

# BETTER TIMES



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## BETTER TIMES

Published monthly for AA members in the Greater Toronto Area

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### How to reach us

Submit group news, medallions,  
other event notices, letters to the  
editor or articles to **BETTER  
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## Promoting the Attraction

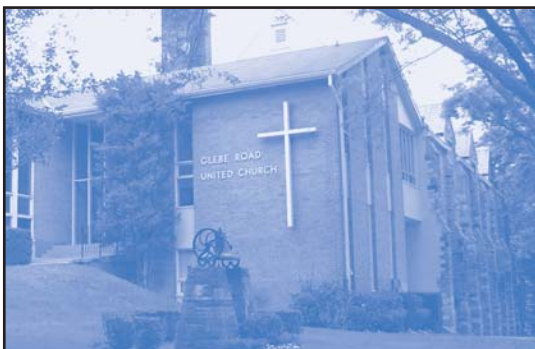
I've heard estimates that one in ten people are alcoholic or have a drinking problem, and that worldwide, 98 per cent of alcoholics will die not even knowing they are alcoholic. With a planetary population of over 6 billion, one tenth is 600 million. Given that there are approximately 2 million AA members worldwide, that 98 per cent figure doesn't sound too far-fetched.

Stated another way, one tenth of the Greater Toronto Area population (approx. 4,500,000) would translate to 450,000 alcoholics or problem drinkers within the boundaries of Toronto Intergroup.

The point is, we have a vast number of suffering alcoholics and problem drinkers right on our doorstep; and that's where **Public Information** comes in. A LOT of people don't know that alcoholism is a disease from which recovery is possible. We know it's cunning, baffling, and pow-

erful, but there are many who continue to suffer, both alcoholics and those affected by someone else's drinking, and if we don't share our experience, strength and hope...who will?

The Toronto Intergroup Public Information Committee will be sponsoring a **Public Information Service Day** on



**Saturday, September 25, 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.** at Glebe Road United Church, located at 20 Glebe Road, which is just east of Yonge Street, 3 blocks north of Davisville subway, in the heart of beautiful uptown Toronto. *It*

is fully accessible.

Please consider this your personal invitation to attend, feel energized and inspired. We will have panels, discussions, speakers, brainstorming, a pot-luck lunch, literature display, and whatever else those attending wish to present, with practical topics such as public presenting, committee-building, identifying needs, public service announcements, working with media, carrying the message to schools, libraries, doctor's offices, co-operating with social service agencies and police. There will be special guests from Al-Anon Public Outreach Committee and Cooperation with the Professional Community (CPC) Committee.

The public is out there. They need you to reach out to them. We need you to help us do it better.

Tom S.  
Chair, Public Information

## A Day of Service – A Life of Sobriety

For several years now, usually on the second or third week of September, Scarborough District 22 has worked closely with GTA Intergroup, the Sub-Committees, and neighbors in District 18 to put on a well-informed day describing what each Sub-Committee does to help spread the message to the still suffering alcoholic.

On Saturday, September 18, 2004, as in the past few years, the Annual Service Day will be held at Oakridge Community Centre, 63 Pharmacy Avenue one block north of Danforth Avenue. Chaired by the Alternate D.C.M. of District 22, this day is not only open to the groups in District 22, but to all the Districts in the G.T.A. as well as Toronto Intergroup.

The theme this year is 'Service Is The Key To Your Sobriety', and our objective is to attract new members into the service structure. Bring along a sponsee, and see if we can convince them that service can enhance their sobriety.

The day starts at 9 a.m. with opening remarks, and an introduction to the District Panel. Each Sub-Committee then has 30 minutes to discuss their work, keeping it short enough for questions and answers. After a Pot-Luck Lunch at 12:05 p.m., the Guest Speaker, Ruth P. of the Pine Hills Group, will share her excellent personal recovery and service message. Following the Speaker, the remaining Sub-Committees will share until the day ends at 4 p.m. There will be Literature and Grapevine Tables

set up throughout the day.

Later that night, there will be a clean and sober dance from 8 p.m. to 1 a.m. Tickets are \$8 each, and can be purchased from any District 22 G.S.R. or at the door. There will be pop and water available for purchase and finger food at each table. There is plenty of free parking, and the center is within walking distance of the Victoria Park Subway. Because of fire regulations, we are limited to 120 people.

Mark Saturday, September 18, 2004, on your calendar, and meet us at the Oakridge Community Centre, 63 Pharmacy Avenue for a full day of information, fellowship, and fun.

Larry W., Alt. D.C.M., District 22

## The Editors Say...

**W**ell, those 'Lazy, hazy, crazy days of summer' (by Nat King Cole) are drawing to a close. I am writing this in early August (not that we've had a great summer so far), but it will soon be September when 'Back to the REAL WORLD' hits us all.

On that note, there's a TV ad that shows people screaming as a red and yellow fall-coloured leaf lands on the pavement in front of them! It's a-coming, so I suppose it's appropriate to focus on this fall's activities in the Fellowship and give everybody a wake-up call.

As you can see from our front page, the Fellowship is lurching out of the summer doldrums with a vengeance. First up to bat is the District 22 Service Day out east on Saturday, September 18. You, too, can find out exactly what all those mystifying acronyms stand for like GSR, DCM, PI, CPC, TF and CF. Yikes! What does it all mean? Come and find out and they'll throw in a lunch too!

### Back to the REAL WORLD?

This is closely followed by the Public Information and the Co-operation with the Professional Community Sharing Session Day on Saturday, September 25 at Glebe Road United Church. Again, a lunch will be thrown in with a truly dynamite Guest Speaker (Jack L. the "Famous Flood Survivor" from Peterborough/ Kawarthas). Seriously, I have heard Jack speak about Public Information several times. He has a terrific message and he WILL wake you up!

There are other Service Days coming up, Committee activities, the famous Archives Breakfast featuring a guest Archivist/ Historian from Akron, Ohio (more about that next month), and of course, we are getting ready for Gratitude Month, so update those Group Lists and get them in to 234 as soon as possible! Remember that we depend heavily on

Gratitude Month.

Our involvement in the Fellowship is SUPPOSED to bring us 'Back to the REAL WORLD'. Some may use the Fellowship as a psychological crutch and hide out there, stay on welfare and/or social assistance, don't go looking for a JOB or a LIFE again! "Just pass the sandwiches and doughnuts!"

"Get a lunch pail and get a job," is old-time AA. It has worked for LOTS of folks, and that's truly wonderful and a miracle. After all, this Program is ABOUT CHANGE, based on working Spiritual Principles on a daily basis; and taking responsibility for our lives, families, finances, etc.

On the other hand, it was 'quietly' explained to me that some folks have had to GENTLY re-enter the world, slowly and steadily; some through continuous Service work, some

also by volunteering and/or part-time employment, often while under a doctor's care and guidance. The Spiritual Principles behind the Traditions can REALLY help. It's fantastic the difference they can make in dealing with others too, especially in 'stressful situations'. Sometimes slow integration may look like a bit like 'hiding out', but it can (and hopefully should) be preparation for a new and better life.

So, we ALL need ALL the help we can get and lots of time, prayer, care, love and support from our sponsors, our home groups, our doctors, counselors and of course, our family and friends. With these we will ALL make a better life.

To end back where we started - in a 'State of Grace', so to speak - let's not forget about line two of the song!

'Roll out those lazy, hazy, crazy days of summer  
Dust off the sun and moon and  
sing a song of cheer'

*Kevin M. and Alexx V.*

## Keep it Simple - Our Primary Purpose

**I**'ve been meditating on how, during an open meeting, if left to me, I would keep the AA program simple, while passing on the message more effectively to accomplish our primary purpose.

First, I would stop announcing the availability of 'Sponsors'. I would request the persons offering sponsorship to volunteer as 'greeters'. A person entering the doors of AA for help for the first time, as most of us experienced, is very much 'bewitched, bothered and bewildered'. When a newcomer hears the word 'sponsor' he is apt to think, "who is this Nosy Parker? Is this going to be like the ones from the 'parochial board'?"

The thought of taking on a sponsor would sound like the good old mother-in-law coming home to fix things. Remember, someone once said, "Do not walk in front of me, I may not follow. Do not walk behind me, I may not

lead. Just walk beside me and be my friend."

If it was up to me, I'd tell



the newcomer that they are in the right place at the right time. I'd tell him that we have no

solutions, nor do we have any intentions of meddling in his family problems. I'd tell them

the story about Ebby, Bill and Bob, in two minutes flat, and then give them the bad news. I'd tell them that everyone will some day have to die, but alcoholics go insane and then die. I'd say that every alcoholic will some day quit drinking, but only the lucky ones quit while still alive. I would allow the newcomer to meet and be introduced to all members of the group and other 'invisible alcoholics'.

A newcomer usually comes to an AA meeting sober looking for human contact; a place in the "herd". Presenting a Big Book to every newcomer makes no sense. This seems to be an unnecessary ritual. Give them a meeting list! Give them AA-approved pamphlets for newcomers! Good God! Give them old issues of **BETTER TIMES!** A Big Book could be presented with a three-month chip provided that person declares that he is a member of the group.

Presenting medallions is another way of carrying the message. Announcing anniversaries from the podium is also good, but how many members are present at these meetings? Fifty? A hundred? **BETTER TIMES** publishes a 'Have You Heard' column, so why not make use of this? Of course, this is only a thought. I'm sure I'm not alone in thinking this.

*Ronny H.*

## Archives Alley

Bill W.'s spiritual sponsor suffered intensely from arthritis. In Bill's own words, "He was the greatest and most gentle soul to ever walk the planet."

On a cold, rainy night in November 1940, Bill felt discouraged and alone. His friend, Hank P., had gone back to drinking. Thousands of copies of the Big Book sat unsold in a warehouse and the spiritual movement of AA seemed fragile and untenable. Five years sober, Bill sat dejected in a small rented room above the 24th Street AA Club.

The Club's maintenance man, Tom, called up to him that there was 'some bum from St. Louis' to see him. Grudgingly, Bill called to send him up. The older gentleman introduced himself as a Jesuit friend. He wanted to talk to Bill about the similarity of AA's twelve steps and the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius. Bill had never heard of them. They talked long into the night and when Bill went to bed that night, for the first time in a long time, he slept soundly.

Father Ed wrote extensively about the 12 Steps and Catholicism. He brought enlightenment and acceptance to many, both inside and outside of his church, but would be the first to acknowledge that he rode the coat tails of the 12 Steps for his own personal growth. He was the first to see that the Steps would be helpful for all addictions. He once remarked that the Steps had moved therapy from the expensive clinical couch to the coffee bar and from the inexperienced professional to the informed amateur.

It was believed that Bill W. had a second spiritual conversion the night he met Father Ed above the AA Clubhouse. Over the next twenty years, they became very close. Father Ed died April 2, 1960.

*Bernadette MacL.*

## Have You Heard?

### RECENT MEDALLIONS

**Peter G.**, 10 yrs, *Bellamy*, Aug. 16  
**Roy K.**, 35 yrs, *Beverley Hills*, Aug 17

### UPCOMING MEDALLIONS

**Greg D.**, 1 yr., *Fellowship*, Sept. 6  
**George M.**, 15 yrs, *Pathfinders*, Sept.8  
**Bob M.**, 10 yrs, *New Anchor*, Sept.9  
**Frank D.**, 5 yrs, *Rexdale United*, Sept.9  
**Mt. Albert Bob**, 15 yrs, *Back to Basics*, Sept 10  
**Ken S.**, 20 yrs, *Spiritual Progress*, Sept.11  
**Henry W.**, 35 yrs, *Lawrence Plaza*, Sept.12  
**Cindy**, 1 yr, *Bellamy*, Sept.13  
**Angela M.**, 5 yrs, *New Anchor*, Sept.16  
**Pat P.**, 45 yrs, *Bayview*, Sept.19  
**Vince O.**, 1 yr, *St. Jamestown* Sept 19  
**Ashley S.**, 1 yr., *Don Valley*, Sept. 21  
**Yolanda H.**, 1 yr, *Rexdale United*, Sept. 23

### GROUP ANNIVERSARIES / SPECIAL EVENTS

**Young Peoples' Meeting** to be held at the *Bayview Group* on Sunday, Sept. 26. 5 speakers; refreshments after the meeting.

### THINGS WE CANNOT CHANGE...

**Danny W.**, *Thorncliffe Park*, 3 yrs sober, passed away recently.  
**Mary P.**, *Wexford*, over 8 yrs sober, passed away July 24.  
**Vicki H.**, *Miracle / Newmarket*, over 23 yrs sober, passed away recently.  
**Roy K.** *Beverly Hills*, 35 yrs sobert, passed away August 14

### MEETING CHANGES

**Responsibility Group ( C )** Tuesday (CENTRAL) **NOW AT 8 p.m.**  
**Last Chance Group Discussion Mtg. ( C )** Thursday (SUB NW) **DISCONTINUED until further notice.**  
**Don Mills Discussion Group ( C )** Friday (NORTH EAST) as of now, **meeting back at OLD LOCATION:** Jubilee United Church, 40 Underhill Drive, east of DVP and north of Lawrence Ave E.

### NEW MEETINGS

**Good News A.A. Mtg. ( C )** Wednesdays 8 p.m. (CENTRAL): 695 St. Clair Ave West, Christie and St. Clair (across from McDonald's). Big Book and 12 Step discussion; once a month Open Meeting for medallions. *Non-Smoking.*

### SPECIAL EVENTS, CONVENTIONS, and CONFERENCES

**NORWOOD and DISTRICT 28<sup>th</sup> ANNUAL ROUNDUP**

**Theme:** 'No Longer Alone'.

**Time and Place:** Norwood Town Hall, S of the lights in Norwood. Saturday, Sept. 11. Starts at 1 p.m.; Dinner at 6 p.m.

**Details:** AA and AI-Anon speakers. \$15.

**SCARBOROUGH DISTRICT 22 SERVICE**

### DAY

**Theme:** 'Service is the Key to Your Sobriety'

**Time and place:** Oakridge Community Centre, 63 Pharmacy Ave. (within walking distance from Victoria Park subway; parking available). Saturday, Sept.18. 8:30 a.m. to 4 p.m.

**Details:** Panels, Fun, and Fellowship. Free lunch and coffee! Clean n' Sober Dance afterwards at 8 p.m. Dance tickets \$8.00.

**For More Information:** *See article in this edition!*

### PUBLIC INFORMATION SERVICE DAY

**Time and Place:** Glebe Rd. United Church, 20 Glebe Road East (Davisville subway). Saturday, Sept. 25. 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.

**Details:** Fully accessible. Day features panels, discussions, speakers, sharing, and a pot luck lunch. Free admission.

**For More Information:** *Watch for flyers. See article in this edition!*

### 9<sup>th</sup> Annual MISSISSAUGA FALL ROUND UP

**Theme:** 'Miracles of Honesty'

**Time and Place:** St. Mary's Ukrainian Catholic Church, 3625 Cawthra Rd., Mississauga, just S. of Burnhamthorpe Rd. Saturday, October 9

**Details:** AA and AI-Anon. \$15. (includes lunch and refreshments).

**For more information:** Contact Steve at (647) 888-2921 (anytime) or Francis (905) 279-8182 (anytime). *See flyers.*

### TORONTO GRATITUDE CONFERENCE

**Theme:** 'Courage to Change'

**Time and Place:** October 8, 9, and 10 in Toronto, Canada.

**For more information:** [www.torontogratitude-conference.org](http://www.torontogratitude-conference.org).

### HAMILTON AND DISTRICTS AA 36<sup>th</sup> ANNUAL AUTUMN LEAF ROUNDUP

**Theme:** 'Back to Basics'

**Time and Place:** Sheraton Hamilton Hotel (Toll Free 1-800-514-7101). Sept.17, 18 and 19

**Details:** Full AA, AI-Anon, and Alateen programmes. Speakers: Bennie McC., Oakville, ON; Al B., West Lake, OH; Jim B., Jamestown NY.

### 20<sup>th</sup> ANNUAL ARCHIVES BREAKFAST

**Time and Place:** Oasis Convention Centre (Mississauga). Sunday, Nov. 7

**Details:** Tickets \$25. Guest Speaker: Gail L., Akron AA Archivist. Tickets available 234.

*Watch for flyers.*

### SPECIAL ANNOUNCEMENT

**WINTER SEASON OPEN HOUSE NEEDS MORE COOKS!!!**

Due to expansion and a bigger kitchen, the Winter Season Open House event needs MORE volunteer cooks for Christmas Day 2004! Don't be a 'turkey', come out and cook one! Free dinner, too! **Call Kenny C. to volunteer at (416) 762-1176.**

Summer time always keeps the crowds small (thank God we are back to the real world next month).

We lost two more operating committee members. Maybe they should just add the item "Elections" to the standing order on the agenda. There was actually an election this time, with Diana M. (Thornccliffe Park) and Ron W. (Bloordale) elected to the committee.

We've removed the Finance Committee section of this report, and have provided them with their own space to tell you whatever they want (seeing as we seem to keep reporting the same things here, over and over and over and...).

If I can say just one thing, it is "Yes, Intergroup makes a profit on books they sell. They have to. Stop making them say it to stir things up." They wouldn't have to mark up books if we would cough up a little more in Gratitude month.

Self Support is asking for your Group Lists again, and this year, they want the Dry Dates as

## Intergroup Report



well. You might ask why, and you would likely be just in your inquiry. The reason is, the newer members tend to give less.

Archives got their room at 234 (as we reported last month) and are in the process of filling it. They want to tape some long timers who can share "the atmosphere and camaraderie of early AA in Toronto". A commit-

tee this busy needs to expand, and they are looking to open an Archives Committee table, similar to that of other Committees, to include Districts and Intergroup.

September 11<sup>th</sup> is the last day to get your order in to your DCM for your 2005 Grapevine pocket planners (\$5.25 each) and wall calendars (\$8.50 each).

Money first please. The Intergroup Website will soon contain a *Grapevine* page, linking would be surfers to the New York *Grapevine* site. And finally, they are still trying to flog the last of the old *Grapevine* tapes. Maybe they should just move them into the new Archives room.

The best thing about Tom S. chairing the P.I. Committee is he doesn't talk as long as Kevin. He is quick and to the point. "Attraction rather than promotion, but we can promote the attraction." Gotta love that!

The Treatment Facilities Committee is hoping to work with the Corrections committee to set up a Joint Information Day in January. They are also preparing a list of all Service meetings in detox units, treatment facilities and hospitals. Busy, busy, busy.

On a final note, a motion is pending to have Intergroup request a donation of a First Edition Big Book to raffle off for money.

*Gord MacK.*

## To 'Precoin' or not 'Precoin'

The request was a surprise to some attending the business meeting, which was not attended by the member requesting what she termed 'pre-coinning'. The member had asked that her 15-year medallion be given to her a few days before her dry date. She was moving the following week and family and friends could be accommodated much better if the presentation was early.

One member pointed out that this was not acceptable; that one's sobriety date was normally recognized at the open meeting after one's dry date, not before. There was not much discussion before the vote was called. All but two of the twenty or so members present voted to present the medallion early. Two members abstained from the vote.

What happened here? Was this a violation of Tradition Four where we are autonomous except in matters affecting AA? Was this a matter that affected AA as a whole? And was the

group conscience an informed one? Was the right decision made?

In the days that followed, I asked some longtimers their opinion. One stood firm in his conviction that an AA celebration is after one's dry date, never before. One said that he had heard of it once before, when a beloved member was presented with his medallion a few days before his death, and was buried with it. Another said that groups that bend the rules are 'stepping down a notch' in not holding our traditions sacred. Still another said that superstition would have prevented him from ever taking his medallion before his time was in. Another opinion was that taking an AA medallion in this manner indicated that it was a goal rather than an example for others.

Do you have an opinion about this? We look forward to hearing from you.

*Bernadette MacL.*

## Letter from the Finance Committee

Through June 30th, our Income is slightly above a year ago, but still below our Expenses of about \$30,000 (or \$5,000 per month). Our Expenses are on budget, and below last year.

Our greatest financial need NOW is to reap a great Gratitude Month contribution (around \$70,000 would be nice).

All AA Members can greatly help. Be grateful for your sobriety and give liberally.

Here's to healthy and harmonious finances for you and us.

*Ron S., Chair Finance Committee*

## By The Book

I have found that the most difficult job as editor of **BETTER TIMES** is to prepare a piece for publishing when the content represents everything I oppose. Practicing Open-Mindedness helps somewhat, but I'm still tempted to retort back.

Instead, let me just remind all of our Constant Readers that we welcome letters back to the editor on articles we publish, even if you disagree with them.

For example, if you think that giving newcomers a Big Book makes a lot of sense, and feel that not enough newcomers are being exposed to the Big Book, or told what it says, and are being guided to the softer ways in the 12 and 12 paving the way to their next drink, you would be within your rights as an AA member to feel this way.

And we'd love to hear from you.

*Bible Gord*