

Our first **Group Spotlight** comes from **Group 1957, East Thessaloniki, Greece**. We hope you enjoy this story of how one group was formed from another. It's a wonderful example demonstrating the concepts of attraction and "spreading the word." We invite your group to consider sharing its story by submitting an article to [PI@familiesanonymous.org](mailto:PI@familiesanonymous.org) for our next issue. We also hope this story will inspire other members to form new groups and to use our available free downloads like *Are You at Your Wits' End?* (#7014) to help "spread the word" about FA.

My name is Soula, and since the 4th of July of 2005 I have been a member of FA in Thessaloniki, Greece. The choices of my 27-year-old addicted son led me to FA when I hit bottom and realized I was not capable of helping him. At the FA meetings, I realized how sick I was myself. For the first time I was able to share my problems, my fears, my anger and my despair.

People there talked to me about myself and my personal problems, whereas I was thinking that I didn't have any problem at all and that it was my son who had the problem. How right they were! I kept going to the meetings every week, to hear new things, to try to get a "prescription" for my problem; I kept listening, sharing and crying at the same time.

My husband, Sotiris, and I live in East Thessaloniki, and I had to cross the whole city by bus to reach the meeting place. The meetings ended pretty late in the evening, so I asked my husband to come pick me up by car.

The third time he came, he also decided to become a member of our group. The change in our attitude was very obvious. The recovery of our family had started. The same happened with our addicted son.

After about a year of our attending FA meetings and applying the principles of "tough love," my son got into treatment and stopped using! It's been 8 years now, and he got married last year and has a sweet child.

Crossing town to get to the meetings was quite hard for me, but I kept going because the group had become my second family! One day the thought and desire came to me: How nice it would be to have a meeting place in East Thessaloniki! I discussed the idea with Sotiris and with Anna and George, two other members. I felt the idea had to mature in order for us to see results, and we had to go one step at a time.

A very good friend of ours suggested we should go to see the mayor of Thessaloniki! The mayor is a leading producer of wine in Greece and has been a publicly declared AA member for many years, so he knows the 12 steps very well. We had a feeling we would find compassion, understanding, and helpful suggestions from him.

The next day we called his secretary, explained our cause, and asked for an appointment. She was very sweet and told us she would let the mayor know and would get back to us. I didn't hear from her for a couple of months and started thinking that maybe I was doing something selfish. So I asked my Higher Power to show me if it was His will or if we should just quit.

The very next day, someone from the mayor's office called and gave us an appointment for the coming week!!! Exciting!

### **Group Spotlight, Continued by George M., Secretary of Group 1957:**

I was familiar with the principles of tough love and not enabling, since my daughter went into rehab in July 2008 and I was attending family-support meetings at rehab centers. I wasn't particularly interested in FA meetings, especially since my wife, Anna, was already attending those and I was studying her Red Book at home. When Sotiris and Soula asked my wife and me to help them approach the mayor, I was happy to help them.

Together, the four of us prepared a folder addressing the drug problem in Greece, including recent national statistics, a summary of recent laws enabling local authorities to take initiative on the drug issue, and a list of other municipalities in Greece that had already taken action to enable 12-step programs and mutual-support organizations.

We felt that the mayor was very inclined to help us but that he also needed to have the tools to address the city council justifying his actions and decisions. Furthermore, we wanted him to have our approach and propositions in writing, as it looked more official and was something he could pass on to his staff to study and take action on.

During our half-hour meeting with him, he was very excited. He shared his experience with AA and Al-Anon, he flooded us with his new ideas and projects that he wanted to implement to help young people in our town, and he asked us what place would be good for us to start having our meetings!!!!

Our dream to start a new FA group in East Thessaloniki came true. On September 29, 2011, we had our first meeting on the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor of the Community Drug Awareness and Prevention Center in East Thessaloniki.

Word of the new FA meeting place spread, and soon we had visitors from all the other "co-de" groups, along with new first-time people and, of course, FA members from East Thessaloniki who are now regularly attending our meetings.

We decided to have a step meeting once a month, and a few times we've invited some noted guest speakers. Our average attendance was from 12 to 16 members, reaching a peak of 45 during a noted-guest-speaker event.

We operated there for about a year and a half, and every meeting was a life changing experience! For me personally, the FA meetings gave me a new perspective on self-recovery and helped me focus better on the 12-step program and how to apply it on a daily basis in my life.

Unfortunately, due to the economic crisis, many public services and departments in Greece had to merge and reduce expenses. This included the place we were meeting. The staff there kindly invited us to join them at their new place, but after trying it a few times, we agreed that it was too hard to find and not easy to get to, and that we had to look for a better place.

Now, two years later, we are meeting in the multifunctional hall of an East Thessaloniki church, and we average more than 20 members every week. The amazing thing is that sometimes we have new people coming who have nothing to do with drug addicts, but they keep coming as they realize they are learning a new way of life and a new way to happiness that they didn't know existed!

We have printed the tract "Are you at your Wits' End?" along with the addresses of all the FA groups in North Greece and the telephone hotline in Athens. All of us are distributing it wherever we go, and people love it!

Another thing we have discovered is that sharing together our personal lessons, our feelings, and the similar situations we have faced has a tremendous impact on

people's lives. What I like about our group is that it's alive, moving and changing, and every time I go to a meeting is like expecting to see a new miracle: a miracle of change in me as well as in others! I feel like I am in a new family that I love and they love me and that I cannot live without!