

• Contents •

Mississauga Fall Roundup ... 1
Farewell My Love..... 1
Tradition Eight in Practice... 2
Meditation 101 2
In a 12 Step Program and
Going to School 3
Have You Heard..... 3
Intergroup Report 4
This Month's Cartoon 4

BETTER TIMES Published monthly for AA members in the Greater Toronto Area. 234 Eglinton Avenue East, Suite 202, Toronto, ON M4P 1K5 Telephone: 416-487-5591 Fax: 416-487-5855 TTY: 416-487-5062 Email: bettertimes@atoronto.org Web: atoronto.org/btimes.html
Editorial Ctte: Aaron K. (Chair), Marrey P. (Editor.), David N. (Cartoonist), Jim H. (Circ.), Ciara C. (Desktop), Lynn W. (HYH). 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 prior to the 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.

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.

Mississauga Fall Roundup

Saturday October 17th 2009

You can't miss the location — it's the magnificent, multi-spired St. Mary's Catholic Ukrainian Church on Cawthra Road just south of Burnamthorpe. There's lots of free parking.

You can't miss the timing: it's on Saturday, October 17th — one week after Thanksgiving weekend.

And you certainly won't want to miss the event: the 2009 Mississauga Fall Roundup. This year's theme reminds us that 'You Are No Longer Alone'.

Registration opens at 8am with freshly brewed coffee and snacks, and kicks off a day filled with excellent AA, AI-Anon and Alateen speakers. We expect to finish about 3 pm.

Your ticket will cost you \$20 (\$5 for Alateen guests), unchanged from last year. You will be treated to a hot and cold buffet lunch, and coffee will be available with snacks throughout the day.

One popular feature you definitely should not miss is the family panel. This unique perspective on AA, AI-Anon and Alateen — from members of the same

family — continues to be one of the most powerful sessions of the Mississauga Fall Roundup.

Of course, the not-to-be-missed sobriety countdown promises once again to be a highlight.

Tickets are available from Committee members at meetings throughout District 6, beginning August 14th. They will also be available at the door on Roundup Day.

Mark down Saturday, October 17th as a day to remember — 'You Are No Longer Alone'. It's a Roundup you will be delighted not to miss. For more information visit us online at www.mississaugafallroundup.com

The Roundup Committee

2009 Mississauga Fall Roundup

Date: October 17th 2009

Time: 8am - 3pm (approx.)

Location: St. Mary's Catholic Ukrainian Church,
3625 Cawthra Road, Mississauga

Cost: \$20 (\$5 for Alateen)

Farewell My Love

I developed these feelings four years ago. It felt great every time I filled my glass with you. It didn't matter how I felt that day... I loved to come home and start my drinking because you always knew how to numb the pain. That's when you became my lover, my best friend and most of all, my every thing everything.

Every time the pain and problems kept me chained for not having a voice and my troubled heart made me weak, that's when I would turn to you for comfort. As years unfolded and time faded away — I found I was isolating myself from everyone. My family, my friends and my fiancée knew what I was going through. By now there was no turning back, I was like a runaway train heading for the end of the line. But still you were growing so strong in me — I couldn't let you go even if I tried. I was bidding time with the devil and the darkness of demons. In the evening, I heard the flock of your voices crying out to me, wanting me to fill my body with the love of your poison. Well, heck, I loved you more then my own fiancée! I don't know!! If I kept on going the way I was then you would have taken all

my dreams away like the way you took my fiancée away. There are many contradictions about you: how you feed off weakness and promise you will take good care of your lovers. As the lies became too unbearable and I no longer wanted you in my life, I started to feel strong again.

The last call — thanks to everyone but most of all thanks to you, God, for allowing me to get out of this pit of darkness and make me see the light.

In all these messages we should listen:

1. How do I get out of here?
2. When will I become human again?

Although my world was torn and my heart was breaking, now I feel my heart and my world are mending. It's up to you to awaken from this deadly nightmare and start to move on by getting help and someday you will (just like me) find your common ground and learn to be still.

Swaran S., Yorkville Group

Tradition Eight in Practice: A Special Worker's Eye View of AA

Tradition Eight makes a clear distinction between paid work, unpaid work in AA. For a better understanding of this Tradition and how it is practiced in everyday life, I spoke with two special workers employed at Toronto Intergroup: Judy, a nonalcoholic and Alexx, a recovered alcoholic.

How is working for AA different from working for any other organization?

Judy: The only difference is that it is not-for-profit and I work with a volunteer board rather than senior executives. I really am always impressed by the people I work with, the volunteers on the committees, their commitment and dedication. I especially appreciate when you say the serenity prayer at the beginning of all your meetings. It reminds me that this is a way of life and you don't have to be an alcoholic to appreciate it. Unlike other nonprofit organizations, you have twelve traditions to uphold. I believe they are a great advantage to your organization. They enable there to be less conflict and help everybody focus on a common goal.

What kinds of day-to-day challenges do you face as a special worker?

Judy: Every once in a while a phone greeter doesn't come in and I have difficulty dealing with calls from still suffering alcoholics. I worry that I am not the right person for them to talk to and I often hope they're only calling in to find out where a meeting is located. Callers are still always very grateful for my assistance even when I tell them I am not a member of the fellowship.

Alexx: I always need to maintain a delicate balance between my AA life and my work life. When I am at 234, I am wearing my "special worker hat". Often people want to talk to me about stuff related to AA service work. I always have to be conscious of the amount of time I am spending talking to someone about non-work "AA stuff". Conversely, when I am at an AA meeting, I am wearing my "AA hat" and often people will approach me at meetings with issues related to my job. I have to gently remind them that I am attending an AA meeting and

ask them to please phone me during my regular business hours.

Alexx, have you ever experienced a conflict of interest between your AA work and your service work and how did you overcome it?

Alexx: A while ago, I was unemployed and my sponsor suggested I volunteer at 234 stuffing envelopes. Eventually I was offered a job but I was also still serving on the operating committee. This was a new precedent: how do I balance my paid work and my unpaid service work? We decided that I would remain on the Operating Committee, I would do the minutes for all IG meetings and liaise with subcommittees but whenever there was a vote regarding how money was to be spent at 234 or employment, I was to abstain from voting. This helped me to avoid any conflicts of interest between my job and AA service work.

Thank you Judy and Alexx... you have given this alcoholic a clearer understanding of Tradition Eight and how it ties in with our Primary Purpose.

Elaine G., Port Credit Group

Meditation 101

Meditation: the very word conjures up images of monks in saffron robes sitting in silence and stillness for hours on end; it also evokes much scepticism and suspicion in the general public as well as in AA. But what is meditation?

Roy H. of Bloordale Group — who teaches a course in Mindfulness comments, "A.A. teaches us to live one day at a time. Meditation goes one step further and teaches us to live one moment at a time. It helps us to live in the present moment. Most of us tend to live in either the past or the future where self-will, ego and resentment dwell. Meditation brings us into the present moment enabling us to suffer less and live more joyously and peacefully."

Michael S., of Open Hands Group who has practiced meditation for decades says, "It is a simple practice that allows you to cut through the clutter of mental turmoil and

settle into a place of inner calm and quiet. Practicing meditation on a daily basis can improve health and well-being, improves circulation and oxygen intake, removes toxins from the body, and brings peace, serenity and profound awareness into your life."

How do I get started practicing meditation?

Roy H. suggests people look for introductory meditation course in their area and is better than relying on books and tapes for guidance.

Michael S. suggests that a beginner might want to try the following exercise:

- Sit comfortably in an upright chair with your feet flat on the floor and your arms resting by your side.
- Focus your attention on your breath. Become aware of the cool, dry sensation when you breathe in through your nose

and notice that as you breathe out, the sensation changes, becoming warm and moist.

- Now visualize the in breath as being cool and refreshing and follow the breath as it flows throughout your entire body. Visualize the out breath as being warm and comforting, and follow the breath as it flows throughout your entire body. Keep your focus on these two sensations:
 - ◆ Breathe in – cool and dry
 - ◆ Breathe out – warm and moist
 - ◆ Breathe in – cool and refreshing
 - ◆ Breathe out – warm and comforting
- As you continue to breathe, quietly repeat the following, each time allowing yourself to go deeper and deeper into consciousness:
 - ◆ Breathe in – say (to yourself) – I am filled with loving kindness

continued on page 4

In a 12 Step Program and Going to School

While getting sober from alcohol was an important first step, it was only the beginning of alcohol recovery. Both my body and mind needed some time to recover. In this period, depression and cravings to use were intense and very hard to fight. Without support from my sponsor and Alcoholics Anonymous, relapse would have been very likely.

I found the challenge of going to post-secondary education for the first time was very great for me because I was presented with an overwhelming amount of pressure and many opportunities to drink. Some of the contributing influences were the fact that I had the freedom of being away from home for the first time and I experienced anxiety about meeting new people. Living in residence was a major trigger to drink because of the daily floor parties. My family also imposed pressure on me to meet their extremely high expectations with respect to my schooling.

I believe I drank as much as I studied and I excelled at both. During my time in school, with the pressure to drink being quite high, my drinking became more frequent and my tolerance to alcohol increased; a social drink was never going to be enough. I ended up leaving school.

After having a stable period of sobriety, I decided to go back to school to further my career endeavours. The challenges I encountered were mostly being invited to a bar after class and the stress of excelling in my studies. These types of challenges were manageable and I could face them with courage because I have a program of recovery. Like it or not, even in sobriety I was going to face alcohol again since alcohol use is so common in our society. Good treatment helped me develop new coping skills to deal with stressful situations and pressure to drink socially. Without these skills, stressful situations frequently trigger relapse. I feel that with every drink I took I gave my life and any chance for happiness away and now with every meeting I go to, I am reclaiming my life in the most powerful and meaningful way. Thank you AA.

???????

haveyouheard

Recent Medallions:

Agnes O.	1	Pathfinders	July 1
Norma M.	1	Bloordale	July 5
Don S.	35	Kingsway	July 8
John P.	1	Unionville	July 8
Marion T.	1	Golden Mile	July 8
Norma	1	Thornhill	July 8
Metka V.	1	New Anchor	July 9
Ronald A.	5	Maple	July 9
Clark S.	10	Aurora	July 12
Tom W.	10	Aurora	July 12
Tunde F.		Westmoreland	July 14
Nicki	1	Thornhill	July 15
Steve B.	15	Parklawn	July 17
Sean McD.	20	Lakeshore	July 19
Ken S.		Westmoreland	July 21
Ray W.	1	Golden Mile	July 22
Tara	1	Thornhill	July 22
Ed R.	20	Rouge Valley	July 23
Lisa C.	1	Markland Wood	July 23
Larry R.	5	Unionville	July 29
Jean H.	1	Maple	July 30
Richard G.	1	Westmoreland	August 4
Rocky P.	5	Unionville	August 5
Elizabeth S.	20	Chartwell	August 6
Ross S.	20	Lansing	August 8
Shawn K.	5	Miami Beach	August 8
Lilly D.	1	Maple	August 13
Christine B.	1	East York	August 18
John M.	1	Westmoreland	August 18
Jennifer M.	1	Aurora	August 23
Wayne D.	15	Aurora	August 23
Alinda K.	1	King City	August 24
Andrew B.	1	Westmoreland	August 25
Chris R.	15	Unionville	August 26

Upcoming Medallions:

Bob M.	15	New Anchor	September 3
Don H.	1	East York	September 8
Dora M.	30	Golden Mile	September 9
Beata B.	1	Unionville	September 16
Keith B.	15	Unionville	September 23
Joanne G.	1	Aurora	September 27
Shane E.	1	Unionville	September 30
Patrick K.	1	Glenholm	October 5

Meeting Changes:

Big Blue (C) Thursday 10am (SUBURBAN WEST): New meeting located at St. Paul's Church, Milton, Ontario.

Joy in Sobriety (C) Wednesday 8:30pm (EAST): Meeting has been suspended until Sept. 2, due to construction.

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

New Meetings:

AA Women's (C) Sunday 3pm (CENTRAL): New Meeting

East Toronto Men's Step Discussion (C) Sunday 9:30am (EAST): New Meeting

Discontinued Meetings:

Half Century of AA Group (C) Tuesday 6pm (SUBURBAN NORTH): Meeting is discontinued.

Joy in Sobriety (O/C) Thurs. 8pm (EAST): Mtg discontinued.

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

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

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

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

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

Oakville Odyssey (Youth) Monday 7pm (SUBURBAN WEST): Meeting is discontinued.

Pourquoi Pas! (C) Saturday 11am (CENTRAL): Meeting is discontinued.

Announcements

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!!!

Bathurst will be celebrating one year of carrying the message to the still-suffering alcoholic on Monday, September 14 at 8pm. All are welcome!

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! For more information go to www.torontogratiuderoundup.org

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.mississaugaafallroundup.com

Joint Intergroup and Districts Meeting will be held Tuesday Sept. 8 from 7:30pm - 9:00pm at 234 Eglinton Ave East. Intergroup and districts in the GTA hold ongoing joint sharing sessions, attended by the GTA Intergroup committee chairs, and the district committee members. This meeting to be facilitated by Intergroup.

68th Buffalo Fall Convention will be held November 6 - 8 at the Marriot Buffalo/Niagra, 1340 Millersport Highway in Amherst, New York. For more information visit: buffaloaany.org/upcomingevents.htm

25th Annual Archives Breakfast will be held Sunday November 9 from 9 - 12 at the Oasis Convention Centre, 1036 Lakeshore Rd East, Mississauga. Tickets are \$25 and available from all Archives committee members (250 seats only).

July '09: Intergroup Report

Chairperson's Opening Remarks: Florence B. (Noon Rap), Operating Chair – Florence welcomed everyone to the new location of the General Meeting. She stressed the importance of subcommittee budgets (these are important for our charitable status). 2010 Subcommittee Budgets are to be submitted to the office by October 1st.

Finance Report: Bruce L. (Back to Basics), Finance Chair – Finance Report for the month of June 2009: Donations were \$8,026, below budget by \$2,645. Year-to-date donations were \$43,723, over budget by \$1067. June income before Operating Expenses was \$16,333. Sales were \$15,124, over budget by \$6,466. YTD Income before Operating Expenses was \$106,332, over budget by \$17,461 mainly due to the ORC contribution. Total expenses for June were \$12,039, under budget by \$3,764. Year-to-date total expenses were \$73,687, which is \$36,428 under budget. Net income for June was \$4,294, over budget by \$4,161. Year-to-date net income was \$32,645, over budget by \$53,889. Prudent Reserve as of June 30, 2009 – Book value + accrued interest: \$124,644.

A GSO-circulated letter regarding literature price increases due to rising shipping costs, etc. In response to questions, Bruce stated that the prudent reserve reflects 6 month's operating expenses for the office and that the GSO literature price increase was "across the board" (i.e. including the U.S.).

Motion: to Suspend Regular Business to facilitate elections for a new Operating Committee member: Phil M. (Bloordale) is the new Junior Operating Committee member (by acclamation).

SUBCOMMITTEE REPORTS

Access Ability: Donna MacQ. (Sunnyside), Chair – Dist.22 will not ask for an ASL Interpreter for their Service Day. Next mtg: Sun. Aug.16 at 11 am at 234.

Archives: Roy R. (Trial & Error), Chairperson – The 25th Archives Breakfast will be held on Sun. Nov 8th at the Oasis Convention Centre (Mississauga). Tickets are \$25 and available through Archives Committee members. Speakers are Joy (St. Catharines) and Pete QW. (Oakville). Next mtg: Fri. Aug.14 at 7 pm at 234.

Corrections: no report

CPC: Victoria B. (Steps to Serenity), CPC committee member – District 12 had concerns about CAMH interest in obtaining books and having meetings in their facility. In District 18, a package sent to the Woodgreen Staff Employment Centre (Danforth and Donlands). Upcoming events: the American Psychiatric Association Convention Aug.6-9. Next mtg: Mon. Aug.10 at 7 pm at 234.

Information AA Day: No report. Next mtg: Mon. Sept. 28 at 7:30 pm at 234.

Public Information: Bryan W. (Rox Glen Traditional), Chairperson – Last meeting was a Training Session, focusing on how to speak at non-AA meetings. Next mtg: Mon. Sept.21 at 7:30 pm at 234.

Reception: Rick McC. (Six Points), 1st Vice Chair – 57 reps were present.

Treatment Facilities: No report. Next mtg: Thurs. Aug. 20 at 7:30 pm at 234.

Twelfth Step: Jim O. (Markland Wood), Chairperson – New phone system has been ordered and will take 6-8 weeks for installation at a cost of \$7,000. Next Phone Training Session: Sun. Aug. 16 at 1:30 pm at 234 (one year of continuous sobriety is needed to volunteer for the phones). Next mtgs: Wed. Aug. 12 at 7 pm and Fri. Aug. 28 at 7 pm

Website/Newsletter: Aaron K. (Yorkville), Chairperson – New additions to BT include a Districts Page and a Procedures & Guidelines Page. Better Times is still in need of a Co-Editor; special thanks to Ciara for her extra efforts this month. Website would also invite the District Reps for submissions to the District Page. Next mtg: Sat. Aug. 8 at 1 pm at 234.

Winter Season Open House: No report. Meetings will likely resume in Sept., once a committee is assembled. This event needs a Chairperson! Please submit service resumes to the Operating Committee c/o 234.

Next General Meeting: Tues. August 5 at 8 pm at Lansing United Church, 49 Bogert Ave. (Yonge and Sheppard subway).

Meditation 101 (cont'd)

- ♦ Breathe out – say – I am blessed with radiant health
- ♦ Breathe in – say – I am peaceful and calm
- ♦ Breathe out – say – I am happy, joyous and free

Michael suggests meditating for 20 minutes preferably twice a day to establish regular practice. "We are basically creatures of habit and you want to establish a habit of doing this in your daily life. Alcoholics gravitate towards negative habits like drinking, drugs, gambling and negative delusional thinking. If you don't want to suffer, you need to make a conscious effort to develop this positive habit positive habits in your life."

Mike also stressed that we have to take ourselves out of the equation when it comes to God, Prayer and Meditation. You can't force yourself to get it, instead you have to experience it and accept it as it comes. He warned that Meditation is not a quick fix either. You won't become the best or the most serene. Meditation puts you on a path towards consciousness, enlightenment, and self-awareness, enabling you to become more intuitive and less reactive towards life.

So what happens if I can only sit still for five or ten minutes at the most?

Roy says not to worry or get too discouraged about this but to keep trying: "Even a short time of meditating can be immensely beneficial to you. I find that people can benefit from doing a couple of short meditation sessions each day and try to bring themselves back into the present moment throughout the day."

I found that initially I was very enthusiastic about meditation but as time passed it started to fall by the wayside in my daily life. Roy says that this is a very common reaction. "It's like anything, once people start feeling the benefits of meditation, they stop doing it. Remember that meditation is bankable. You benefit even from off and on practice so long as you keep coming back to it."

And if you find yourself saying, "I don't have time, I'm too busy and have too many commitments and distractions to meditate", Roy remarks, "You found time to drink, find the time to meditate. I can't imagine how my life would be today without it... Meditation has enhanced by life in ways I find difficult to describe. It is now a way of life for me."

Elaine G., Port Credit Group

