

The GTA InterGroup celebrates and welcomes all to the 75th WINTER SEASON OPEN HOUSE December 25th 2019 @ College Street United Church

History of the Winter Season Open House

January 20, 1944:

A.A. Central Office opened at 1170 Yonge St.

December 25, 1944 - December 25, 1959:

Open House at 1170 Yonge St.

January 15, 1960:

1170 closed and 2 Gerrard St. West opened

December 25, 1960 - December 25, 1970:

Open House at Columbus Hall on Sherbourne St.

December 25, 1971 - December 25, 1979:

Open House at Metropolitan United Church

The reason the Open House left the Metropolitan United Church was

“rowdyism and drinking at the Church.

The Church would not tolerate what was taking place. InterGroup did not feel it was in a position to police the gathering. Various elements in the Fellowship used the Steps and Traditions to prevent the necessary controls.”

read more of the history on page 2

The above summary and following on page 2, written in 1991, is based on a memo from Tommy H. Archives Records.

Updated Nov. 2019 by Eddy G. GTA Archivist.

December 25, 1980 – December 25, 1988: Open House at North Toronto Memorial Gardens

Intergroup chose this site for the Open House because it wanted to remove it from the downtown problem areas. "At this time the Xmas Open Houses were the responsibility of the elected representatives of the Fellowship in Toronto. An element in the Fellowship did not feel the proper way of treating the downtown alcoholics was being followed by moving up to Eglinton West (the area where North Toronto Memorial was located) where the drinking drunks would not go. At this point the minority took it into their own hands and the result was the start in 1981 of the dinner at St. Bartholomew's which has continued. It has unquestionably been successful but it was not fulfilling the wishes of the majority. It is a controversial issue. The elements who have put it on have shown that it is useful." Accordingly, "a number of members of A.A. who felt that A.A. should be helping drunks at Xmas time in the downtown area" started a dinner at St. Bartholomew's, Dundas St. East, beginning December 25, 1981 and continuing to today and probably into the future. "In 1989, they were requested to consider realigning themselves but they chose not to (do so)."

December 25, 1989 – 2014: Open House at Emmanuel Howard Park United Church

An Xmas Open House was started in the West end and handled again by Intergroup. "It was felt by Intergroup that the group involved at St. Bartholomew's was in effect dealing with the East end", while Intergroups Open House took care of the West end... One other note: a few years ago the assembled representatives at Intergroup decided to change the official name from "Xmas Open House" to "Winter Season Open House" to avoid the Christian bias of the traditional name. The assembly acted in response to the challenge that, as a worldwide institution now seeking to help alcoholics of all stripes, regardless of religion or irreligion, AA should avoid officially associating itself with any particular form of religion, as declared in the "Preamble".

December 25, 2015 - 2017: Open House at St. James Cathedral's Snell Hall (Southeast corner of Church St. & Adelaide St. E.) Moved to this location because the hall is fully accessible and it is in a central location.

December 25, 2018 – present: College Street United Church, 452 College St. (College & Bathurst), Toronto.



75th WINTER SEASON OPEN HOUSE



Doors open for holiday turkey and A.A. fellowship

For many grateful alcoholics, December 25th provides a special opportunity for service in A.A. by volunteering at the Winter Season Open House (WSOH). For the second year at College Street United Church a merry, dedicated team will co-ordinate food and fellowship welcoming between 400 and 500 guests during the day. This is the 75th year with doors open to all for the GTA Intergroups celebration of A.A. and the holiday season.

"This is how we carry the message," explained Eddie A., this year's event chair. He noted that the open house is a year-in-year-out tradition that reaches all alcoholics: the sober and practicing alike. This will be the 10th year that Eddie has been involved with organizing the open house.

Eddie clearly remembers early in his sobriety being encouraged by mentor Marvin W. to join the WSOH committee, and then to volunteer to serve his first year as chair in 2011. What he remembers most about that first year as chair was his kitchen co-ordinator, Kathleen from the Long Branch Group, doing an amazing job holding down the day's most challenging role and with only one year's sobriety at the time. After Eddie's first two-year term as chair, the position rotated through Fred B., Simon W., Darren T., and Andrew A., before Eddie was acclaimed to serve again this year.

"This is not a one-man job. It's a whole committee," said Eddie, giving full credit to his team. The event has a dedicated core volunteer base that started planning in October. "I was surprised when I walked in 10 minutes late to our first meeting and had 10 people waiting for me," said Eddie, recalling how plans got in motion this year.

Volunteers are needed for a variety of duties. Work will start the night before the open house with setup and decorating. Greeters are needed for when doors open on the holiday morning around 9:30. The first meetings of the day will start an hour later, with both open and closed meetings running simultaneously. Both chairs and speakers are needed. Meetings will continue at intervals throughout the rest of the event, culminating in an informal gratitude session before winding up at 4 p.m.

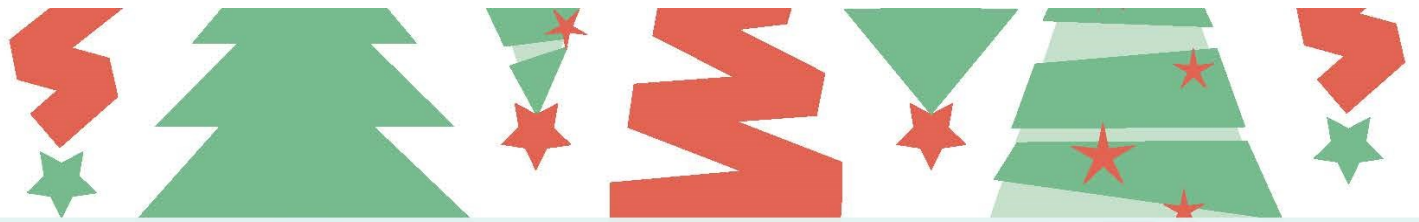
Eddie is most excited to be including two AI Anon meetings, one open and one closed, in the day's schedule. "There's a lot of people with spouses inter joined in the program. It's a family disease," he said. In the future he'd like to possibly see an Alateen meeting added to the day.

People approach the open house in different ways. "Some people set up camp and are there all day. Others just come for a meeting then leave to go about other holiday activities," said Eddie. What's most important is that everyone is welcome, and no one is ever turned away. The open house is held in a fully accessible facility.

Dinner is the highlight of the open house, served between 11 a.m. and 2 p.m. This year, kitchen co-ordinator Richard B. will again be lining up the chafing dishes brimming with turkey and ham. Servers are needed to staff the buffet. "Serving is one of the glamorous volunteer spots," noted Eddie.

Please see the WSOH flyer for more details on how you can attend and support the WSOH as it celebrates an amazing milestone 75th year!

Chris Z., Communications Committee, Port Credit Group



Toronto Intergroup Presents

Winter Season Open House

Fellowship,
food, fun! Selfie
with Santa!

Open & Closed
AA and Al Anon
meetings!

Open and Closed AA Meetings 10:30, 1:00, 2:15
Open and Closed Al Anon Meetings 11:45

Wednesday, December 25, 2019 - 10 AM - 4 PM

College Street United Church

452 College Street, Toronto

Transit 511 Bathurst Streetcars (from Bathurst subway station)

506 College St. Streetcars (Queen's Park Subway station)

Paid parking on the south west corner of College and Bathurst



For more information go to www.aatoronto.org or email: wsoh@aatoronto.org
Contact Event Chair: Edward A. 647-333-6415

We are Self-Supporting

Together we will make the 75th Annual
Winter Season Open House a success.

Use your talent as service to the AA fellowship

Arrange to contribute or cook a turkey or ham

Contribute baked sweets or desserts

Contact us: wsoh@aatoronto.org

Or volunteer time as part of the WSOH committee

Tuesday, December 24th, 2019 - 9:00 - 2:00 (set-up, kitchen food prep)

Wednesday, December 25th, 2019 - 9:00 - 5:00 (greeters, meetings support, buffet servers, clear tables, sanitation detail, clean-up and closing crew)

Upcoming Committee Meetings

GTA Intergroup - 234 Eglinton Ave East, Suite 202

Sunday December 8, 2:00 pm

Contact Volunteer Coordinator

Nicole 416-575-7639 or wsoh@aatoronto.org



WORD search



SUBMIT A BETTER TIMES ARTICLE!!

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

GREATER TORONTO AREA INTERGROUP

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STEP 12 *Hidden word will appear next month*

U S P I R I T U A L D R E G D
E N W G D E G L I V E S C N N
A R D L N E V D D S I E I I U
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S P E T S R H L N E M O C E B
T H E M E U Y T J Y D I I F X

Hidden Word: _ _ _ _ _

Last month's hidden word: **MEDITATION**

* Opinions expressed in BETTER TIMES are those of the authors and don't necessarily reflect those of the Greater Toronto Area Intergroup. The editorial staff reserve the right to edit submitted articles for length, content and grammar in accordance with layout and quality purposes.

Submit group news, medallions, other event notices to:
communications@aatoronto.org

ABLE
ACTION
ADMITTED
AWAKENING
BECOME
BRIEFLY
CAPABLE
CARRY
COMMON
DAILY
DEFINITIONS
FOUND
GENUINE
GIFT
KIND
LIVES
LIVING
LOVE
MANY
MEANING
MESSAGE
MIND
PEACE
PEOPLE
PRACTICE
RECEIVE
RESULT
SPIRITUAL
STEPS
SURVIVE
THEME
TRIED
UNDERSTAND

FROM THE ARCHIVES: DID YOU KNOW?

1. that on Dec. 11, 1934 Bill W. takes his last drink & enters Towns Hospital in New York for the 4th time?
2. that on Dec. 12, 1934 Bill W. has a spiritual experience in Towns Hospital & finds relief from obsession with alcohol?
3. that in Dec. 1934 Bill & Lois start attending Oxford Group meetings?
4. that on Dec. 15, 1934 Ebby gave Bill W. a copy of William James book "The Variety of Religious Experience"? It deeply inspired Bill by revealing 3 key points for recovery: 1. Calamity or complete defeat in a vital area of life (or what we call "hitting bottom"). 2. Admission of defeat (or what we call acceptance). 3. Appeal to a higher power for help (or what we call "surrender"). These key points are also the basis for Steps 1, 2 & 3.
5. that from Dec. 1934 to May 1935 Bill W. works with alcoholics, but fails to sober any of them?
6. that in Dec. 1937 Bill meets with Rockefeller Foundation in an attempt to get money?
7. that in Dec. 1938 starting with Oxford Group principles and the idea of "plugging the holes an alcoholic might wiggle through" Bill begins writing the 12 Steps of AA? The first version of the 12 Steps was written at 182 Clinton St., NY. It took Bill about 30 minutes. The draft of the 12 Steps, as Bill wrote them that night, has been lost. An approximate reconstruction is recorded in the book "Pass It On" on pages 198 & 199.
8. that in Dec. 1940 Bill W. met Father Ed Dowling SJ, at the 24th St. Clubhouse in New York who became Bill's spiritual sponsor?
9. that in Dec. 1947 the Grapevine carries a notice that a new 48 page pamphlet titled AA Tradition was sent to each group?
10. that on Dec. 25, 1949 Dr. Bob pays what was probably his last visit to the Alcoholic Ward at St. Thomas Hospital in Akron, where he has treated 1,000s of drunks?
11. that in Dec. 1950 Paramount changed title of its movie "Mr. & Mrs. Anonymous" to "Something to Live For" at AA's request? Released in 1952, it dealt with the wonderful work being done by AA.
12. that in Dec. 1982 Nell Wing, Bill's secretary and GSO Founding Archivist "retires" but continues to be an ambassador-at-large for AA and a passionate advocate for AA archival history?
13. that on Dec. 1, 1985 the first Annual Archives Breakfast was held at the Howard Johnson Motel at Hwy 427 & Dixon Rd.?
14. that on Dec. 16, 1943 80 people attended the first AA Banquet at the Royal York Hotel in Toronto? Today this event is called the Ontario Regional Conference (ORC).
15. that on Dec. 22, 1974 the Etobicoke Group was started. The name changed to the High Park Group in April 1989. The group moved in January 1987 to St. John's Anglican Church at 288 Humberside Ave. in the High Park area where it still meets today.



**TO DONATE AA/GTA ARCHIVAL ITEMS TO
THE GTA ARCHIVES
PLEASE CONTACT THE GTA ARCHIVIST
EDDY G. @ 416-536-7536**

**OLD GTA MEETING BOOKS ARE NEEDED
FOR THE GTA ARCHIVES**



ORC

2020

IF YOU WANT WHAT WE HAVE

**ONTARIO REGIONAL CONFERENCE
MARCH 20 – 22, 2020**

Sheraton Centre Hotel, 123 Queen Street West, Toronto, ON

International and North American speakers include:

Craig F. (Scotland) | Clancy I. (California)

Diana M. (Florida) | America K. (Texas)

Al-Anon speakers include:

David E. (Chicago) | Ken T. (Pennsylvania)

Visit aaorc.ca for information and registration

MY LIFE SO FAR

My name is Valerie and I am an alcoholic

I spent the first 23 years of my life in Montreal and Lachine, Quebec. I had one sister and a Mom and Dad. No one in my immediate family is an alcoholic. We believe my Grandfather who immigrated from Ireland was an alcoholic. However, we never saw him drunk. We believe, through the prayers of my Grandmother that he stopped drinking. On my Father's side there were no alcoholics. On Sundays my Mother cooked roast beef and mashed potatoes dinner and served wine which I drank with no particular effect.

I went to school in an all-girls Catholic school. In school and at teacher's college, I don't recall any drinking. I quit teaching after 1 year and joined the airlines. After 3 years in Montreal, I transferred to Vancouver. I ended up being very sick and was admitted into a psychiatric hospital. I was there for 3 months, where I received shock treatments. At age 26 I transferred to Toronto where I shared an apartment with a cousin. Most Saturday nights we had a party with lots of drinking, singing, dancing and lots of noise.

At age 30, I crossed that invisible line and I drank alcoholi-

cally for the next 5 years. Every night except Saturday, I worked every day. As I walked every morning to Victoria Park subway, I would say: I'm not going to drink today. And every afternoon around 3 pm, I would say: I'll buy a bottle and have 1 drink. As an alcoholic, 1 drink started the craving and I drank till I passed out every night. I continued to go to work every day and drink every night. I was very disciplined in that way because as a young girl, I went to school even if I was sick.

**I had a spiritual experience.
I heard in my head;
you need God
you need A.A.
you need people in your
life.**

37 years ago, drinking alcoholically as I did felt like a moral sin to me and not a disease. I wanted to jump. I knew if I did my sister and my Mom and Dad would go to heaven and I'd go to hell and I'd never see them again. I drank alcoholically from age 30 to 35.

On February 14, 1982 I had a spiritual experience. I heard in my head: you need God, you need A.A. and you need people in your life. I have not had a drink since. In 2019 I am 73 years old and 37 years sober. I will say my life has had some difficult times and good times. 7 years ago, just before my 30 year sober anniversary, I experienced another depression and loss of my memory. I went to a hospital and was diagnosed with short-term memory loss. In the last 7 years since my 30-year medallion, I have felt good. I thank God daily.

A.A. is my community. At the present time, I am the Intergroup rep. of my home group. I enjoy attending the meetings and bringing back the information to my group. Thanks for the opportunity to share.

Valerie, Lawrence Plaza Group

FIRST SOBER CHRISTMAS Christmas Season 1975

I was several months sober; my phone was ringing off the hook; a host of new AA friends were keeping my spirits alive and happy. I was going to meetings all around Los Angeles as often as possible. My spare time was spent hanging at the clubhouse at 26th and Broadway, in Santa Monica. There I felt safe because the subject was generally focused on one subject: SOBRIETY. Although my family was back in Indiana, I was seldom lonely, and I seemed to be winning the battle against that first drink. The goose seemed to be hanging high! (A Bill Wilson saying)

However, I hadn't experienced a sober Christmas season for over twenty five years and there existed that hidden terror of the next drink, but I seemed to be successful at pushing it away, like the boy in the Big Book who was whistling in the dark to keep up his spirits. I pushed harder to keep away those terrifying thoughts. But, like a muscle, the harder I shoved it, the stronger it got. Christmas and New Year's Eve around the corner and fear grew to near terror. Maybe I could get past this but what about the next time? Don't think about it! Don't think about it! If I think it I'll drink it! The fear grew paramount. Was I headed for deep chicken fat trouble?

Near disaster: I marched into a Hollywood bar, after a Christmas parade and almost ordered a gin and tonic. Thank God I didn't! The next week, a new sponsor led me through the Twelve Step process and I, for the first time, started living the actual program of action of alcoholics Anonymous! By the summer of 1976 the obsession to drink was lifted and has never returned.

If I were asked to offer personal experience for someone new, it would be to find a sponsor who can help them through the Twelve Step process, el pronto. The fellowship is good, but a vital spiritual experience is the ultimate solution. I believe that lots of meetings were very vitally important for me those early months, but as is often heard: *"Survival on the fellowship is untreated alcoholism."* But also: *"Rarely have we seen a person fail*

GROUP	WHAT	DATE	MTG TIME	DETAILS
Agincourt Acorn	Candlelight Gratitude	Tuesday Dec. 3	8:00 p.m.	Open Christmas & New Year
Aurora Discussion	Gratitude Candlelight	Sunday Dec. 15	7:00 p.m.	Speaker, followed by Food
Rox Glen Traditional	Christmas Meeting	Thursday Dec. 19	8:00 p.m.	Mtg., followed by Festive Dinner
Danforth	Candlelight Meeting	Thursday Dec. 19	8:00 p.m.	Open mtg., followed by candlelight
The Hill	Holiday Party	Thursday Dec. 19	8:30 p.m.	8:30 - 11 p.m.
Beverly Hills	Candlelight Gratitude	Friday Dec. 20	8:00 p.m.	Snack food welcome
Silverbirch	Yultide Gratitude	Friday Dec. 20	6:30-7:30 BB Closed	Potluck @ 8, Gratitude mtg.8:30
Erin Mills	42nd Anniversary	Monday Jan 6	7 p.m. Buffet Dinner	Followed by Speaker mtg. @ 8:30

Chips and Coins Celebrate Recovery

NAME	YEARS	DRY DATE	GROUP	CELEBRATION
Nancy B.	1	Oct. 28 2018	The Crossroads Group	Nov. 3 2019
Tyler M.	1	Nov. 4 2018	Prince Edward Group	Nov. 4 2019
Christine F.	1	Oct. 5 2018	King City Group	Nov. 4 2019
Bert H.	20	Nov. 1 1999	Beaches Group	Nov. 5 2019
Meagan K.	5	Nov. 4 2014	Anniversary Group	Nov. 6 2019
Susan G.	20	Oct. 24 1999	Parkway Group	Nov. 11 2019
Jenny O.	1	Nov. 21 2018	Sisters in Sobriety	Nov. 27 2019
Kathryn G.	5	Nov. 27 2014	New Anchor Group	Nov. 28 2019
Kevin P.	1		Danforth Group	Nov. 28 2019
Bill G.	5	Nov. 30 2014	Danforth Group	Dec. 3 2019
Tristan J.	10	Dec. 4 2019	Anniversary Group	Dec. 4 2019
Beverly W.	30	Nov. 30 1989	Aurora Discussion	Dec. 8 2019
Virginia H.	25	Dec. 4 1994	Lakeshore Group	Dec. 8 2019