BETTER TIMES

Produced for A.A. members, by A.A. members in the Greater Toronto Area
OCTOBER 2020

OCTOBER IS GRATITUDE MONTH

Contributions & Self-Support

The Seventh Tradition states:

"Every A.A. group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions."

While contributions cover each group's rent and other expenses, the Seventh Tradition is essential at every level of A.A. service. It is both a privilege and a responsibility for groups and members to ensure that not only their group, but also their intergroup/central office, local services, district, area, and the General Service Office remain self-supporting. This keeps A.A. free of outside influences that might divert us from our primary purpose - to help the alcoholic who still suffers. The amount of our contribution is secondary to the spiritual connection that unites all groups around the world.

GREATER TORONTO AREA
INTERGROUP

MISSION STATEMENT Greater Toronto Area Intergroup is a coordinating body that supports the 12 step work of A.A. groups in the Toronto area. We connect individual groups, our members, the public, and the still-suffering alcoholic with one another.

A.A.'S RESPONSIBILITY STATEMENT

I am responsible. When anyone, anywhere, reaches out for help, I want the hand of A.A. always to be there. And for that: I am responsible.

Support of the GTA Intergroup provides essential and life-saving Twelfth Step Service Work through the following committees: Accessibility, Archives, Communications, Cooperation with the Professional Community, Correctional Facilities, Finance, Grapevine, Information A.A. Day, Ontario Regional Conference (ORC), ORC Advisory, Operating, Public Information, Self Support, Treatment, Twelfth Step (phone line) and the Winter Season Open House.

GRATITUDE AND SERVICE In 2019, approx. 250 members donated more than $76,825, representing over a quarter of Intergroup's total revenue. It's our hope that the GTA A.A. groups can help Intergroup continue to be self-supporting.

7 WAYS THE GTA INTERGROUP SUPPORTS THE FELLOWSHIP

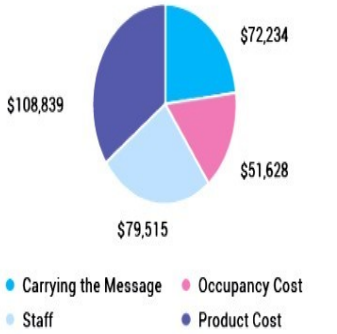
1. Provides space for all Intergroup Sub-committee's as well as District Sub-committees
2. Offers a fully-stocked literature department
3. A full wall showcasing A.A. archival materials for members to see and visit
4. Medallion engraving service
5. Hosts our website www.aatoronto.org providing resources such as meeting times and locations, literature orders
6. Publishing of the GTA A.A. newsletter Better Times; A newsletter for A.A. members, by A.A. members
7. Provides 24/7 phone hotline coverage by A.A. members

Donations can be made by: Credit Card, Cheque, Money Order, Monthly via members' chequing account or online at www.aatoronto.org. You can also pay by cash or debit by visiting our office. Please make cheques payable to: A.A. Toronto Intergroup. **No amount is too little!**

GTA Intergroup 2019 Income Sources & Expenditures

2019 Income Sources

2019 Expenditures



DONATE ONLINE: Go to www.aatoronto.org and on the Home Page, click Donate on "MAKE A DONATION / 7th TRADITION" in the top-left corner

Completey fill out this form if you **require a TAX RECEIPT** please print/ check:

- ☐ I wish to volunteer for Service. Please call me.
- ☐ Please include me in your Confidential database
- ☐ Please email a tax receipt
- ☐ I DO NOT require a tax receipt

(Donations that arrive after December 31st will receive a receipt for the upcoming tax year)

...Or make a donation via the options listed below:

Please accept my donation of $ _____ *(Maximum donation of $5000.00)*

Check one: ☐ I have enclosed a cheque or money order payable to AA Toronto Intergroup

☐ I want to contribute amount above MONTHLY/ Signature below authorizes (+Void Cheque)

☐ PLEASE CHARGE MY: ☐ VISA ☐ MasterCard Signature _____

CARD NUMBER: _____ EXP. DATE: _____ CVD (ON BACK OF CARD): _____

FIRST NAME: _____ SURNAME: _____

APT/UNIT: _____ ADDRESS: _____ CITY: _____ POSTAL CODE: _____

PHONE: _____ EMAIL: _____ GROUP: _____

Intergroup highlights the importance of service and encourages member participation.

Intergroup serves as one of the many hands of A.A. when anyone anywhere reaches out for help - we can always be there.

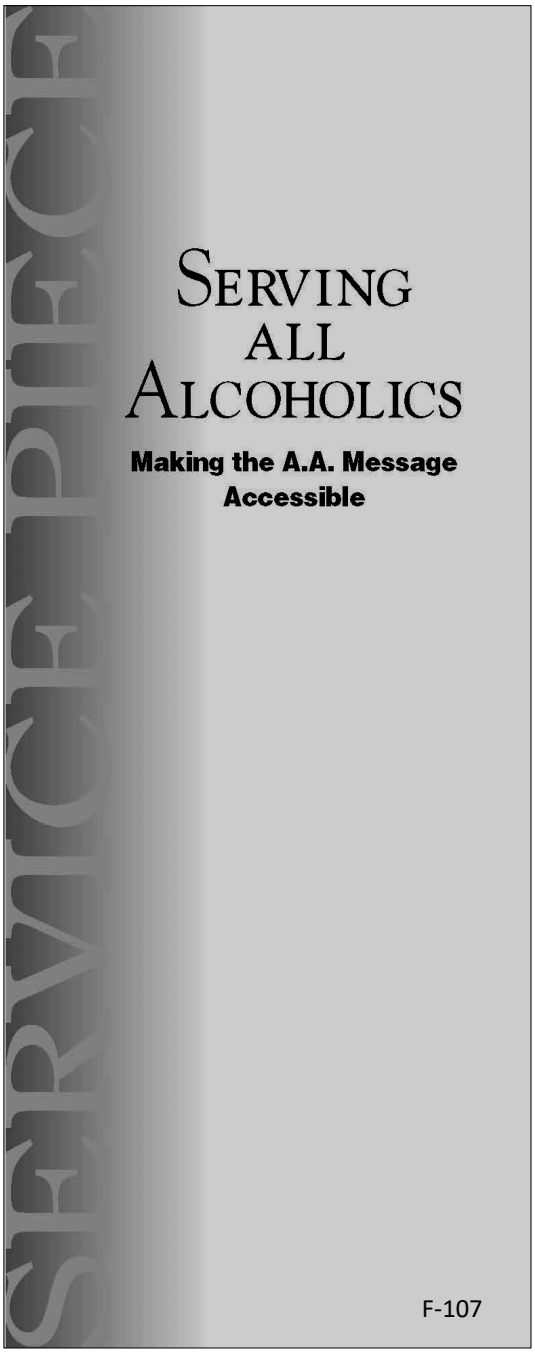
PLANNED GIVING Your consideration in providing a planned gift whether a bequest in your will (max. $5,000) a gift of life-time insurance, securities, or charitable annuity (max. $5,000 per year) would be greatly appreciated in carrying out the support we all need.

Meetings to Go

A mobile AA meeting for any fellowship member who, for whatever reason, cannot attend a regular AA meeting in the GTA due to accessibility barriers. Two AA volunteers will come to your residence with AA readings and Big Book. You can also arrange an online zoom meeting.

To learn more visit accessibility@aatoronto.org or call 416-487-5591

GTA Intergroup Accessibility Committee



Making the A.A. Message Accessible

While there are no special alcoholics, there are alcoholics who have additional personal barriers to receiving the A.A. message. For some, a six-inch step can be an insurmountable obstacle. A locked access door, blocked ramp or parking problem can make it impossible to get to a meeting. Some members are ill, homebound, or living in retirement or convalescent homes; others have hearing or vision loss, learning, reading or information processing challenges; and still others are elderly, use wheelchairs, canes or have other mobility concerns. Literature may be hard to understand. Childcare issues may make it impossible to attend regular meetings. Remote geography or cultural differences may hinder contact with other members.

(From pamphlet F107)

An honest regret for harms done, a genuine gratitude for blessings received, and a willingness to try for better things tomorrow will be the permanent assets we shall seek. **12&12 Step Ten, p. 95**

GREATER TORONTO AREA INTERGROUP

MEETING UPDATES!

Help Us To Help You! Please Update Your Meetings!

Many in-person meetings have had to close down again, some remain open and are following the updated provinces restrictions.

To check your meetings status please visit the aatoronto.org website. Please contact us to update your meeting details.

Visit www.aatoronto.org and complete the update form, it's that easy!

Simply a welcome; Adventures with Bridging the Gap

It wasn't what I'd expected when my Bridging the Gap (BTG) contact told me that he hadn't had a drink in six years and that he'd been cured with hypnotherapy. I'd invited him to a meeting and we were talking in person for the first time. My understanding was that he'd just gotten out of rehab a few weeks earlier. Why go to rehab if you haven't had a drink in years? He said something about an upcoming court date. None of this was going according to the script in my head.

My experience with BTG is that it's a great idea. The program works to match people exiting treatment facilities with an A.A. temporary contact in the community where they'll be living. Before someone leaves a facility, they can complete a BTG form and their contact information will find its way into the hands of an A.A. volunteer ready take them to up to six meetings. It's set up to be a great way of smoothing the transition into sober everyday life.

In practice, I usually get voicemail when I call out on a BTG request and no one calls me back. I'll follow up a week later and the result will be the same. In my last couple years of volunteering for BTG I've only actually met two people.

The first told me he never had more than four beers and that the councilors at rehab kept telling him he didn't really have to be there. I drove him to one meeting and he never called me again. My second contact, who said he hadn't had a drink in six years, took a meeting guide and left without really saying goodbye.

Why is BTG so weird? Why don't more people take advantage of the service? Am I doing something wrong?

Then I remembered talking to a fellow A.A. when he'd put his name down on my list of BTG volunteers. He said he'd recently taken someone to a meeting who he'd first called a full year earlier. When he'd initially received this person's contact information, it was the usual routine of leaving an unreturned voicemail. But this newcomer had saved his contact number. For a full year A.A. remained as hope, as a possibility, and this person used the number a year later when they needed it, when they were ready.

The truth is we can never know what's going on in another person's head, or where they are in their recovery. As an outreach volunteer in A.A. it's not my role to attempt figuring out what someone else requires. The less I try to second-guess the more useful I'll probably be. My job is to love other people and to be of service, and I know from experience that this strengthens my recovery and makes my life better. The truth is that through BTG I've driven one person to a meeting, and made sure another got a GTA meeting guide. These are two big wins for my recovery! The rest is in the hands of a power greater than myself. **Chris Z.** Port Credit group

An 8 page pamphlet for A.A's who carry the message into treatment and rehabilitation facilities.

Available for purchase by contacting the Literature dept. at the GTA Intergroup office:

litdept@A.A.toronto.org

or by phone:

416-487-9865

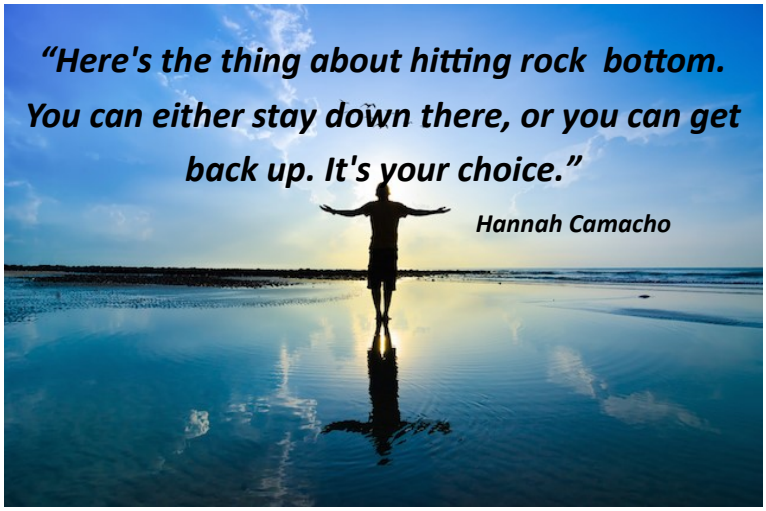
SANDWICHES AND JUICE

I've known that my drinking was a problem for a long time. When I finally decided to stop, I realized that I couldn't. I had blown countless opportunities, thrown away relationships, ran from responsibilities, and found myself destitute and broken.

I think most people faced with my reality at that point in my life would stop, I didn't and I couldn't. Without the drink I was uncomfortable and I was scared. I couldn't think past the next bottle. I'd lie, steal, beg, and borrow. I'd do whatever was necessary to achieve that feeling of comfort and peace… I'd do anything.

I've been in many detox's. I've claimed many cots and filled up on sandwiches and juice. I've walked away from some, ran from others, and was kicked out of more than a few. That feeling of willingness to get sober was fleeting. Some rest and a few meals, and that thought would hit me. That elusive feeling of comfort was waiting for me. I'd find a way. I always did.

I've been to several treatment centres of various lengths of stay and differing approaches to sobriety. Unfortunately, after a time, I always returned to the drink. I'm an Alcoholic. That's what I do, I drink.



So what's different this time around? What has changed in me? What have I done today to maintain sobriety? Who am I today? The truth is I'm still a hopeless alcoholic. Today I have a solution that affords me a daily reprieve from the desire and necessity of the bottle.

There was my last stint in detox, I needed to safely stop and I needed some rest. I needed some sandwiches and juice. I had hit many bottoms in my time, but this time, I think I'd really internalized the hopeless nature of my problem. I believed it. I knew it was my truth. I became willing to work at staying sober and do whatever was suggested. I would do whatever I could.

I stopped stealing. I stopped lying. I tried to show love and support to others. I went to many meetings. I tried to cultivate healthy fellowship with other alcoholics. I practiced mindfulness of my emotions. I discovered my triggers and found ways to mitigate the hazards they presented in my life. I'm never perfect, but I'm getting better. It gets easier as time goes by.

I joined a home group. I got a sponsor. I tried to be of service. I started working the steps with my sponsor. I discovered many truths about myself. Today I can embrace the sunshine, even if there are clouds. Today is an opportunity to be good … to myself and to others, so I will.

Jay S. The Hill Group

IT STARTS WITH THE SMALLEST OF STEPS

I started to attend A.A. meetings in Toronto's west end in 1978.

It's hard for me to now recall the savage spirit that had me in its power.

Over time the injuries done to us by alcohol, repair themselves. Most of us have a moment sometime in our second year where we look back over the previous decade of our lives and the decisions we took and we wonder at the insanity of it all. The good news is that it is just the beginning.

I still have the photographs from that era hidden away in a special drawer where the things only for my eyes reside. Alcoholism is not a private vice, but you can live it down.

From my current position, I find it hard to believe that I was able to make the right choice all those years ago with the facts at my disposal and with the damaged organ between my ears. The first time I read the Big Book I was in a psyche ward and I found it impenetrable. Now it's childs play. Same head, same heart, and same hands but oh they function so much better without the poison.

Do you know what it was that turned it around for me? I was attending my third A.A. meeting in my current run of sobriety not knowing of course that this attempt was going to take root when all the others had failed miserably. I've always been a good judge of character, a bit of a quick study. I know when people are telling the truth and I know when they are playing fair.

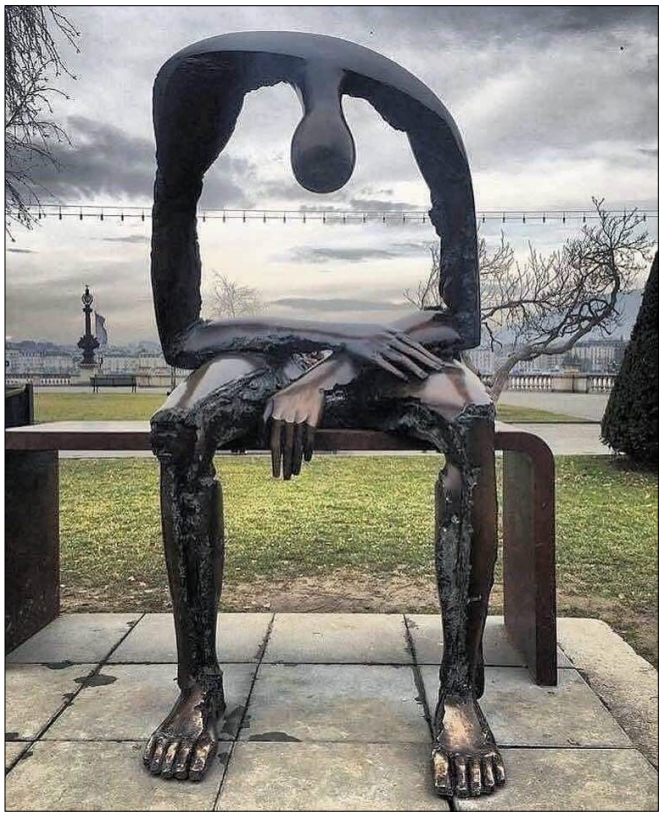
There was a guy standing at the back of the meeting and he and I got chatting. I told him about my situation and I asked him that universal question: Does this work for you? He told me he was no expert and that he had only been sober for a short time but he said when he came to the meetings and did what they asked him to he was able to stay sober.

I couldn't have decided to follow this path in the shape I was in. It was too much and far too soon, but I could trust the word of another human being and use that to orient myself and stay where I needed to be for just one more day. One more day for my body mind and spirit to have the time and space they needed to repair themselves. His witness was a small thing but it made all the difference. **David E.**

THE JOY OF A SOBER AND SANE LIFE

At the time when my drinking became unmanageable and I was powerless to stop it, I knew I had to get help to bring myself back to a sober and sane life. My many attempts to stop drinking and to avoid all of its severe collateral damages did not work.

My success in sobriety is a result of wanting to be sober for myself, my loved ones, my career and to regain the values I lost, both materially and morally.



I entered a rehabilitation inpatient treatment center where I spent five weeks from December 2019 to January 2020. At first I was skeptical and resentful; I did not understand A.A., the Steps, the importance of the Big Book, and the purpose of the Councillors. Some came off to me as "look at me I've been sober for years and you're not, I get to go home and enjoy freedom, you don't". I was depressed, full of self-pity, and confused.

I thought that once my five weeks were completed, I was done forever with my alcoholism treatment and I can get back to my normal life. This was not the case; I learned from my medical caseworker that the five-week treatment was only a part of my rehabilitation. I must attend 20 weekly aftercare classes and ninety A.A. meetings in ninety days, call in regularly to my medical caseworker, provide daily activity reports and visit my family physician every two weeks for about three months. These were all conditions of receiving long term disability benefits due to my alcoholism. Once I was cleared for work by my physician and no longer receiving the benefits, the conditions were lifted. At first, I resented them; I felt as though I was being managed and policed, something I had never experienced.

Being brought up with a religious background and attending religion-based schools from Kindergarten to Grade 12, I always thought of myself as being both religious and spiritual.

Not until my involvement with the A.A. program, getting a sponsor reading the Big Book, and doing the Steps that I truly understood what being spiritual meant, and then I said "*I want this, I want to live a spiritual life*".

My sponsor asked me to declare that "*I would go to any lengths for a spiritual existence*". This was an easy oath for me to take because I knew what the payoff would be and how pleasant it would be to live with myself and others while having a spiritual existence. I now found the path to being "*at peace with myself and others.*"

Practicing the fundamentals of a spiritual life, as I learned more about it, helped me get through with ease and gain back some of the respect I lost when I was drinking.

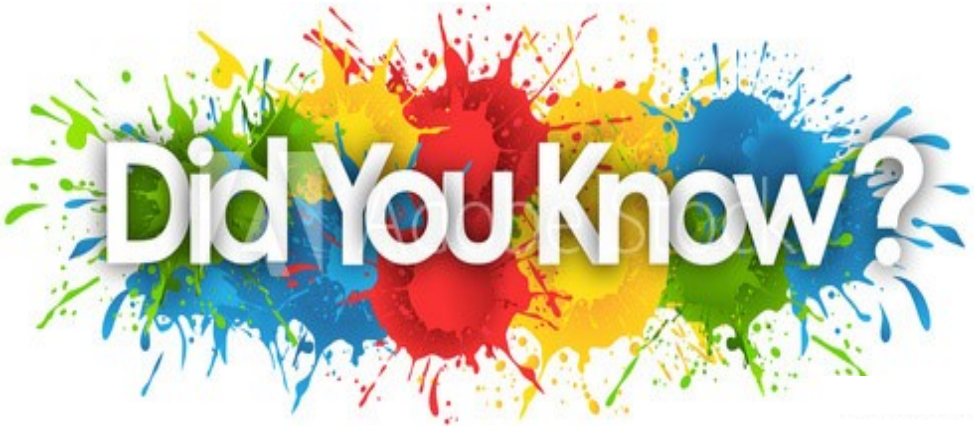
I also attracted others who wanted a spiritual life for them selves and we formed a small group where we provide support to one another.

My spirituality allows me to live our common prayer, the Serenity Prayer, every day. It lets me turn over to my Higher Power the things I cannot control and gives me the courage to make better the things I can.

Being spiritual means cleansing the mind of such things as pride, resentments, judgment, fear, anxiety and envy. As I work on removing these sins I am creating a dwelling space within me for my Higher Power to whom I am getting closer. I can no longer be disappointed or depressed as my will is now in the hands of my Higher Power who loves me and whom I love. I am no longer the director of the show, I was no good at it anyway.

My Higher Power is doing a fantastic job, and my job is to enjoy, live in peace, and be of service. For this I will forever be grateful.

Anonymous
St. Clements Group



CONTACT GTA ARCHIVIST EDDY G. 416-536-7536 TO DONATE A.A. ITEMS INCLUDING OLD GTA MEETING BOOKS.

1.that on Oct. 20, 1928 Bill signed a pledge in the family Bible: "To my beloved wife that has endured so much, let this stand as evidence to you that I have finished with drink forever"? Thanksgiving, Bill signed another pledge in the family Bible: "My strength is renewed a thousand fold in my love for you." In January 1929, Bill signed yet another pledge in the family Bible: "To tell you once more that I am finished with it. I love you." On September 30, 1930, Bill wrote his last promise to stop drinking in the family Bible: "Finally and for a lifetime, thank God for your love." After that he gave up making promises in despair.

2.that in Oct. 1937 Dr. Leonard Strong, Bill W.'s brother-in-law, begins a series of letters to his friend, Rev. Willard S. Richardson of the Rockefellar Foundation seeking money for the new recovering alcoholic's group that will become AA?

3.that in late Oct. 1939 Akron, Ohio alcoholic members withdrew from the Oxford Group & held meetings at Dr. Bob's house? It was a painful separation due to the affection the alcoholic members had toward T. Henry & Clarace Williams.
The Oxford group meetings were held in the Williams home. In January 1940, meetings moved from Dr. Bob's house to the King School on Wednesday night.

4.that in Oct. 1939 sudden expansion of membership at Cleveland occurred based on the Liberty Magazine article & editorials in the Cleveland Plain Dealer by Elrick B. Davis? Cleveland membership jumped from a dozen to over 100 in a month. Clarence S. who was the founder of AA in Cleveland called himself "the Father of AA"

5.that in Oct. 1940 Bill W. went to Philadelphia to speak to Curtis Bok, one of the owners of the Saturday Evening Post (the largest general circulation magazine in the US with a readership of 3 million)? In Dec. Jack Alexander was assigned by the Post to do a story on AA. His article was published March 1, 1941 which helped AA membership jump from 2,000 to 8,000.

6.that on Oct. 3, 1945 the AA Grapevine was adopted as the national publication of AA with 3,000 subscribers?

7.that in Oct. 1958 CBS-TV's Playhouse 90 premiered J.P. Miller's "Days of Wine and Roses"? It starred Cliff Robertson (as Joe Clay) & Piper Laurie (as Joe's wife Kirsten). AA cooperated in its production. The story centered on Joe's testimony at an AA meeting. The ending found him in recovery but his wife continued to drink & abandoned Joe & their daughter. The Warner Brothers movie version premiered in 1962 starring Jack Lemmon & Lee Remick. It was nominated for several Academy Awards, it won for Best Song.

8.that on Oct. 5, 1988 Lois Wilson widow of Bill Wilson and co-founder of Al-Anon Family Groups dies at the age of 97?

9.that from 1951-1963 the Assemblies took place during the ORC at the Royal York Hotel in Toronto? All Delegates & Committees were elected there.

10.that in Fall, 1964 the first Area Assembly for Eastern Ontario was held outside of Toronto in Belleville, Ontario?

11.that on Oct. 27-28, 1984 the Eastern Ontario Area Assembly was again held at the 401 Inn in Kingston for 2 days and has continued with the 2 day sessions?

12.that on Oct. 25-26, 1986 Dennis D. was elected as Eastern Ontario Area Delegate Panel 27? It was the first time an American was made a Delegate in a Canadian Area. He was from Bombay, NY. Also Dennis made the 3 light system when DCM's give their 2 minute report.

13.that in Oct. 1959 Gratitude Month began for the requesting of moneys to support Toronto Intergroup from the members of the Fellowship in Toronto?

WORD search

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SUBMIT A BETTER TIMES ARTICLE!!

Please send us in your own words, your ideas, your journey, your experience, strength and hope in 200-500 words to bettertimes@A.A.toronto.org *

STEP TEN

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Awareness
Behaviour
Commitment
Daily
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Disappointment
Discipline
Dishonesty
Fear
Grateful
Honesty
Identify
Integrity
Inventory
Liabilities
Maintenance
Meditation
Perseverance
Personal
Prayer
Principles
Promptly
Relationships
Resentment
Responsibility
Selfishness
Wrong

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ALL MEDIA INQUIRIES ARE TO BE SENT TO THE OPERATING COMMITTEE CHAIR oc.chair@A.A.toronto.org

GROUP SPOTLIGHT

In-person A.A. meetings being put on pause has become our new reality. After grappling with this new fact and the need of many to continue to connect in person, a new meeting slowly formed. At first a few alcoholics, physically distanced and practicing proper protocols, gathered in the cold of March and April this year. Word got out and the Anchor of Hope Group was born of a pandemic that would stop human connection … but it could not.

This group and their trusty crew of hearty members can be found under the pavilion, on the grass, or seated on the rocks at R.K. McMillan Park, 830 Aviation Rd. in Mississauga, rain or shine.

In the early days of the pandemic, the group held informal meetings in the back yard of Amanda H. in an enclosed gazebo which was originally built for her children. Those that gathered together truly need that human connection of fellowship. Initially, meetings were held twice daily. After a couple of weeks, being indoors had become dangerous for Amanda's 94-year-old grandfather and others due to the pandemics' new social gathering restrictions.

Then as if a gift from above, while out walking about in R. K. McMillan Park, a group member came upon a pavilion. That discovery was the genesis for The Anchor Group. This pavilion is covered, has a lighted space with a heated and serviced bathroom. It proved to be the perfect place to hold safe, socially distanced in-person meetings.

In Amanda's words "*A true blessing and Godsend*" and almost miraculously these friends in fellowship could continue to share their experiences and hope for the future.

The message within *The Anchor of Hope Group* is a simple yet meaningful one, their group is open to all who seek comfort and fellowship in their shared goal of continuing life's voyage in sobriety.

While a small but growing group, they have had more than 25 attendees at their medallion celebrations, and as many as 18 people often attend the daily lunchtime meeting.

During these meetings, members have been fortunate to witness some amazing and truly magical, spiritual events like;

- Marriage proposals on boats and on the rocky beach
- Baby ducks and swans born and growing before their very eyes
- Geese, swans, and ducks walking straight up to watch as if joining in during sharing, and then deciding to waddle away to get on with their day as the members move on as well.

This group is genuine and heartfelt, many laughs, cries, and connections. Contrary to some thoughts or fears, moving outside seems to have added so much more to this group and is felt by those who attend.

This group's membership is growing by word of mouth. We are pleased to invite all to join in on the groups meetings and get to know a fellowship of people who are happy to share their experiences with strength and hope.

"*Some are still suffering, but for many, they need the in-person experience as their higher power. Some have found sobriety from coming to the meeting for the first time. Seeing amazing changes has been fantastic. We have chips from 1-8 months, and we also do chips painted on rocks if people request*." says Amanda.

The Anchor of Hope Group sounds to me like a place I would like to drop in on and enjoy a share or two, perhaps under the pavilion, on the grass, or maybe pull up a spot on the rocks and offer a share of my own. A new location for the winter months is being sought.

David R. The Hill Group

NAME	YEARS	DRY DATE	GROUP	Celebration
Bert J.	35	Sep 1, 1985	Silverbirch Group	Oct. 9
Gary R.	10	Oct 9, 2010	Erin Mills Group	Oct. 12
Cheryl M.	1	Oct 5, 2019	Sisters in Sobriety	Oct. 14
Terhi L.	5	Oct 15, 2015	Don Mills Group	Oct. 15