

BETTER TIMES

August 2009
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VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

Have a few hours a week and interested in assisting in the Archives Repository? Archivist needs help filing and cataloguing.
 Please call the GTA Intergroup office (416 487 5591) and leave your contact information.

Stepping Stones' 30th Anniversary

They say that whenever someone dies, that somewhere on earth someone is born!

In 1979, Betty H.'s sponsor (Reg Brown) died, and Betty entered a very difficult period in her sobriety. Well, she turned to service, along with the help of Mike S. and Jack A. Betty recalled a line on page 111 of the 12 & 12 which contained the phrase: stepping-stones to better things"

On September 6th, 1979, Betty H. started the new Stepping Stones Saturday Night Discussion Meeting at Holy Rosary Church on St. Clair Ave. W. By 1984 the 'meeting' had grown to 7 members and Stepping Stones became an official 'group' within AA. By 1991, the group numbered close to 40 members. In 1994 the group moved to Bloor St. United Church. But by 1999, membership had fallen back to 6-7 members.

That year, 4 new members joined and began a re-growth. By August 2005 and until June 2007, the group's home was at Trinity St. Paul's on Bloor St. Finally, on June 2nd, 2007 Stepping Stones held its first meeting at its current home in St. Peter's R.C. Church at the Bathurst Subway. Over the years, the Group has evolved to 2 meetings a week (Wed & Sat), with a membership list now of approxi-

mately 140. Saturday meetings are occasionally as high in number as 195-200 attendees.

Certain things have become characteristic of the Stepping Stones Group. Since April 2006, food has been generously provided most weeks. Fellowship after each meeting has always been crucial to its members. In the old days, everyone went to Fran's Restaurant on St. Clair, joined by a few members from 2 other groups in the area.

Stepping Stones has seen many challenges over the years, but has grown and thrived!

Today's 140+ membership is a vibrant, high-energy group with a median age of approximately 40 years old...half older, half younger, and a strong mix of 30% female and 70% male members! Our sub-groups for discussion include 1-2-3, The Big Book, The Steps, and Meditation. Business meetings are lively (ok, animated!)...service abounds amongst us...and there's wonderful, caring sobriety being freely shared. Our founder is in her 50th year of sobriety! And, we turn 30 on September 6th, 2009!

"It's not just the meetings we make, it's the steps we take"

Pat Q., Stepping Stones Group

Unity Day 2009

We held the first Unity Day two years ago in Barrie, Ontario. Leonard Blumenthal, then board chairman of AA World Services, came as our guest, and the day was both well attended and enjoyed by all.

The goal of Unity Day 2007 was to get Areas 83 and 86 working closer in Service. This makes sense, since the two areas share a common border, running through Oakville, Malton, Bradford and other towns.

Unity Day 2009 has the same purpose. It's another chance to bring the two Areas together on a joint project. Our special guest this year is Phyllis H, the new general manager of the General Service Office in New York.

Your Unity Day chair was lucky enough to meet Phyllis in Moose Factory this February. She is a remarkable woman. She also brings a strong service background to her new job, having been a past delegate and regional trustee for the western region of the United States.

The day will be similar to a standard workshop. Our respective Delegates will each give a talk on General Service and the General Service Conference. They may also share a bit of their personal recovery and/or their personal journey through service.

The schedule is still being finalized. But you can expect to hear District Committee Members (DCMs) and Committee Members from Areas 83 and 86 present on:

- Grapevine
- Public Information (PI)
- Correctional Facilities (CF)
- Treatment Facilities (TF)
- Cooperation with the Professional Community (CPC)
- Archives
- Self-Support and Remote Communities

Unity Day admission is free and a lunch will be served at a cost of \$6.00. The closing banquet will cost \$25, and feature Phyllis H. as the after-dinner speaker. Tickets for the banquet are limited to 200. They can be purchased through various DCMs or committee members and online at www.ficomputers.com.

This is a great chance to meet our new General Manager and the trusted servants who perform the business of AA at the area level. It's also a chance to learn what General Service is about and to share the spirit of Unity, Service and Recovery. We hope to see you there.

Unity Day 2009
September 26, 2009

King City Community Centre (Arena)
25 Doctor's Lane, King City, Ontario

Rodney S., Unity Day Chair

Of Loaves and Fishes (or "What I Thought About After Information AA Day")

When I first walked in the door of the recent Information AA Day (at Lansing United Church in Willowdale) my first thought was that many of the faces looked familiar. As both an AA member with 20 years of sobriety and the current GSR of the Oakville Group, I have been around a bit, but it still strikes me as odd that I can drive across an area of 3 million people, or drive all the way to Kingston for Area Assemblies, and still see the same faces.

Don't get me wrong, it's nice to see those faces. Comforting, in fact. It's just the numbers game that strikes me as being odd. They say 5% of the people in AA do 80% of the work and that was very evident here, as I have found it to be all across AA.

Anyway, the first workshop I attended was on self-support — Tradition 7 — every A.A. group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions. Now self-support would seem a rather straightforward concept, we don't take money from charity or government, we pay our own way, etc. but I think there might be quite a bit more to it than that. If you stop to think about it, the \$2.00 I throw into the basket religiously every meeting shouldn't really be enough to keep this global organization going the way it does. Many groups struggle to pay their rent but most do, and thanks to all these familiar faces, we all keep going.

It kind of reminds me of the miracle of the loaves and fishes. You know the one where the Christian apostles show Jesus the few loaves and fishes they have collected to serve thousands

waiting on the hillside. He directs them to start passing them out anyway and, somehow, the few loaves and fish must multiply as they are passed from person to person because all are fed and all are sated. With so few members getting so much work done I believe this phenomenon must be at work in AA.

As I heard at the meeting, self-support is not just about money; it's about time and work. Time, something I squandered so very much when I was drinking and, now that I am sober, I can be so very stingy with.

Time to do the grunt work of AA: set up chairs, make coffee, clean the coffee pot after the meeting, sweep the floor, answer the phones at Intergroup, answer my phone when Intergroup calls, stock up supplies, order cakes, chair meetings, in short, make myself useful.

And here again, it is so often the same few faces that I see doing that work, for decades even, as it keeps them sober. I think it must be like with the loaves and the fishes, the group starts off working with what little help it's got and somehow, always, as one person here and there steps up, it seems to be enough.

The real question for me, in this loaves and fishes analogy, is 'do I want to be part of the miracle or merely one of the multitudes on the hillside?' Because, notwithstanding what we tell newcomers about how important they are to AA, what the old-timers told me when I came in is true: "AA doesn't need me, I need AA."

Kathy M.
Oakville Group

The Fantasy of the Frosted Glass

When we think of summertime we often mention outdoor patios with frosty glasses of beer and wine beckoning to us. We visualize the condensation running down the side of a lovely crystal glass and the allure of the cold satisfying beverage inside.

Okay, now let's get honest. When you were in the throes of alcoholism, did you really care what kind of glass you were drinking from, if you still had enough dignity to use a glass? I think I managed to smash most of mine. And when was the last time you remember letting a drink sit long enough to build up condensation?

The reality is that it is no more difficult to stay sober in the summer than at any other time. In early sobriety, time seems to tick by very slowly. This is because we are still changing our lifestyles and finding productive ways to fill our time and also because we are conscious for more hours of the day.

If time is crawling by and a month seems like three months, wouldn't you rather have three June, July or Augusts than three January or Februarys? What a blessing to have summer months that seem to last forever!

There are many opportunities in the fine weather to take pleasure in nature and to use your new found strength and co-ordination to benefit from outdoor activities.

Your determination to quit drinking was not made lightly. Many factors and experiences led to that choice. Now that the resolution has been made and you are on your way to a life of sobriety, don't question that judicious decision by entertaining fantasies such as that of the frosted glass.

Stella M
Park Royal Group

Accepting Acceptance

It's a word we all hate to hear, but yet, all desire to have in our lives. If there were a dictionary of addiction, the definition of acceptance might read: "Acceptance; contrary to selfishness; to live life on life's terms." Of course, we all have our own definitions of "Acceptance," but the one that has held in my head and kept me from drinking is the one that I experience on an everyday level.

I never could accept a lot of things in life and I believe it made it harder for me to see the world from the perspective of a social drinker. For the longest time I could not accept certain people, places and things. It frustrated me to face the world and accept it for what it is, because (the world) never agreed with my own ideals.

My lack of spiritual progress and intellectual growth resulted in me being an ill minded, irresponsible person. A world of my own creation was less painful and uncomfortable, but fear driven and unrealistic. I've been a magician for so long that my own tricks have fooled even me.

When I began to change my attitude, I began to learn to accept. Before I felt alone and dismembered by my thinking. Yet, when I started walking a new path in the program I found my Higher Power again, He made acceptance more tolerable for me to perceive. It took some time to get over myself, but I knew it would work out in the end, as long as we both agreed to walk together, from now on.

Mike L, Formerly (Oakville North) Group

What Is Love?

Love is not only sentimental, not only pleasure and desire. Love is comprehension, forgiveness, compassion participation, brotherhood, dedication, and enthusiasm.

Love has no prejudices, has no differences, no fear, and is not suspicious. Love has no gender or age, no condition and no limits.

Love is desolving in others with a warm hug; to become real power, real light and real joy. Love is the only true reason for life. Love will be the mystery that becomes reality.

Love will be the pain that becomes joy, and the darkness that becomes light and colours. It will be happiness and more. It will be God!

Carlo Alberto Cancellara

Dr George Little and Reverend Percy Price and the Big Book

"The Reverend George A. Little, D.D. who read the [Saturday Evening Post, March 1941] book review by Dr. Emerson Fosdick on Alcoholics Anonymous, made photo copies and eventually ordered a copy for himself. He became an enthusiastic supporter of A.A.

Meanwhile, Dr. Little continued to be the alcoholic's friend - so much so that he enrolled at the Yale University School of Alcoholic Studies from which he graduated in 1941. It seems virtually impossible today to understand what it must have been like for suffering alcoholics, especially when we focus on the reality of no meetings and just six Big Books floating around. Dr. Little was so impressed with the results he witnessed from those now famous five books of "Alcoholics Anonymous" that he had purchased in 1946 that he wrote New York to see what could be done to acquire more copies of this incredible book for Canada.

In August 1942, twenty months after reading Dr. Fosdick's review, New York granted Dr. Little Canadian distribution rights to "Alcoholics Anonymous." Importing the book was not as easy as it seemed and required negotiation with Canada Customs, but by October 1942 all problems settled, the Big Book was now on its way and available in larger quantities. A.A. in Ontario may not yet have been born, but 1942 was a golden year in our history.

Dr. Little and Canon Quintin Warner were now joined by another committed, energetic nonalcoholic, the Rev. Percy G. Price, M.A. LL.B., the assistant pastor of Metropolitan United Church. Rev. Price graduated from Osgoode Hall in 1905 but soon discovered his preference for assisting others and graduated from Victoria College in 1911 as a minister. Earlier, as he'd done so often, Dr. Little had given Rev. Price a copy of our book and Rev. Price reacted with the same enthusiasm it seemed to instill in everyone who read it."

(excerpt from 50 Years of AA in Canada, pp. 8-9)

Maire O'B, GTA Intergroup Archivist

Recent Medallions:

Bob C.	15	St. James Bond Group	June 2
Dave L.	1	East York Group	June 23
Agnes O.	1	Pathfinders Group	July 1
Norma M.	1	Bloordale Group	July 5
Don S.	35	Kingsway Group	July 8
John P.	1	Unionville Group	July 8
Marion T.	1	Golden Mile Group	July 8
Norma	1	Thornhill Group	July 8
Metka V.	1	New Anchor Group	July 9
Ronald A.	5	Maple Group	July 9
Clark S.	10	Aurora Group	July 12
Tom W.	10	Aurora Group	July 12
Tunde F.		Westmoreland Group	July 14
Nicki	1	Thornhill Group	July 15
Steve B.	15	Parklawn Group	July 17
Sean McD.	20	Lakeshore Group	July 19
Ken S.		Westmoreland Group	July 21
Ray W.	1	Golden Mile Group	July 22
Tara	1	Thornhill Group	July 22
Ed R.	20	Rouge Valley Group	July 23
Lisa C.	1	Markland Wood Group	July 23
Larry R.	5	Unionville Group	July 29

Upcoming Medallions:

Richard G.		Westmoreland Group	August 4
Tony L.	5	Unionville Group	August 5
Shawn K.	5	Miami Beach Group	August 8
John M.		Westmoreland Group	August 18
Jennifer M.	1	Aurora Group	August 23
Rodney S.	12	Aurora Group	August 23
Wayne D.	15	Aurora Group	August 23
Andrew B.		Westmoreland Group	August 25
Chris R.	15	Unionville Group	August 26
Joanne G.	1	Aurora Group	Sept. 27

Meeting Changes:

Parkdale Sunday Morning (O) Sunday 11am (WEST): Meeting has been cancelled due to municipale strike.

St. James Big Book Discussion (C) Monday 1pm (CENTRAL): Meetings are suspended until further notice due to construction.

Oakville (O) Monday 8pm (SUBURBAN WEST): Please note our new start time of 8pm

Streetsville Action (O) Wednesday 8:30pm (SUBURBAN WEST): Meetings are now being held in the Fellowship Lounge (due to renovations).

Living Sober (O & C) Tuesday 8pm & Thursday 7pm (SUBURBAN NORTH): Meeting has been moved to Trinity United Church at 461 Park Avenue in Newmarket.

Bathurst (O) Monday 8pm (Suburban North): Meeting day has been changed from Sunday to Monday.

Discontinued Meetings

Oak Discussion (C) Saturday 7:15pm (CENTRAL): Meeting has been discontinued.

Pourquoi Pas! (O) Saturday 11am (CENTRAL): Meeting has been discontinued.

Lakeside Discussion (C) Monday 8pm (EAST): Meeting has been discontinued.

As Bill Sees It (C) Tuesday 7pm (EAST): Meeting has been discontinued.

Augusta Discussion (C) Friday 12:30pm (CENTRAL): Meeting has been discontinued.

Glenview Discussion (C) Monday 8pm (CENTRAL): Meeting has been discontinued.

Oakville Odyssey Monday 7pm (SUBURBAN WEST): Meeting has been discontinued.

Announcements

9th Annual 11th Step Picnic will be held Sat. August 8th from 12-5pm on Centre Island. Join us for fellowship in the sun. Bring your ball, glove, Frisbee, games, blankets, sunscreen... whatever you want! Speaker Meetings at 1 and 2:30pm Cost: Free! (Donations gratefully accepted) For more info call: Barb 905-264-6080 or Rick 416-255-0447. In the event of rain, the event will be cancelled.

43rd Dunnville Convention and Campout will be held September 11th - 13th at Byng Island Conservation Area. This year's theme is "You Need Not Stand Alone". For more information visit www.aatoronto.org

Stepping Stones 30th Anniversary will be held on Saturday September 12 at St. Peter's Church, 840 Bathurst Street. There will be special keynote speakers, a pot luck dinner, and lots of enthusiastic sobriety. All are welcome to join us...please come and help us celebrate!!!

2nd Area 83/Area 86 Unity Day will be held Saturday September 26 at King City Community Centre Arena. Workshops, recovery talks, a banquet and a special guest speaker, Phyllis H., General Manager of the World Service Office. Admittance is free for the day. Tickets for the banquet dinner are \$25.00. There will be a lunch available for a separate cost. Seating is limited to 200. For more information and tickets call Rodney S. 647-588-7751 or email rodney@ficomputers.com.

Toronto Gratitude Roundup will be held October 16th - 18th at the Courtyard Marriott Hotel (475 Yonge Street, Toronto) The roundup is an AA Conference with Al-Anon participation. It is hosted by GLBT members and our friends. Everybody is welcome!

Mississauga Fall Round Up will be held Saturday October 17th at St Mary's Ukrainian Catholic Church, 3625 Cawthra Road, Mississauga. This year's theme is "You Are No Longer Alone". Full AA, Al-Anon and Alateen. Registration and coffee 8 am, opening Meeting 9am. Tickets \$20.00 (Alateen \$5.00) includes buffet lunch. For more information go to www.mississaugafallroundup.com

The Strike & Meeting Cancellations

Because of the strike by city workers, meetings held in city run community centres are cancelled. However, unless those meetings notified us of this fact, they will not appear as being cancelled either on the meeting listings, map, or notices pages, so please keep that in mind when looking at a meeting listing.

June '09: Intergroup Report

Chairperson's Opening Remarks: Florence B. (Noon Rap) – Florence took the time to acknowledge and thank Glebe Rd. Church for providing a meeting space for the monthly meeting these past several years. Next month, the General Meeting will be held at Lansing United Church (49 Bogert Ave., near Yonge and Sheppard subway).

Collection of the 7th Tradition: \$133.66.

Finance Report: Bruce L. (Back to Basics), Finance Chairperson – Bruce presented the Finance Report for the month of May. Donations were \$5,070; below budget by \$793. While group donations were lower than expected, individual gratitude donations exceeded estimate. Year-to-date donations were \$35,697, which was \$3,712 over budget due to group donations in January and February. Those present were given a copy of the New Price List for Literature (this list available on our website); Bruce explained that the Finance committee “tried to lessen the blow” a little bit on the prices of the big selling items like the Big Book and the Twelve & Twelve. Bruce will have more information for members next month about why prices have gone up. Explained that GSO has, like many of us, “been feeling the pinch”: several employees have been laid off. Jim A. (Leslie) concurred with Bruce on this point, sharing that GSO has been cutting back on services. Jim also mentioned he will pass on any information on this point in future. Carolyn R. (Markham Village) opined that, if GSO increased the prices “it’s necessary and for a good reason”.

SUBCOMMITTEE REPORTS

Access Ability: Donna MacQ. (Sunnyside), Chairperson – Info AA Day was a success and our presentation was well-attended and well-received. Attended People In Motion June 5 & 6. Were fewer attendees and fewer exhibitors this year, but it was still well worth doing. Received a query regarding our grant for ASL Interpreters at meetings. GSR for District 22 stated they are thinking of having ASL Interpreter at their Service Day on Sept.12. A new GSR from District 10 has joined the committee. **Next mtg:** Sun. July 19 at 11am at 234.

Archives: Roy R. (Trial & Error), Chairperson – Next Archives Breakfast will be held on Sun. Nov 8 at the Oasis Convention Centre (Mississauga). This is the 25th Anniversary of the event. Tickets are \$25 and are available through Archives Committee members. Speakers are Joy (St. Catherines) and Pete QW. (Oakville). **Next mtg:** Fri. July 10 at 7pm at 234.

Corrections: No report. **Next mtg:** Mon. July 6 at 7:30pm at 234.

CPC: No report. **Next mtg:** Mon. July 13 at 7pm at 234.

Info AA Day 2010: Marvyn W. (Mississauga), Chairperson – 2009 Committee thanks all members for attending the 2009 Info AA day. It was wonderful to see many members from across the GTA in attendance. 2010 Info AA Day is a Joint Committee between the 9 General Service Districts & GTA Toronto Intergroup. We are asking members for their theme suggestions and preparing an awareness brochure to increase awareness about the event to general members. **Next mtg:** Mon. Sept. 28 at 7:30pm at 234.

ORC 2010: Jim A. (Leslie), event committee member – Jim spoke on behalf of the ORC 2010 Chair, Jim B. He thanked all members for their support at this year's conference. Committee will meet again in Sept. Next year's committee is looking forward to providing another great event.

Public Information: Bryan W. (Rox Glen Traditional), Chairperson – Committee continues to work on updating a school list for the GTA, so they can send a letter out to all schools. Were present at Info AA Day, Pride Weekend and the recent Salvation Army Conference. Folder/holder campaign continues at the District level. Any member wanting to put these around their area can contact the committee through 234 or the website. Bryan asked for young AA members who would be interested in volunteering to give talks at schools. **Next mtg:** Mon. July 20 at 7:30 pm at 234.

Treatment Facilities: Steve A. (Markland Wood), Committee member – CAMH requesting an additional meeting at the Medical Withdrawal Unit. Over the summer, the committee will be compiling a list of all treatment facilities/service meetings/detox/shelters/referral services, etc. so that we can have an up-to-date inventory as well as the status of service meetings, etc. The committee

also has plans for coordinated Bridging The Gap contacts within treatment facilities. Meetings for July and August will be by e-mail and phone contact.

Next mtg: Thurs. July 16 at 7:30pm at 234.

Twelfth Step: Florence B. (Noon Rap), committee member – 2 new volunteers have come forward. Next phone training session will be held on Sun. July 19 at 1:30pm at 234. One year of continuous sobriety is needed to work on the phones. The project of increasing the 12-Step List continues, but will take time. Committee now holding 2 meetings a month; one on the second Wednesday and one on the last Friday. Both meetings start at 7pm. Committee is also considering holding a 12-Step Workshop in the future. **Next mtg:** Fri. July 24 at 7pm at 234.

Website/Better Times: Aaron K. (Yorkville), Chairperson – Better Times is looking for a new co-editor and is always looking for contributions to publish. Our web traffic is healthy with many notices that come into the site. Thanks to our Webmaster, Brian T. (Twelve Traditions) for the outstanding effort he contributes. **Next mtg:** Sat. July 11 at 1pm at 234.

Implementation Committee: Dee T. (Streetsville), Chairperson – On June 13 the Implementation Committee finalized its restructuring of the Operating Procedures & Guidelines of the GTA Intergroup in accordance with the Motion approved by Referendum in December 2008. Greatest challenge was making sure that the spirit of the Motion was consistent throughout the entire document and that there was no contradiction between the different sections and sub-sections. The Implementation Committee recommends that committees that are made up of members from the districts and a Liaison from GTA Intergroup be categorized as Joint Service Committees, and that they select their own Chairperson. The GTA Intergroup liaison would submit the committee reports to the GTA Intergroup Floor, and bring back to their respective committees any concerns and recommendations from the Floor to the Executive Committee. We are confident that the restructuring of the office staff, and their roles, along with the new terms of service on the Executive Committee can only lead to more responsibility and consistency in the operations of GTA Intergroup. Finally, the committee recommends that for the next Executive Committee elections, all members from the most recent past Operating Committee be permitted the chance to stand for election, along with the members of the current Operating Committee.

Reception Centre: Rick McC. (Six Points), 1st Vice Chair – 52 members were present at tonight's meeting.

Next General Meeting: Tues. July 28 at 8 pm at Lansing United Church, 49 Bogert Ave. (Yonge and Sheppard subway).

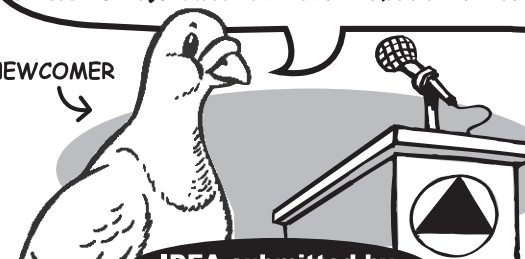
Please note: This is a summary of the minutes from the meeting. A complete copy of the minutes is available for download on the website at www.aatoronto.org

OVERHEARD AT A MEETING!

Newcomer reading PROMISES for first time...

WE WILL COMPREHEND THE WORD
CEMETERY AND WE WILL KNOW PEACE!

NEWCOMER



IDEA submitted by
STEVE P.