got cancer and died. It was the saddest time of my life. It took years to recover.

Now I'm a widow and a little lonely. I continue to surf, still competing at age 65. This year, I won three out of six contests. I have 18 years' sobriety now and sponsor a six-pack of women. I'm on Step Eight in A.C.A. It kicks my butt and I love it. Wow. More will be revealed; just take it one day at a time.

My sponsor tells me to put my feet in the sheets sober tonight and I've done it 100 percent, A-plus Gold Star! I have a surf contest this weekend; I'll try again to win, and have fun trying.

Surf's up, sober girl!





Collateral Gratitude

By Marty L., Santa Cruz

GratITUDE was something new to me when I started living clean and sober. Fear had run my past life. Drugs and alcohol had long been part of my everyday life; they helped me fit in a world that was only in my mind. I knew I couldn't go on living that way.

I came to A.A. not knowing where my life was headed, not knowing what to do. Surrendering seemed the only option. But how?

In A.A. I saw how others had changed their lives. I discovered I was feeling the gratitude others had been talking about. I was starting to look at the world differently. Had I begun to surrender?

As I attended A.A. and worked the steps, my life began to change. I didn't notice at first, but after a time I looked back and saw changes taking shape. A feeling of accomplishment came every time I looked at my growth. I kept coming back.

I know now I'm on a journey into a new way of life. Surrendering is becoming a familiar tool. I'm now seeing fears as a challenge - not something to run from, but something to use as a tool for growth.

As I share my stories of gratitude, happiness spreads through me and to those around me. What I was given freely I am now passing on to others.

Knowing there is a collateral effect on people when I share stories of gratitude is just one of the many gifts I receive as my life moves forward in sobriety.

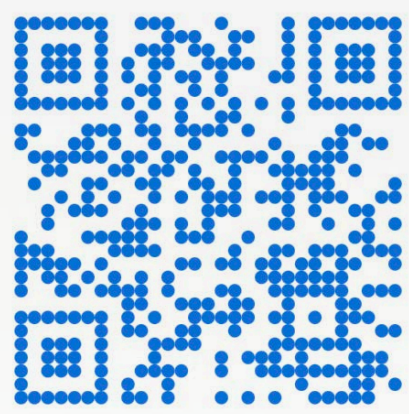
NOVEMBER IS GRATITUDE MONTH

For many decades now, we in the Fellowship have formally carved out the month of November as a time to express our collective gratitude for our individual sobriety.

Central Office relies on Gratitude Month donations for a large portion of our annual operating expenses. Through your generous donations, we can continue to provide the much-needed services to the alcoholics in our community.

Getting the word out about Gratitude Month becomes increasingly difficult with the addition of online and hybrid meetings, so please help spread the word at all of the meetings you attend.

Donations are accepted by PayPal.





Reflections on Gratitude

Tara W., Santa Cruz

With Thanksgiving coming up, it's the time of year I think about gratitude. Of course, if I'm in fit spiritual condition, I'm thinking about gratitude all year long. But that's not always the case.

In my 19 years of sobriety, one thing has remained constant every time I write a gratitude list: I am grateful for my sobriety. Sometimes sobriety is No. 1 on my list, sometimes it's further down, but it's always there. And many of the other things on my list wouldn't exist if I weren't sober.

These often appear on my list, and are results of my sobriety – My marriage to a wonderful husband; the opportunity to be a mother; my other family relationships and being present for them; my friendships, especially with sober women; my sponsor and her ability to offer the perfect A.A. tool or step for those seemingly impossible situations or emotions; a warm and comfortable home to live in; good health; and delicious food.

Sometimes I remember to express gratitude to my higher power. But as I write these words. I realize that lately, this expression has been missing from my lists – and my life. I'm not spiritually grounded or connected these days. Interesting how a gratitude list can show me the great blessings I have and, upon reflection, can also show me what's missing. Usually, what's missing relates to something internal: something with my attitude, my emotional sobriety, my spiritual condition, or all three.

I started writing this to consider the benefits of expressing gratitude in general, and making gratitude lists. As always, more is revealed as I put pen to paper.

Let me share about something else I

appreciate: the opportunities to be of service both in and out of the rooms. For example, I play an active role in my daughter's Girl Scout troop, and I volunteer for her school events and other extracurricular activities.

Service in A.A has been a key part of my sobriety. In my 19 years, I've had a service commitment at least 90 percent of the time. Service has definitely kept me sober.

My first commitment was handling the coffee for an Early Riser meeting. Currently, I'm treasurer for the Friday noon Soquel Acceptance group. Over the years, I've been Intergroup rep, General Service rep, secretary and other positions. During the pandemic, I had six-month Zoom secretary positions a few times for both out-of-state and local meetings.

I am grateful it's easy to find an open service commitment here in Santa Cruz County because of the number of meetings we have: 244 in-person meetings each week, and more than 100 online, according to our Intergroup website.

There are many “non-meeting-related” positions too – a phone shift on the Diverter from the comfort of your home, a once-a-week shift at Central Office, or helping with a special event. No matter which you choose, gratitude will be one of the rewards.

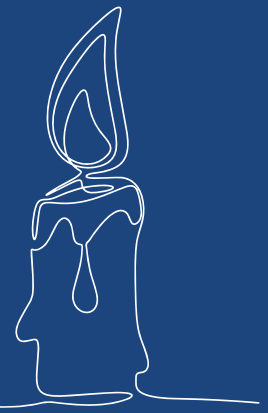
A few days ago, I came across a non-A.A. article with 100 questions meant to generate gratitude. The questions also could also be used as prompts for gratitude journaling, the author suggested. As I skimmed the list, I was surprised at how much I still have to learn – a lesson that comes up regularly. I plan to use some of these prompts, and look forward to deepening my gratitude practice.

So What About Prayer?

By Brenna H., Santa Cruz

“...pain was the touchstone of all spiritual progress.”

Twelve Steps & Twelve Traditions, p. 93



In early sobriety I was desperate for God and A.A. to keep me alive and sober. I prayed daily with hopelessness and terror like the dying atheist I was. Thankfully it was enough willingness to keep me sober and on the path of recovery. Over time, though my relationship to meditation and spirituality grew, my relationship to prayer receded. Recently, after a long and intense emotional bottom, I was catapulted into a deeper level of willingness and surrender, which has greatly strengthened my relationship to A.A. and my Higher Power. Intense pain has truly led me to the biggest blessings in my life. I believe I needed this flavor of suffering to be willing to earnestly seek, listen, and heed divine guidance, despite my fears for the outcome.

When it comes to prayer, we are blessed in A.A. with several we can learn by rote and so use at any moment of need or say habitually to keep ourselves on track. Over the last several years I had slowly crept away from A.A. and my ego and alcoholic thinking cunningly disconnected me from my Higher Power. When desperate times hit and all my efforts failed I had no where to turn but to a power greater than myself. Our daily prayers were a tonic to my spirit, helping me to reconnect with a Higher Power that I felt so estranged from.

I've also returned to conversational prayer: talking to God as if to a long-trusted friend or confidant, someone I

can say anything to and they will love me through my trials and shortcomings. I remember that God is beyond human and therefore has endless love, infinite wisdom and will guide me with perfect clarity in all matters.

At times I imagine I am talking to a beloved ancestor or friend that has passed on, or an idyllic version of a character or icon. I used to have a daily gratitude practice with my imaginary version of Oprah. My Grandpa, who had many limitations in his human form, has been of great comfort to me since his passing. This way of praying can help create a personal relationship with my spiritual aid without the sometimes-alienating experience of trying to talk to something so large and incomprehensible as God. I've found this especially helpful if my ego has taken more ground in my consciousness and done its subtle tactic of, classically, Edging God Out.

Throughout my sobriety I have also communed with angels, deities, archetypal figures, Mother Earth and nature spirits. Once the spirit of a tree gave me a message that saved my life: I prayed to God in desperation from a hospital bed, and the wizened oak outside my window answered back. It communicated the very thing I needed to hear to get through that terrifying experience. If God is everything then why wouldn't elements of nature work in cooperation with “[God] that presides over us all”?

In my journey of seeking communion with a Higher Power, I have studied the spiritual beliefs of several indigenous cultures from around the globe, all of whom hold an animistic worldview. They operate from the belief that all things are alive with the spark of God-force or spirit. This way of viewing life resonates deeply with me, especially after my many experiences of sitting with plants or animals and getting intuitive thoughts or ideas from these interactions. It might seem wild to some modern minds, but that's the beauty of our spiritual program. We don't have to share the same beliefs around our Higher Power, we just get to do our program and find a source of strength, as a result.

And, of course, we have our relationship to the fellowship. We can seek guidance and support from the Group Of Drunks and Good Orderly Direction; from our sponsors, trusted friends in the fellowship; A.A. literature; recorded A.A. speakers, etc. And although I seek guidance and connection from many sources outside of A.A., after my experience of losing touch with my program, I now like to think of these other resources as side dishes to my main course of A.A.

However we frame our relationship to a source greater than ourselves, it seems that it is in the seeking of this connection, with an honest and open heart, that we can receive the guidance, strength, wisdom, fortitude and change of heart and mind that can keep us sober and help us stay aligned with God's will.

When my honest seeking is followed up with receptive silence, even just brief moments of meditation, and I'm willing to heed the guidance I receive, I feel the resonance and rightness of this prayerful

action. It has been through this two-way prayer that I have come to truly trust in and rely on God as my source of guidance instead of my own thoughts and ideas.

The greatest challenge in this protocol for me is surrendering my fears that stand in the way of me seeking, listening or heeding God's will. When doing inventories, I can see that fear is at the root of all my attempts to control things. Whether it's a desire to change other people's minds, to get a new job or to keep my beloveds safe - whatever it is, it's almost assuredly rooted in fear.

The truth is, that no matter how much I exert my will on situations, I am so utterly powerless over all the other players and circumstances that I might get the very thing I don't want by trying to bend things to my liking. And, I have such a limited vantage point that I can't possibly know what I actually need, and when. This hit me so plainly and so intensely recently that I was finally able to admit complete defeat and surrender to my Higher Power, not just my alcoholism, but all my plans and designs and all the people I hold most dear.

Forced humility is never brought about by fun and easy times, but simultaneously I have never felt so at home in my life as I do now. If I don't stay vigilant and continue my spiritual development and maintenance I could easily throw my serenity and sobriety away. I require repeated reminding through meetings, step-work, the literature, my sponsor and daily prayer and meditation, that I am not running any show whatsoever. Through this great surrender I've come to trust in my Higher Power and begin to enjoy the ineffable mystery of, very simply, living life itself.

A Case for Cross-training

By Tony d. Z., Santa Cruz

I did all the things I was supposed to do when I got sober. I went to meetings, read the Big Book, called my sponsor and, on occasion, actually followed his directions. When he told me to avoid relationships in early recovery, it sounded like a good idea. Years later, despite admonitions about dating in the rooms of A.A. I found myself head over heels with a woman who could not stay sober. I was devastated, and a friend suggested I attend Al-Anon. It made sense. Most of my closest friends were alcoholics in recovery, and despite my sobriety, I was still attracted to women with drinking problems.

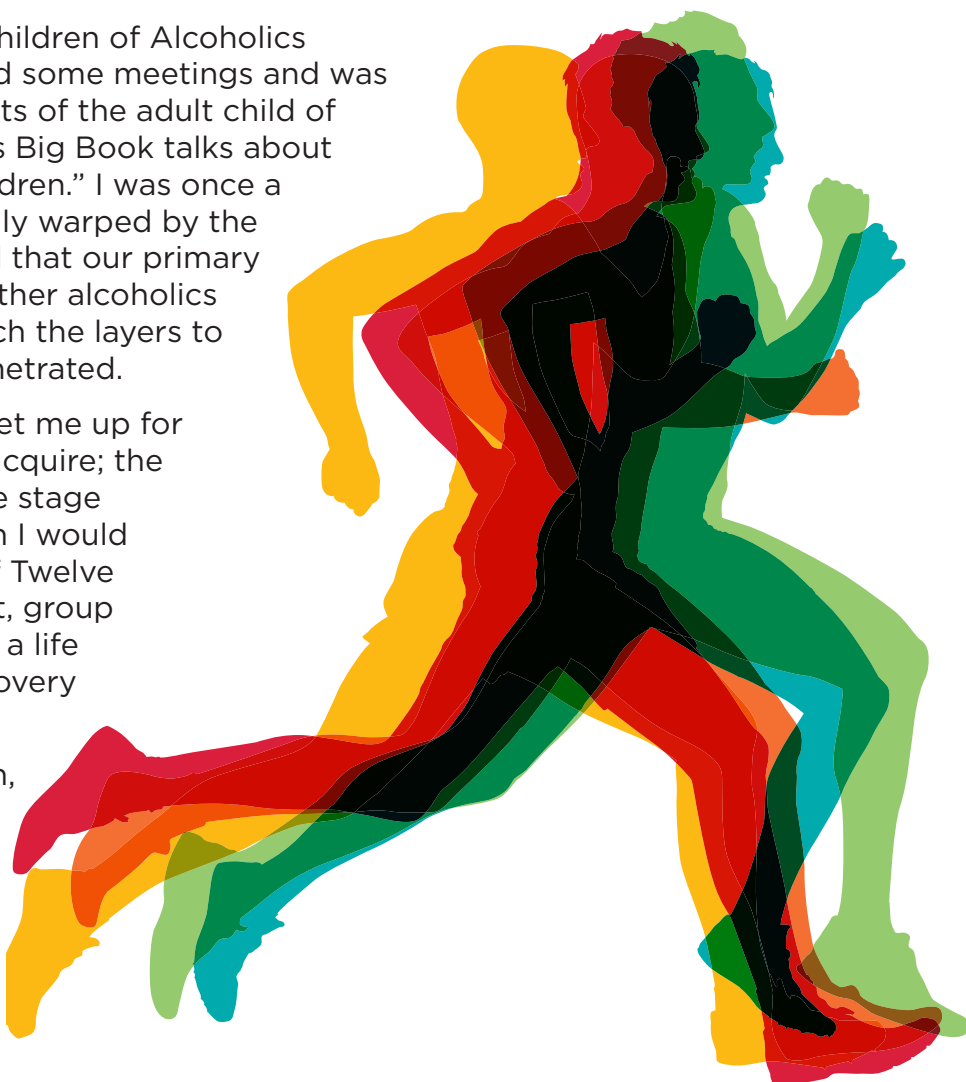
I was nine years sober and had spent the previous four in Al-Anon when I finally hit an emotional bottom behind a truly toxic relationship. I couldn't understand it. My life had gotten better; I had resurrected my career and began the healing process with my daughter. But my relationships only became more destructive. Desperate, I went to a handful of Sex and Love Addicts Anonymous meetings here in Santa Cruz. I couldn't relate to the compulsive ways in which members described acting out, but it was hard to deny that I was a love addict.

“I was once a blameless child whose life was badly warped by the effects of alcoholism...”

A few years later, the local Adult Children of Alcoholics program was expanding. I attended some meetings and was introduced to the “laundry list” traits of the adult child of an alcoholic. It became clear: A.A.’s Big Book talks about the “warped lives of blameless children.” I was once a blameless child whose life was badly warped by the effects of alcoholism, and I learned that our primary purpose, “to stay sober and help other alcoholics to achieve sobriety,” could not reach the layers to which these initial wounds had penetrated.

Growing up in an alcoholic home set me up for every defect of character I would acquire; the childhood trauma I endured set the stage for the dysfunctional ways in which I would try to cope. It's taken thousands of Twelve Step meetings, anger management, group therapy, grief retreats and at times a life coach, but I wouldn't trade my recovery for anyone's.

With my sobriety as my foundation, I am able to do the additional work necessary to live a life I look forward to on a daily basis.



Delegate's Corner

ERIC LEE, PANEL 73 DELEGATE



As we enter autumn, I can't help but think about my early sobriety. Fourteen years ago – right around now – I was entering the rooms of A.A.. I took my last drink in September, but I spent my first two weeks sober hiding out in my parents' backyard eating Sour Patch Kids, so I didn't make it into A.A. until October.

Early sobriety was terrifying. There were lots of new people with a lot of new information – and a lot of confusion because of all the messages I was hearing. Get a sponsor. Buy this book. 90 meetings in 90 days. God. Pamphlets. Home group. Yet despite how terrifying everything was, I was also graciously welcomed into A.A. I was rebellious, but the group I attended welcomed me lovingly.

And that makes me think – are we welcoming today? Do we treat the newcomer with grace and compassion? Do we create space for people to explore who they are and to get the help that they need? Do we provide a safe space for them? Do we guide them to a recovery that works for them, or instill in them our own belief system?

This is what an inventory is. We take account of who we are – where we are succeeding, and where we are falling short. Many groups take inventories around this time, and the Area is preparing for its own inventory also.

Our inventory is, much like a group and personal inventory, a fact-finding mission. The business meetings of general service have been a place I have spent a lot of my sobriety, and I was welcomed here too. People took the time to explain to me what was going on so that I could participate in an informed manner.

Are we still doing that today? Does the Area support the districts and groups? Are we informed in our decision-making? Are we being careful with our money? How do we allow for full participation? Do we trust people? I am so excited to hear people's thoughts on the Area – and I'm looking forward to sharing my own.

General Service is how A.A. solves its most vexing problems. So our fact-finding mission will help us make sure that each new person in General Service, much like each new person in A.A., finds a purpose – even if it's scary at first.

Yours in service,
Eric Lee, Panel 73 Delegate

Santa Cruz County Intergroup July - September Group Contributions

Anonymous	1,093.00
Aptos Women Serenity	180.00
Aromas Group	166.00
Bay Group	229.00
Brown Baggers	311.61
BYOB	50.00
Conscious Contact Meditation	138.10
Early Risers.	907.14
Friday Night Big Book & Step Study	180.00
Friday Night Lights	40.00
Friday Night Live	48.00
Gay Men Living Sober.	150.00
Jade Street	1,221.00
Make My Day.	156.63
Mattison Lane	37.34
Men's Westside Big Book.	180.00
Midtown Women's.	120.00
Mud Flats Group.	100.00
Nifty Fifty Plus	203.50
No Frills.	60.58
ODAAT	139.20
Out of the Blue Group.	97.37
Roxas	151.80
Saved By Grace	338.33
Santa Cruz Speakers Meeting	136.23
Skyland	30.00
Sober & Sandy	302.06
Soquel Acceptance Group	300.00
Soquel Step Study.	100.00
Sunday Morning Spiritual	268.55
The Donut Group	78.76
Thumpers.	880.48
Thursay 5:30 Group	260.00
Todays Womens Step Tradition	160.95
Twisted Sisters	210.30

July, August & September Total: 9,025.93

SOBRIETY MILESTONES

October

Michele D	October 24, 1976
Marty W	October 11, 1978
Nancy N	October 13, 1980
Vanessa S	October 21, 1981
Sally Ann	October 16, 1985
Sheri	October 31, 1987
Lee J	October 30, 1988
Erik H	October 18, 1991
Briana K	October 26, 1991
Barbara H	October 13, 1992
Denise R	October 14, 1994
Clare T	October 17, 1994
Tim M	October 28, 1994
Penny C	October 22, 1995
Tim E	October 2, 2000
Kimberly H	October 30, 2000
John S	October 20, 2002
Brenna H	October 1, 2004
Brigid F	October 1, 2006
Casey L	October 1, 2007
Kathy D	October 4, 2007
Christine R	October 26, 2012
Gary H	October 7, 2013
Rose T	October 15, 2014
Joe N	October 19, 2014
Chelsie O	October 30, 2021
Liz H	October 31, 2000

IN MEMORIAM

Dan C 59 yrs.	October 4, 1947
Ken C	October 12, 1986

Want to list your A.A. anniversary in the GrapeSCINN? Email your name and sobriety date to: grapesccin@gmail.com



Saturday, November 4

Doors open at 5:30 · Meeting at 7:00

MID-COUNTY SENIOR CENTER
829 Bay Ave. Capitola

Speaker: Katie H
Fair Oaks · 1/17/2006

Hosted by the Ben Lomond Fellowship

NOVEMBER EVENTS

For more information
about this month's events, visit
aasantacruz.org

November 1 @ 7:30 pm - 8:30 pm
Intergroup Council Meeting
Meeting ID: 828 1508 0970
Passcode: 588309

November 4 @ 3:00 pm - 4:00 pm
Watsonville Fellowship 4th Step Workshop
Watsonville Fellowship
939 Lincoln Street, Watsonville

November 4 @ 7:00 pm - 8:15 pm
Birthday Speaker Meeting
Mid-County Senior Center
829 Bay Ave., Capitola

November 5 @ 1:00 pm - 3:00 pm
CRUZYPAA Monthly Meeting
Harvey West Park
326 Evergreen St, Santa Cruz

November 8 @ 7:30 pm - 9:30 pm
General Service District Meeting
Meeting ID: 898 9003 8938
Passcode: 121212

November 9 @ 7:00 pm - 8:00 pm
Web Committee Meeting
Meeting ID: 884 7009 1801
Passcode: 2272

November 11 @ 10:00 am - 12:00 pm
4th Step Workshop
Ben Lomond Fellowship
9496 Hwy 9, Ben Lomond

November 14 @ 7:00 pm - 8:00 pm
Joint Committee on Safety
Meeting ID: 892 3730 0658
Passcode: 857738

November 15 @ 7:30 pm - 9:30 pm
Intergroup Steering Committee Meeting
Meeting ID: 861 8723 8980
Passcode: 723088

November 18 @ 11:00 pm - 3:00 pm
Santa Cruz Intergroup Open House
Central Office
5732 Soquel Drive, Soquel

November 19 @ 1:00 pm - 3:00 pm
CRUZYPAA Monthly Meeting
Harvey West Park 326 Evergreen St
Santa Cruz

November 25 @ 3:00 pm - 6:00 pm
SC Fellowship Birthday Speaker Meeting
Santa Cruz Fellowship
412 Front Street, Santa Cruz

CALIFORNIA NORTHERN COASTAL AREA 06 (CNCA 06) OF
ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS PRESENTS

FALL ASSEMBLY 2023 "THE AREA INVENTORY"

SAVE THE DATE! SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 4

Monterey Moose Family Center
555 Canyon Del Rey Blvd. Del Rey Oaks, CA

Zoom ID: [632 553 607](https://aasantacruz.org/join/632553607) | Password: 1935

REGISTRATION	9:00 – 10:00 AM
ORIENTATION	10:00 – 10:15 AM
AREA BUSINESS MEETING	10:15 AM - 12:00 PM
LUNCH	12:00 – 1:00 PM
AREA INVENTORY	1:00 – 5:15 PM
WHAT'S ON YOUR MIND?	5:15 – 5:30 PM



Attending online? Spanish-English interpretation and
Closed Captioning will be provided on Zoom.

Attending in-person? Bring your **FM RADIO** for Spanish-
English interpretation and Assisted Listening.



If you are as excited about service as we are, please join Central Office in informing, engaging, and inspiring others. Please join us!

- pamphlets
- helpful takeaways
- freebies
- meeting handbooks
- service materials
- silent auction
- trivial pursuit
- prizes

& P I Z Z A



OPEN HOUSE

SAT NOVEMBER 18
FROM ELEVEN TO THREE

5732 Soquel Drive
Soquel, CA 95073

for more info, call
(831) 475-5782