

BETTER TIMES

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They bring to the table at 234 the good, the bad and ...

See story, right...



See Page 2



What Does A Treatment Facilities Committee Do?

That's a question on everyone's mind, I'm sure. Well, it has been my privilege to be the Treatment Facilities Chair for nearly two years now, and I can tell you I've learned a lot about the kinds of challenges the District Representatives have had and the importance of this work. The District Reps last year were a terrific group of volunteers and this year I am blessed with an equally talented and dedicated group. They bring to the table at 234 the good, the bad and "What the blah blah blah were they thinking?"

Twelve times a year, (no summer break), a group of enthusiastic volunteers in AA represent their home group and District Table and discuss what has been going on in their District. The "SARS" problem certainly kicked the stuffing out

of the service meetings in the hospitals and centres, but that has not squashed their enthusi-



asm and willingness to make the AA message available to the still-suffering alcoholic. There is always lively discussion around the table. Topics such as cross

addiction. Should they be included in AA "closed" meetings even if they feel they don't have a problem with alcohol?

Or when someone comes out of treatment, who is the first person responsible to get that newcomer to an AA meeting outside that facility? Everyone has an opinion of course. As the Chair, my job is to referee from time to time and keep everyone on track. The most important thing on my mind is that we are all there for one purpose and that is to make sure the doors of AA meetings are open and accessible to all who want help.

To know more come to Treatment Facilities Day on Saturday Sept. 6th at Glebe Road United Church. (See Page 3)

*Yours In Love and Service
Diana M.*

Gratitude

To borrow from J.F.K., ask not what AA can do for you, but rather ask what you can do for AA. If AA is the foundation of a new life for me, it is supporting everything that has come my way since joining the fellowship.

So what do I do to support AA? Everyone might ask themselves that question every now and then. There are lots of things one can do as service that support AA at a variety of levels. There has to be one best suited to you and your skills. Not everyone can do everything, but every ONE can do SOME thing. Carrying the message, our primary purpose, can be done in so many ways.

Just showing up at my own group, or at other groups I visit on a regular basis, is uplifting for me. It is reassuring that familiar faces I know and trust

are still there. You just never know who you are going to meet, to learn from or to help along our spiritual path. Then there are innumerable tasks that are always required at the group level, the district level and at every other level of service in AA

And now with Gratitude Month, October, on the horizon, there is the financial aspect of supporting AA. Tradition 7 says we should try to be fully self supporting, declining outside contributions. Since we in AA tend to be tighter than bark to a tree, as stated in the Self-Support pamphlet, we tend to forget that for all the good works we try to accomplish, it is still money that makes the world go round. In the same pamphlet, Bill W. wrote, "Our spiritual way of life is safe for future generations if, as a Society, we resist the temptation to accept dona-

tions from the outside world, but that leaves us with a responsibility that we cannot skimp when the group passes the basket."

But beyond the 7th Tradition we can also make a personal annual contribution to support the work of Intergroup during Gratitude Month. The way that I determine the amount of my contribution is to calculate x amount of dollars for each year of sobriety that AA has given me.

We owe it to ourselves and to those who will follow to squarely accept our responsibility to fully support the program of AA, its service committees, and the programs to carry the message to the suffering alcoholic. We have to go to any length to keep AA alive and healthy.

Yours In Service.....Jim A.

The Editors Say...

Although I am only just coming up to a year's sobriety, I already know that these are indeed better times. In sobriety, I can do things spontaneously. I don't need a week's advance notice to go out for an evening. I can be ready on the spur of the moment.

I am recapturing some of my earlier pleasures, things I enjoyed doing before drinking began to rule my life. I recently bought a bicycle, and feel like a teenager again when I ride it. I can go to movies and the theatre again without falling asleep during the performance (most of the time).

There is a whole beautiful world out there waiting for me to

rediscover it. I hope, however, that I am not taking for granted what I owe to AA. I know that I must stick to my program, or I will be back where I started – in a black hole of despair, from which I could see no escape. I was recently saddened by the death of a member of one of the AA groups I try to attend on a regular basis. This was a bit of a wake up call, because I know that there but for the Grace of God, go I.

I am determined, though, to

make the most of this second chance I have been given.

One of the wonderful things I have found in AA is the fact that, no matter what foolish things I may have done while I was drinking, there is someone else who has done the same. That is one sense in which I now feel I am not alone. The other sense, of course, is the fellowship of AA. I have met many wonderful people in the program, and I know that just by going to a meeting, I will be in a roomful of people

who are just like me, and who understand where I have been. By listening to the stories, I have found hope for the future and a place where I belong.

I feel fortunate indeed to be able to help out with BETTER TIMES, which carries the message of hope to the Toronto-area AA community. As my sobriety progresses, I expect to do more in the way of service, but for the moment, this is it, and I would urge others of you to share with us your experience, strength and hope. Sharing with others the better times you are enjoying can also be an invaluable service, for newcomer and long-timer alike.

Wishing you all joy in sobriety,
Elizabeth S.

The Ninth Step

"Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others."

In early sobriety, I did not feel that I had harmed anyone except myself. However, the two people I blamed the most were my parents. As I did the suggested steps of AA I knew the only person responsible for my alcoholism was myself. Nobody forced me to take that fatal first drink. The first amend I had to make was to myself. Working with a sponsor, I called my parents and informed them that I had become a member of AA. After three treatment centres, I went to a lot of discussion meetings, finding similarities in others' stories and also listening to people who had their families back after many years of sobriety and working the steps. **Step 9 was the key.**

My parents attended my

first-year medallion and didn't know what to expect. That was the beginning of a new relationship with them. I started to remember family birthdays and

anniversaries, (they could see a change in my handwriting, it was not shaky).

My father was diagnosed with prostate cancer two years

ago. In November 2002, he was hospitalized. My mother called me, crying that she wished she had given me a better life. She also told me that my father wanted

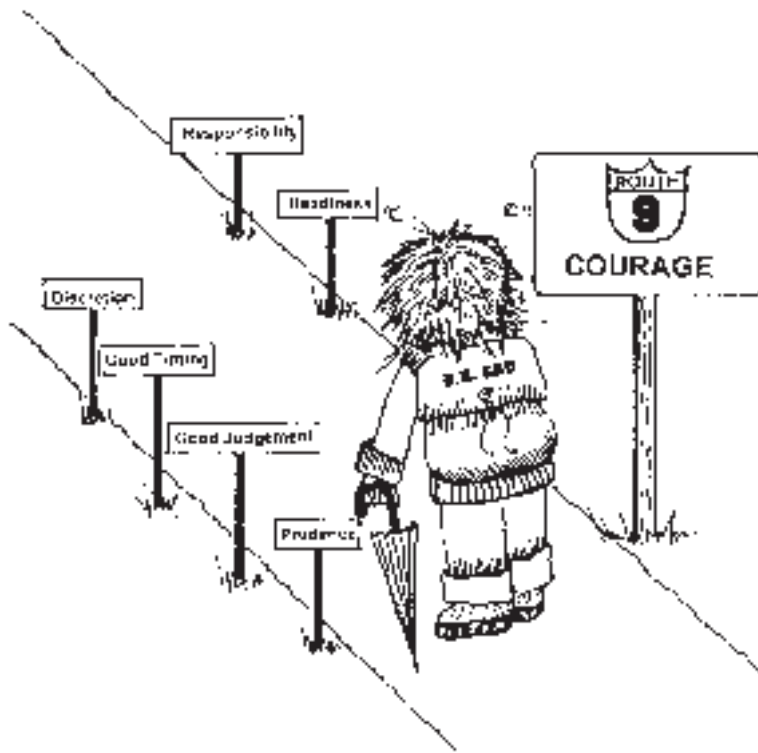
nobody to visit him in hospital, however, my sponsor and several members asked me, "What does your heart tell you to do?" That was to visit my father and tell him I don't blame him for my alcoholism and that I loved him and my mom. He smiled and said thanks.

That started a new journey for me with the rest of my family as well. I spent two days with them at home. My father and I talked a lot about everything, good and bad.

In March 2003, he was hos-

pitalized for the last time, and was sent home two weeks before he passed away. I received a call on April 6, that he had just passed away. But for the Grace of God and the program of AA, I was able to spend 12 days with my family and helped my mother as much as I could. I am closer to my mother today, more than I could ever have dreamed.

Terry H.



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Archives Alley

Dorothy C.

Back in August 1945, Dorothy C. breathed a sigh of relief when her husband Joe appeared to have quit drinking. He had found a group of men that seemed bent on keeping him sober. The men came from Alcoholics Anonymous and Dorothy saw them as dependable and trustworthy.

Dorothy met Joe on a blind date. He had filled in to help out a co-worker although he was adamant about 'not doing blind dates.' Reluctant to go on the date and being a committed bachelor, he nonetheless became infatuated with this beautiful lady. They were married seven weeks later.

The early years were most difficult, due primarily to Joe's alcoholism. Without the support of family and friends, Dorothy wouldn't have been able to manage.

It was in the early '50s that Dorothy, together with eight other wives of recovered alcoholics, began to meet regularly. Initially their gatherings involved war stories about their drunken husbands but gradually the sharing came about to 'what can we do about ourselves?' Meeting regularly, they tried to help each other cope with the challenges of living with alcoholism and sobriety.

In 1948, Bill and Lois W. came to Toronto. Bill was to speak at the Regional Meeting of the Toronto Groups at the Tivoli Theatre. Lois met with the wives the day before and was most impressed with the workings of the Group and their program of action. When Lois returned to New York, she started to map out a plan. The Al-Anon Family Groups was formed in 1951, reaching out to the families and friends of alcoholics.

The late Dorothy C. remained quietly anonymous about her vital role in the origins of the Al-Anon Family Groups. Not until her later years did her family realize the part she had played, but certainly not because she told them. She was far too modest for that.

She is a remarkable, resilient and much-admired woman. By the way her husband Joe will celebrate 58 years of sobriety on August 16th, 2003.

Bernadette MacL.

Have You Heard?

Recent Medallions

- Sharon M.**, 5 yrs., *Scarborough Centenary Group*. July 31
George W., 10 yrs., *Royal York Group*. Aug. 5
Mark D., 1 yr., *Scarborough Centenary Group*. Aug 7
Mary V. 10 yrs., *Royal York Group*. Aug. 19

Upcoming Medallions

- Iris G.**, 25 yrs., *Tuesday Night Women's Group*. Sept. 2
Marjorie C., 10 yrs., *Tuesday Night Women's Group*. Sept. 2
Jim B. 10 yrs., *Agincourt Acorn Group*. Sept. 9
Lynn C., 1 yr., *Scarborough Centenary Group*. Sept 11
Dave A. 1 yr., *Aurora Group*. Sept. 14
Paddy McC., 25 yrs., *One Day at a Time Group*. Sept. 14
Brian B. 10 yrs., *Aurora Group*. Sept 21
Deirdre F., 20 yrs., *One Day at a Time Group*. Sept 21
Julie L. and Len D., both 15 yrs., *Scarborough Centenary Group* (they are celebrating on the same night). Sept 25
Gordon MacN., 30 yrs., *Church Street Group*. Sept 27

Group Anniversaries

- Deer Park Group** 25 years Sept.15.

Things We Cannot Change

The following AA members died recently:

- Jim C.** *S.O.S. Group* July 13
Kevin S. *Open Mind Discussion Group* July 22
Bruce L., *New Life Group (Mississauga)*, over 35 years sober. August 6.
Bill M., *Unionville Group* Aug 17 over 25 years sober

Special Events, Conventions & Conferences

More information on all these events is available on the bulletin board at the GTA Intergroup offices (address below).

Treatment Facilities Day: Saturday, Sept. 6th at Glebe Road United Church (Welcome Group location). Doors open at 10 a.m. and the coffee pot will be on. An opportunity to hear speakers from Treatment Facilities Committee share their experience and personal stories. District representatives will also speak briefly on recent happenings. There will be a Question and Answer period, and some past Reps. will explain the importance of service. See "What Does A Treatment Facility Committee Do?" in this issue.

Cornerstones of Sobriety: Hamilton and districts AA 35th Annual Autumn Leaf Roundup. Sept. 12-14. Sheraton Hamilton Hotel, 116 King St. W., Hamilton ON. Full AA, Al-Anon and Alateen programmers. Registration, dance & banquet: \$55/early bird (before July 31) \$50. Registration only: \$23/early bird: \$18. Alateen Registration and dance: \$10. Info: Senga 1-905-387-5935. Hotel: \$129 single or double. 1-800-514-7101.

Scarborough District 22 Service Day: Service-Gratitude in action. Sept 20, 8:30 a.m. to 4p.m. Oakridge Community Centre, 63 Pharmacy Ave. Panels, Fun, Fellowship. Guest Speaker Roy R,

Trial and Error Group. Free lunch and coffee. Clean & Sober dance 8 p.m. to 1 a.m. Only \$6

District 06 Service In Recovery Day: St.Paul's United Church, 85-31st Street, Etobicoke. One block South of Lakeshore Blvd. Saturday, Sept. 27th, 9 a.m. to 3p.m. Great Guest Speakers, fellowship, Food and Fun.

East York Roundup. Saturday Nov. 1, 11:00a.m. to 8:00pm St. Columba Church 2723St.Clair Ave. (East of O'Connor drive).. Al-Anon Family Panel, Women's Panel, Long Timers "Ask-It-Basket", Keynote speaker, fellowship, Pot-Luck supper. Admission 7th Tradition at the door.

New Groups

Active Group, Wed 8p.m. (O) (CENTRAL) 140 The Esplanade between Jarvis and The Esplanade. buzzer #1040 non-smoking, wheel chair accessible

Aurora Discussion Group (C) Tuesday 8 p.m. (SUBURBAN NORTH): St. Andrews Presbyterian Church 32 Mosley St. Aurora (Mosley at Victoria St.) BIG BOOK DISCUSSION

Meeting Changes

Tuesday Noon Drop-in Discussion Meeting (C) CENTRAL 12:15p.m.change "rear entrance" to "enter by ramp to office entrance door" (changes due to construction)

Grapevine Discussion Group (C) CENTRAL 8:30p.m. Now meeting at Our Lady Of Lourdes R.C. Church, 11 Earl St. West side of Sherbourne, 1 block north of Wellesly. Enter through rear door of church.

Steps To Serenity (C) EAST Tues. and Thurs. Starting time changed from 8p.m. to 7p.m. effective since August 16th.

Deer Park Group (CENTRAL) Monday and Wednesday, Now has a ramp for Wheelchair Access.

Half Century Group. (O) (NORTH EAST) directions changed to: entrance by rear door.

Friday Night Gay Men's Discussion Group(C) (CENTRAL) 8 p.m., is back at Orthopaedic Hospital as of Aug. 1st.

Living Sober Group Beginners Meeting (C) (SUBURBAN NORTH) Tuesday time change from noon to 7 p.m.

Groups needing support:

Mount Dennis Group (O) (WEST) Thursday 8p.m. VERY MUCH IN NEED OF CHAIRPERSONS AND SPEAKERS.

How To Teach Us

Submit group news, medallions, other event notices, letters to the editor or articles to **BETTER TIMES (before Sept. 10 for the Oct. issue)**, mail to GTA Intergroup, 234 Eglinton Ave. E., Suite 202, Toronto, ON, M4P 1K5, by fax 416-487-5855 or by e-mail to btimes@aatonto.org or e-mail joe@vex.net. Only signed submissions with a means of contact will be accepted. For subscriptions call Alexx at 416-487-8110.

PRESENT: 41 Groups, 5 District Liaisons, 6 Committee Chairpersons or members

Chairperson's Opening Remarks: Dan McK. *Half-Century Group, Operating Committee Chairperson.* Dan stressed the importance of "I am responsible".

Matti H., *Wanstead Group,* was elected as a Junior Operating Committee member by acclamation.

Finance Report: Wayne E., *Half-Century Group, Finance Committee member.* Donations and income revenue were down significantly in June, creating a larger than usual deficit. This was caused in part by the fact that a number of groups were not meeting because of SARS. Although the Committee is taking measures to deal with the drop in revenue, it is anticipated that there will still be a small deficit at year-end.

ACCESS ABILITY – Stephanie K., *Hill Group, Access Ability Chairperson.* Access Ability will have a panel at both the Treatment Facilities Day and District 22 Service Day (both in September). It still needs to arrange more training for the TTY machine [for the deaf].

SELF-SUPPORT – Mike E., *Kingsway Group, Self Support Chairperson.* Volunteers from the East and North end are needed at this table. District Reps are also urged to attend. Mike asked Reps to ask their

Intergroup Report



group about Self-Support possibly attending a future groups business meetings.

ARCHIVES – Bob D., *Weston Group, Archives 1st Vice Chair.* The committee is not meeting for the summer. The Archives Breakfast will be held on Sunday, November 9 at the Oasis Convention Centre.

CORRECTIONAL FACILITIES – Dan McK. District 02 **needs volunteers.** The West Detention Centre is looking for more members to help put on meetings.

GRAPEVINE – Jim R., *Bloordale Group, Grapevine Committee Member.* There is a **special Grapevine thread-bound copy**

available at a cost of U.S.\$1.00, which is ideal for Correctional Facilities. This committee urges groups to consider purchasing 5 or 10 copies "to invest in our future".

PUBLIC INFORMATION – Kevin M., *North Toronto Group, P.I. Chairperson.* The committee participated in the annual Metro Police-sponsored 'Breakfast in the Park' held on July 17 at Allan Gardens. About 300 people attended the event.

RECEPTION – Mark C. *Yorkville Group, Operating Committee member.* Mark noted that only 18 % of the total number of groups in the GTA were represented at the meeting.

TWELVE STEP – Mark C. **Volunteers are needed for both phone work (phone duty / 12 Step duty) and to serve on the Twelfth Step Committee**

TREATMENT FACILITIES – Diana M. (Thorncliffe Park), **TF Chairperson.** **Treatment Facilities Day** will be held at Glebe Road United Church on **Saturday, September 6** from 10 a.m. –3 p.m., featuring speakers, panels, fellowship, and a PotLuck lunch. Admission is free

WEB SITE – Gord MacK., *New Anchor Group, Operating Committee member* The committee is not meeting in the summer months. A PERL Program volunteer is still needed for this committee

The meeting adjourned with the Responsibility Pledge.

Turning It Over

There comes a time in facing a challenge when we have done all that we can, and still the situation remains unresolved. This is the time to turn the problem over and release our cares into the hands of the Spirit. When we let the Universe take charge, anything becomes possible. God can do for us what we could not do for ourselves.

If you find that you have reached such an impasse, try the following: in your mind's eye place the problem upon an imaginary altar. Then say, "I turn this over to you, Spirit. From now on, you are in charge." As you walk away, know that all is in Divine hands. Despairing of ever getting published, a young writer used this approach: he placed his manuscript on his inner altar and moved on to another project. Two weeks later, the book was accepted by a major publisher for a substantial advance. Turning to his agent he said, "I want to thank whoever is responsible, because it certainly

wasn't me."

It is good to realize that we do not have to do everything alone. Help is available. Invisible hands come to support us at the right time. As the psalmist assures us, "Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and He shall sustain thee."

Jim M.

(Editors Note: If problems persist we are advised to seek professional help.)

Why Me?

Hello, My name is Nino K. I am an alcoholic & an addict. I don't know where to begin, but I wanted to write this letter, not to share war stories, but to share with others my hopes and methods of staying sober. I have a good life, or at least I do until I relapse.

I've been to rehab twice. I have done all the alcoholic "bad things". I had seven months, until two days ago, when I relapsed. I go to church every Sunday and I join church organizations. I try to keep busy. I also took up a second job to make

more money and keep busy. This is all sounds wonderful, but there is one thing I don't do: keep it simple and go to meetings. Sure enough, I set myself up for a fall. In two days, I screwed up so bad, that not only did I pick up where I left Hell, but I got a personal invitation from back from Lucifer himself.

I am at work, sitting here going over all the things I did in two days...drank, did coke, almost had cardiac arrest. I wrote five bad cheques — the bank will catch on and probably charge me with fraud. I lied, spent money, and missed two days of work. I probably will get written up. I feel remorseful, empty, and have no self-esteem. This time around, I wanted to die. I even came to work at 3 a.m. and sent a suicide letter to my girlfriend, telling her to stop loving me, because I wanted to die. I wanted to die because of the thought that I would spend the rest of my life having anxiety attacks to the point where I blacked out. I used to black out when I would drink, but now I black out from immense anxi-

eties. Now, I feel relaxed only because I am drained. I give up. I give up trying to control my life, I give up trying to prove myself above and beyond.

I have a disease, and if I don't go to meetings and look after my disease...I will die...a slow, painful, and disturbing death. Along with that, I will cause grief for many people. Why me? Why? I look to God for serenity and prayer and guidance. He says to me, "I wouldn't let you die, so get your act together and start going to meetings, and I'll look after your troubles!"

At this moment, I am feeling very emotional. But there is something important I must realize and accept. I cannot be bullet proof anymore. These feelings will pass, they always do, until I screw up again. I don't want to screw up anymore, I love life, I love my personality, why do I run away? I stopped running today. Honesty is the best policy. So just for today, I am keeping life simple and honest.

Thank you Nino K.