

# BETTER TIMES



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## 2006 Winter Season Open House Sponsored by Greater Toronto Intergroup



### BETTER TIMES

Published monthly for AA members in the Greater Toronto Area  
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Opinions Expressed in BETTER TIMES are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of Greater Toronto Area Intergroup.

### How To Reach Us:

Submit group news, medallions, other event notices, letters to the editor or articles to BETTER TIMES (before the 10th of the month of the prior month of issue), by mail, fax or email. Only signed submissions with a means of contact will be accepted. For subscriptions call Alexx 416-487-8110. Not responsible for hyperlink content.

**NOTE:** Please submit Special Meetings dates and times by Dec 4<sup>th</sup> or earlier to get in the Christmas edition of Better Times

**Step Twelve**  
Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to alcoholics, and to practice these principles in all our affairs

Each year since 1944, over 300 AA people gather to attend meetings, greet newcomers, listen to music, and enjoy a holiday seasonal dinner.

This year's theme is: To enhance our winter sobriety during a season of hope, with open fellowship amongst family & friends; to provide an atmosphere of responsibility & gratitude, thereby creating a positive remember when this December 25th, 2006.

The agenda for the day is as follows:

- Four 45 minute Topic Closed Discussion Meetings start at 10:30 AM
- Keynote Speaker 1:00 PM

The Christmas season is a time of festivity and family gatherings. But there are other factors. Family squabbles bring unease and anxiety, office parties offer trials and temptations and misguided friends try to goad us into one last drink.

For that reason, we offer a few helpful tips for the holidays.

1. Most AA groups have candlelight meetings. Attend them. Bring a newcomer to make the meeting special. Setup, bring food, make coffee, and clean up. Volunteer.
2. Pass up a drinking party when you're feeling fragile. If in doubt, don't. No party is important enough to jeopardize your hard won sobriety.

- Live Music for one hour at 11:00 AM & 2:00 PM
- Gratitude Open Speaker Meeting 3:00 PM
- Holiday Seasonal Turkey and Ham Dinner with all the Trimmings from 11:00 AM

**Monday December 25th, 2006**  
**10:30 AM to 4:30 PM**  
**Emmanuel-Howard Park United Church**  
**Roncesvalles & Wright Avenue**  
**Northwest Corner-214 Wright Ave**

- Coffee, Tea, & Sweets available throughout the day

Directions to the Winter Season Open House are: TTC - Take subway to Dundas West Station then board 504 Streetcar or take the westbound 504

Streetcar west along King Street West.

Also, volunteers are needed. If you can lend a hand as a cook, a greeter, a set-up person, a car-pool driver or as musical talent, please contact WSOH-Chair at 647-221-7338 or 416-487-5591.

Finally, to anyone with the means, please make a donation to Toronto Intergroup to help pay for the 2006 WSOH. Please make your cheque payable to "Toronto Intergroup" referencing WSOH on Memo Line and remit to 234 Eglinton Avenue East Suite 202, Toronto M4P 1K5 or bring personally to the 2006 WSOH. Hope to see you this year!

*Mary W., Streetsville Action Group*

## Twelve Tips on Keeping Sober Through the Holidays

3. Carry a phone list of AA members and key their numbers into your cell phone memory. A simple call can save your life.
4. Open your home to AA members. Have an evening or afternoon of fellowship.
5. If your finances are low, pass on the gift-giving. Remember that the greatest gift you can give to your family and friends is your sobriety.
6. Leave the party or function when you feel 'restless, irritable, and discontent.' You don't have to close up the party any more.
7. Keep some candy in your pocket/purse to stave off the urge to drink.
8. Don't sit around brooding. Catch up on your reading; go for a long walk, have a luxurious bath, see a good movie.
9. Stay in the now. Don't start projecting about 'what if's' or 'if only's' Remember to 'Live a Day at a Time.'
10. Attend church/synagogue/temple. Sit in the peace of God's house and focus on Step Eleven.
11. Look for the beauty of the season. You are now fully awake to what you are truly capable of. Give the gift of love to your fellow travelers.
12. We are awakened spiritually by our Steps. We need to apply this spirituality to our lives and pass it on to others. What we give away comes back tenfold.

*Bernadette MacL. King City Group*

## Five Decades of Sobriety and Still Going Strong

It was 1956 and Elvis was singing "Don't be Cruel" and "Heartbreak Hotel." The Platters were singing "The Great Pretender."

A hotel room cost \$9 per night. Ten cents could buy you a TTC ticket or a loaf of bread. Gas was twenty-five cents per gallon, and you could buy a used car for \$120. Houses went for about \$5,000.

And 50 years ago three men - Les K., Eddy L. and Jack M. - formed a group of Alcoholics Anonymous which was to be called the Islington Group. Bob R., our longest consecutive member, still attends our meetings and currently holds a position at the group.

For many years the group consisted only of men, but over time a few women joined. Until 25 years ago there were only three female members. At one point the group's nick name was *The Dinosaur Group*, as the majority of members were elderly,

and had many years of sobriety.

Through the decades, the group became home to many men and women and eventually grew to become the largest AA group in the west end. The group had its ups and downs as membership fluctuated due to the aging of our original members, as well as members moving or changing groups. Approximately seven years ago membership had dwindled in the open meetings and at times there were only two members present at the closed meeting. There was talk of closing the group. However, hard work by group members helped and gradually the group began to grow, until it returned to the strong and united group we know today.

On December 8, at 8:30 pm the Islington Group will celebrate its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary at the Islington United Church.

Everyone is welcome.

*Elsje V. Islington Group.*

## Reflecting A Past Christmas

As I wake, I look at the wall clock: 11 p.m. The room is brightly lit and the season's decorations are in place. "So, what about midnight Mass?" I say out loud to no one in particular. My wife shouts back: "What midnight Mass? Are you daft? Today is Holy Innocents day." It is 1985 and it is the December 28<sup>th</sup>, four days after Christmas eve.

Another Christmas has come and gone. I know my wife and children are giving me that curious look. I stare at the floor and nod my head making out like I'm remembering what happened up to the present moment. My blackouts have been increasing in these past few years. By now, I know it's futile to recapture the events during a blackout. It makes me feel miserable

and insane. But I'm curious, but I really don't want to know.

I say to my wife: "Sorry I didn't go to Midnight mass!"

Her retort is quick and spiteful: "When did you ever go to Midnight mass with me and the children?". I make an excuse; her response? "Don't lie, don't lie! I know you've been out to get more stuff for yourself after we left for church. You were so nice until the evening of the 24th; and then your friend came; he got so drunk, you sent him home in a rickshaw like he was half dead. My God! You don't have any shame; singing filthy limericks to the carol singers?"

I have no recollection of these events, but shame gets the

## Archives Breakfast Review

On Sunday November 5, 2006, 250 members of Alcoholics Anonymous and their friends (representing over 2,322.5 years of sobriety!) gathered at the Oasis Convention Centre in Mississauga to renew acquaintances, meet new friends and to celebrate the Fellowship at the 22<sup>nd</sup> Annual Archives Breakfast.

The Archives Breakfast serves two primary purposes - first, to share the rich history of Alcoholics Anonymous with as many members of the Fellowship as possible as well as the record of AA's inception and growth in Ontario and Toronto.

Since its inception in 1980, the second purpose of the Archives Breakfast in Toronto has been to help generate funds so that the Archives committee can do preservation work - for example, encapsulating typewritten letters from the 1940's and digitally copying AA talks from tape recordings and records.

This year, the Archives Committee invited Mel B., from Toledo, OH to be our speaker. Mel is an active 81-year old with 56 years of sobriety in the Fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous. A seasoned writer, Mel was a major contributor to *Pass It On*, the AAWS-published biography of Bill W. Over the years he also has contributed many articles to the *Grapevine*. He continues to write as a student of AA history.

Mel kept the breakfast audience spell-bound with the story of his drinking in the 1930's and 40's, his introduction to AA and

his final drinks in the spring of 1950.

He then wove a history lesson of the early years around three 'Turning Points' that he suggests needed to be in place for Alcoholics Anonymous, as we know it today, to have survived. These were,

Ebby T. being in a sober space and thus able to pass the ideals of the Oxford Group to Bill in 1934. These tenets are part of the basis of our twelve steps.

Dr. Bob agreeing, through Henrietta Seiberling to meet with Bill in Akron in 1935 and finally getting sober. Bill was discouraged and ready to return to New York when Dr. Bob came back from Atlanta drunk.

Bill and Dr. Bob having the vision to write and publish a book - the one ultimately titled Alcoholics Anonymous. This meant that drunks like us did not have to personally meet Bill or Bob to receive the message of AA.

Mel closed his talk by singing for his brunch. A solo, original tribute to our co-founders, sung a cappella and on key with dignity and passion. The hall honoured him with a spontaneous standing ovation.

Please mark Sunday, November 4, 2007 on your calendars. This is the tentative date for our next Archives Breakfast. Plan on being there!

*Roy Robertson  
Chair, Toronto Intergroup  
Archives Committee*

better of me and I change the subject. "What's for dinner?"

Thankfully this memory is from a holiday season years ago. I have moved half way around the world from Perambur, Madras, India to Toronto, Ontario. I have spent 17 Christmas seasons without a drink.

Now, reminiscing does not make me miserable. It's like using a rear view mirror for a quick look and, then, moving forward. Not only do I get a view of things past it also makes me vigilant of things that could creep up from behind. For this, I thank the God of my understanding & AA.

*Ronny H Bellamy Group*

## Archives Alley

### Bill and Lois

On the motorcycle trip through the United States, to analyze companies for stock investments, Bill and Lois found themselves in the Appalachian Mountains of North Carolina on Christmas Eve of 1925. Prepared to spend Christmas together in their tent, they heard the boisterous voice of a logger. They were invited to spend the holiday with this logger and his wife, son, daughter-in-law, and six children. Years later, Lois wrote endearingly of that time. When there were no presents for the children, Bill sat the younger ones on his knee and gave them all several dollars telling them that Santa had left gifts for them in their tent. Lois silently mourned her inability to have children especially when she saw how her husband so naturally connected with them.

Of all the hopes and dreams that Bill and Lois W. yearned for in the early days of their marriage was the anticipation of having a family together. Married in January of 1918, Bill was waiting to be shipped out to the Western Front as a second lieutenant in the U.S. army. He did not return until March of 1919. Lois suffered a miscarriage when Bill was overseas but had chosen not to tell him until well after his return. A second pregnancy ended shortly after this, destroying one of her fallopian tubes. A third pregnancy was just as seriously life threatening when Lois was admitted to Skene Sanitarium, a woman's Hospital in Brooklyn where her father was on staff. Another ectopic pregnancy destroyed Lois' hopes of ever becoming a mother or giving Bill the child that would stabilize their family and, as she believed, would stop his drinking.

In later years, both Bill and Lois would acknowledge that their childless life had happened for God's purpose and that the direction of both of their lives had been guided to a place where every suffering individual would become an important part of their family.

*Bernadette MacL.  
King City Group*

## Have You Heard?

### RECENT MEDALLIONS

Name	Yr.	Group	Date
Tom C.	..... 1	...Twelve Steps	.....Nov. 22
Jean H.	..... 35	...Kingsway	.....Nov. 22
Mike G.	..... 1	...Unionville	.....Nov. 22
Mike F.	..... 10	...Welcome	.....Nov. 26
Billy C.	..... 5	...King City	.....Nov. 27
Ed R.	..... 25	...East York	.....Nov. 28
Herb T.	..... 15	...Unionville	.....Nov. 29

### UPCOMING MEDALLIONS

Name	Yr.	Group	Date
Pat B.	..... 20	...Aurora	.....Dec. 3
Jeremy M.	..... 1	...Aurora	.....Dec. 5
Bobby D.	..... 15	...St. James Big Book	.....Dec. 11
Paul S.	..... 10	...King City	.....Dec. 11
Gerard O.	..... 5	...Chartwell	.....Dec. 14
Rick R.	..... 1	...Scarborough	.....Dec. 29
Joan (the Hat) A	30yrs	Agincourt Acorn	.....Jan. 9
Ray P.	..... 10	...East York	.....Jan. 9

### MEETING CHANGES

**Kennedy Park Group**, (O) Monday 8 p.m., Konkko Church of Toronto, 398 Kennedy Rd., (SW corner of Kennedy and Danforth), Scarborough

**Sunday Morning Meeting** (C) 10 a.m. (Suburban West). The listing should read: Sobey's Mall, Oakville. NE corner of Bronte and Lakeshore. Enter F.A.S.T. storefront.

### NEW MEETINGS

**The Step Eleven Meeting** (C) Tuesdays 12:15 noon (CENTRAL): Calvin Presbyterian Church, 26 Delisle Ave (one N of St. Clair, off Yonge St). Meeting focus: Step Eleven & meditation. BYOC (bring your own coffee). One-hour duration.

**Lawrence Plaza Discussion** (C) 8 p.m. Thursdays (NORTH): St. Leonard's Anglican Church, 25 Wanless Ave., 2 blocks N of Lawrence Ave, on Yonge St. (behind fire station). Step discussion.

### MEETINGS NEEDING SUPPORT

**Kennedy Park Group**, (O) Monday 8 p.m., Konkko Church of Toronto, 398 Kennedy Rd., (SW corner of Kennedy and Danforth), Scarborough

**Mount Dennis Group** Thursdays (Closed Step Discussion) 8 p.m. (WEST): 71 Guestville Ave., S of Eglinton, W of Weston Rd. Open Speaker Mtg on Mondays at 8 p.m. *Call 234 for details.*

**Pourquoi Pas? (French-speaking)** Saturdays (C) 11 a.m. (CENTRAL). 22 College St.

**Beverly Hills Group** Fridays 8 p.m. (NORTH WEST). Greenborough Community Church, 2000 Keele St. N. of Eglinton. In service for 36 years. Regularly visited by treatment centre newcomers. Needs chairpersons and Speakers.

**Lawrence Plaza Group** 8:00 p.m. Sundays (NORTH) (O). **New time and location:** St. Leonard's Church, 25 Wanless Ave., 2 blocks N. of Yonge & Lawrence (behind fire station).

**St. Patrick's Group** Tuesdays: Big Book study (C), 6:45 p.m.; open speaker meeting (O) follows at 8 p.m. (CENTRAL) St. Paul's RC Church, 83 Power St., at Queen St. East, east of Parliament.

**Don Valley Group** Tuesdays 8 p.m. (O); Thursdays 8 p.m. (C) Step Discussion. (NORTH) Advent Lutheran Church, 2800 Don Mills Rd., N of

Sheppard Ave. East at Don Mills divide.

**Parklawn Group** (O) Fridays 8:30 p.m. (WEST) is in need of attendance, Chairpeople, Speakers, and new members. Humbercrest United Church, 16 Baby Point Rd., Jane and Annette St.

**Centenary Group** Monday (C) Thursday (O) 7 p.m. (NORTHEAST)

**Sunday Scarborough Group** (O) 8 p.m. (EAST)

**Freedom Friday Group** Friday (C) 8:15 p.m. (CENTRAL)

### SPECIAL EVENTS, CONVENTIONS, and CONFERENCES

**The Beverly Hill Group** celebrated 35 Years of Service, Fri. Nov. 24.

**Thornhill Group Candlelight** Wed. Dec. 20

**Glenholme Candlelight** Dec. 11 at 8.30 p.m., also open on Christmas Day and New Year's Day.

**Roxglen Traditional Group's Christmas mtg.** 8 p.m. Thurs. Dec. 21

**The King City Group** will celebrate its **Candlelight** meeting on Dec. 18 at 8 p.m. Open meetings as usual at 8 p.m. on Dec. 25 and Jan. 1/07.

**50th Anniversary of the Islington Group** Dec. 8 at 8:30 p.m., Islington United Church, 25 Burnhamthorpe Rd., north of Dundas St. W. Etobicoke

**Scarborough Centenary Group** will hold its **Candlelight** on Dec. 14 and celebrates **24 years** as a group on Jan. 5, 2007

The **City Central Group** will be having their **Candlelight** on Sun, Dec. 17. at 8:00 p.m. at St. Simon's Anglican Church, 525 Bloor St. E. – East of Sherbourne at back of church (Howard St. entrance).

**Welcome Group** will be having its **Seasonal Meeting**, Dec 17 at 8:30 p.m. Also open Dec 24 and 31!

**No Longer Alone Meeting** Fridays 8 p.m.

(CENTRAL) **Seasonal Meeting & Potluck** Dec 22

**The 2nd Annual New Year's Eve Candlelight Spontaneous Speaker Meeting** at the 519. (this is an open meeting, all welcome) 7 p.m. to 8 p.m., Sunday Dec. 31. 519 Church Street Community Centre (just north of Wellesley, on Church St.)

**3rd Annual Sober Karaoke New Year's Eve Dance Party.** 8:30 p.m. to 12:30 a.m. Sun. Dec. 31. No cover charge, all welcome. 519 Church Street Community Centre.

**29th Annual Spiritual New Year's Dance & Buffet**, Holy Rosary Parish Hall, 354 St. Clair Ave. W., (at subway). Doors open at 8 p.m. Open meeting, Al-Anon meeting, Interfaith Gratitude Service. Dance starts at 10 p.m. Admission dance and buffet \$10 in advance, \$12 at door. Call John P. 416-460-7956 for advance tickets or to volunteer.

**15th Annual Toronto Winter Round Up** with Clancy I. from Venice, CA. Sat, Jan 27 at 9:00 a.m., Novotel North York, 3 Park Home Ave., (North of Sheppard Ave. West, off Yonge St.), North York Centre Subway Stop • \$50.00 Includes dinner and coffee breaks • Pre-registration by Jan. 20 • Speaker Tapes onsite • For info: James H. 416-221-9155 Email: [winterroundup@gmail.com](mailto:winterroundup@gmail.com)

**B**ack in April when he was elected Chair of the Operating Committee, Wayne D. (Goldenmile) said he was going to have fun and hoped everyone would also have fun. At the October Intergroup meeting Wayne said that yes, indeed, he did have fun. Wayne started the meeting by reviewing the successes of Intergroup during his tenure. The desires expressed by groups in the GTA were revealed during the referendum and insurance is now available to all groups.

Ida Y., Glenholme Group, and a member of the Finance Committee, thanked groups for their donations. Intergroup operated at a loss of \$1,639 in the month of October and at a loss of \$15,933 for the year. She asked that groups pay any invoice ASAP. The accounts receivables balance is \$19,366 and increasing. No business can afford to carry such a large balance.

Elections were next with Rene T., (Silverbirch) being acclaimed as Chair of Operating Committee and Victoria B (Beaches) and Stan A. (New Anchor) serving as Vice Chairs. Barbara L. (St. Clements), Arwen H. (Primary Purpose) and Lyle G. (Thorncliffe Park) are the new Junior members of the Operating Committee.

## Intergroup Report



Marv W., (Streetsville Action) 2006 Winter Season Open House Chair invited everyone to Emmanuel- Howard Park Church (Roncesvalles & Wright) December 25 for this day of fellowship and great food. (See page one story).

Barbara H., (Welcome) ORC Chairperson displayed the placards and flyers for the "Surrender to Win" conference March 16, 17 and 18, 2007 and encouraged everyone to take

some back to all groups. Information email: [orc@aatoronto.org](mailto:orc@aatoronto.org).

Dave R., (Woodbridge) and CPC Chair thanked members for voting in favor of the new CPC display and spoke of the rave reviews the display has received.

The Website Committee is in the process of being revamped to make it more user-friendly. Volunteers with web experience are needed.

John P., (Welcome) Self Support Chair reminded us that October was Gratitude Month and

it is never too late to make a contribution to the Intergroup Office even by electronic funds transfer from your bank account or credit card. Call the office for details.

The Better Times Committee is in need of a Chair. If you are skilled in editing or desktop publishing, the Better Times Committee meets the Wednesday before the Intergroup meeting.

Greeter training for the phones is the 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of each month at 1:30pm at 234 Eglinton.

Opportunities for service at Intergroup include: 1 Junior member of the Operating Committee, Winter Season Open House, 1 member for the Finance subcommittee, Better Times is in need of a Chair, the 12 Step Committee needs members and phone greeters, Website Committee needs people with web experience, CPC needs volunteers also. See the schedule on this page for when these subcommittees meet.

A reminder that the Intergroup office is a place of business. As a place of business, one of our responsibilities to our employees is to provide a safe and respectful environment. Please remember this when you visit the office.

*Tim R., Chartwell Group*

## 35 Years for Gerry L.

**G**erry L.'s 35th anniversary meeting at the Recovery Group was a great mixture of laughter, experiences, and tributes. The evening was filled with the generosity of the program - "sharing with others what has so freely been given to us." New and longer-term members expressed gratitude, citing instances to explain the importance of finding time after time that "Gerry is always there," especially for the newcomer. One friend mentioned that "Gerry doesn't give up on people." Another member spoke of his dedicated participation in responsibility meetings; another, his work in service. During his early years as a member of the Chartwell group, he directed his energies to chairing and sharing with a Beginner's group working on Steps 1, 2, and 3.

Accepting his medallion, Gerry admitted that the help of his wife, Suzanne, (who is an active Al-Anon member) her understanding, and especially

her loving detachment, had led him to the doors of AA. In earlier days, it was not uncommon for wives to attend meetings regularly with their husbands.

Gerry paid tribute to his two daughters who attended the anniversary with their husbands and family.

Decades ago, Dr. Bob advised Bill: Don't take yourself too damned seriously. This advice was certainly taken by Gerry and his long-time friends as frequent laughter was heard when memories were shared.

Gerry had the words Faith Courage, Strength and Serenity inscribed on his medallion—strong tributes to Gerry's sobriety and evidence that his program has been one of love and service.

*Kaye H., Thornhill Group*

# Merry Christmas Happy New Year One Day at a Time



**From the staff of the Intergroup  
Office and the Better Times Committee!**

<b>GTAI Subcommittee Meetings—December 2006</b>		
Date	Committee	Time
Fri 1	Joint Meeting Intergroup & the Districts at Glebe Rd United Church (D.10 facilitates)	7:30 pm
Mon 4	CF & TF Committees	7:00 pm
Tue 5	Finance	4:30 pm
	Operating	7:30 pm
Wed 6	Self-Support	7:00 pm
Thu 7	Better Times	7:30 pm
Fri 8	Archives	7:00 pm
Sat 9	Website	1:00 pm
	Spiritual New Years Cte	2:00 pm
Mon 11	CPC	7:00 pm
Tue 12	Monthly General Meeting	8:00 pm
<i>Of GTA Intergroup—Glebe Rd. United Church 20 Glebe Rd. East (N of Davisville subway)</i>		
Wed 13	Info AA Day	7:30 pm
Thu 14	Grapevine	7:30 pm
Sat 16	Winter Season O.H.	1:00 pm
Sun 17	Access Ability	11:00 am
	Phone Training Session	1:30 pm
Mon 18	Public Information	7:30 pm
Fri 29	Twelfth Step	6:30 pm
<b>Yet to be Scheduled:</b> <i>Ad Hoc Implementation Meeting</i>		