

BETTER TIMES

Produced monthly by AA members in the Greater Toronto Area

February 2019



**“YOU ARE
GOING TO
BE OKAY.
YOU ARE
NO LONGER
ALONE”**



A few streets up from me a house was getting torn down in preparation for a new build. A beautiful Toronto red brick two story with a large noticeable four leaf clover on the outside attic roof,

all the moments and movement in that house destroyed. It made me reflect on my own home and the damages done in my active drinking and the rebuild as it looks today.

Prior to my getting sober my house was a shell full of resentments, stress, anger, fear, all those 'isms'. Drama was my middle name and chaos was my game. My home was not a place of serenity. The secrets that I carried filled the rooms and my family suffered. My only comfort was alcohol.

I came into this program under a shadow of extreme fear, shame and guilt. I knew I had a

disease and I knew its name, alcoholism. My bottom was a life or death situation, literally. What I started in a hotel room ended in a hospital, but for the grace of God. Two days later I was at my first meeting, Amazing Grace. It was a Tuesday night, the Blue Jays were in the playoffs. The weather that night matched my mood, gray, thick and heavy, a downpour of rain. I had never been so scared in my life. I had never imagined that my life would BEGIN here in the rooms of Alcoholics Anonymous.

I sat in a chair in circle formation. A couple of people said hi and introduced themselves and then she walked in, a woman, graceful, clean, bright eyed. She introduced herself and I, in tears greeted back. She embraced me and held me tight for what seemed like forever. She whispered softly, "You are going to be okay. You are no longer alone". A ton of bricks lifted from my shoulders. I belonged here, I felt like I was home. It was the strangest warm feeling. I had always felt at dis ease with myself. I felt I had belonged nowhere.

Over the next three months I went to a meeting everyday. I made Amazing Grace my home group and started setting up and

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Word Search

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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, letters to the editor or articles to BETTER TIMES before the 7th of the month prior to the month of issue. Submissions should be 200 to 500 words and may be made online at www.aatoronto.org or emailed to:

Hard Vocabulary

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

DIFFIDENT

GRATIFY

LOQUACIOUS

OBSEQUIOUS

SOLECISM

WISTFUL

AUGMENT

ECLECTIC

IMPORTUNE

MERITOCRACY

PARSIMONIOUS

TREPIDATION

CAPITULATE

EFFICACIOUS

JUDICIOUS

METICULOUS

PROFLIGATE

UTILITARIAN

DIAMETRIC

FORTHRIGHT

LASCIVIOUS

NEFARIOUS

ROTUND

VINDICATE



Please Join Us!

From the Chair



Greetings All!

I am in a “transition position” this month as I am doing double duty as both the new Communications Chair and the outgoing Better Times Editor which brings me to the concept of the “Spirit of Rotation” that we often speak about in our program. What is it and what does it mean?

THE AA GROUP PAMPHLET, P. 34 says:

“Traditionally, rotation keeps AA members from becoming frozen in office. It also ensures that group tasks, like nearly everything else in AA, are passed around for all to share...to step out of an AA office you love can be hard. It can be a real step forward in growth—a step into the humility that is, for some people, the spiritual essence of anonymity...rotation

helps to bring us spiritual rewards far more enduring than any fame. With no AA “status” at stake, we needn’t compete for titles or praise—we have complete freedom to serve as we are needed”. (Bill Wilson)

So, with the idea that an AA member should preferably not stay in one service job for too long, I am thrilled to tell you that over the next month we will be seeing a new fresh group of standing committee members at the Communications Committee of the GTA Intergroup including new Editor, Assistant Editor, Layout Editor for Better Times and a new team of members dedicated to ensuring that the website stays up to date, the online bookstore is up and running for sales in the near future and the 2019 meeting booklets are printed off for everyone’s purse or pocket! We still invite anyone who is interested in joining our committee to email us at communications@aatoronto.org - we are a super fun and productive group! I promise! So Rotate In!

I do want to take this opportunity to thank Chris C., our outbound Communications Chair, with profound gratitude. His leadership and service to this arm of Intergroup was invaluable and a lovely example of what getting it done with principles and personality are all about! On behalf of GTA Intergroup, your time and dedication is most appreciated and we wish you well on the next chapter of your road of service.

Toodles!

Maija P.

RECENT ITEMS DONATED TO THE GTA ARCHIVES

- 1- S.O.A.A.R. Mug, the 1st Secular Ontario AA Roundup held in Toronto, September 16, 2017,
- 1- 3rd Biennial International Conference of Secular AA (ICSAA) in Toronto, August 24-26, 2018 flyer,
- 11-3rd Biennial ICSAA in Toronto 2018 postcards. 13 Items- Donated by Joe C. (Beyond Belief Group).
- 1-The AA Way of Life (hardcover) book, 1st printing, 1967,
- 1-As Bill Sees It (hardcover) book, 5th printing, 1974,
- 1-The AA Service Manual 1977 Edition,
- 1-Box 459 The Bulletin Board, Holiday 1977,
- 1-The AA Service Manual combined with Twelve Concepts for World Service by Bill W. 1988-89 Edition,
- 1-Acceptance, The Way to Serenity and Peace of Mind booklet. 7 Items- Donated by Jennifer C. (Port Whitby Group) from Terry T. (Port Whitby Group).

TO DONATE ARCHIVAL ITEMS TO THE GTA ARCHIVES PLEASE CONTACT THE GTA ARCHIVIST EDDY G. at archives@aatoronto.org



From the Archives

- On Feb. 7 & 8, 1948 Bill W. & Lois came to Toronto? Bill spoke on Saturday at Central Technical School to an audience of 800 people in a closed meeting & on Sunday night to 1400 people at an open meeting at the Tivoli Theatre on Richmond St.
- On Feb. 26, 1948 the Lakeshore Group in Toronto started. Today they are 71 years old.
- On Feb. 1, 1987 Toronto Intergroup Offices moved from 272 Eglinton Ave. W. to 234 Eglinton Ave. E., Suite 502
- Feb. 1938 John D. Rockefeller, Jr. is contacted, gives AA \$5,000.00, refuses to give more which saves AA from professionalism
- Feb. 1939 Dr. Harry Tiebout became the 1st psychiatrist to endorse AA and use AA principles in his practice
- Feb. 1939 Dr. Howard, a Montclair, NJ, psychiatrist, suggests swapping the "you musts" in the Big Book for "we ought"
- Feb. 1940 the 1st World Service Office (GSO) for AA opens at 30 Vesey St. in New York
- Feb. 1940 the 1st AA Clubhouse opens at 334 ½ West 24th Street in New York
- Feb. 1942 Bill W. and 7 other AA's ask 60 rich friends of John D. Rockefeller, Jr. for money at a dinner at Union Club... They raise \$2,200.
- Feb. 1959 AA granted Recording for the Blind permission to tape The Big Book
- Feb. 1981 the first issue of "Markings" the AA Archives newsletter was published. "The function of archives is to give the Fellowship a sense of its own past and the opportunity to study it."

**DID YOU
KNOW**

Medallions

- | | | | |
|------------|----|-----------------|---------|
| • Tom C. | 35 | Sunnyside Group | Feb. 7 |
| • Zobie G. | 5 | Bloordale Group | Feb. 10 |

ORC Service - Free & Fun

MANY years ago a fuzzy, lost, broken, young lady decimated by the disease of alcoholism showed up at AA's doors. I had tried EVERYTHING! Exercise, health kicks, shrinks, therapists, gurus, self help books (my library is extensive) psychodrama, childhood regressions, metaphysics, screaming without screaming, hugging trees, walking on coals, hypnotherapy, acupuncture, win-win camps ad infinitum. It was not until AA that I have been able to stop & do it with some joy as a sober person. This alone is a miracle. By nature I am a negative Nancy. I am defiant, self sufficient; thank you, always right, untrusting and in general bitter. Thus my sponsors insistence that I go to some event called the ORC when I was 3 months sober sounded like complete lunacy. First of all why would 3000 of us all want to hang out...what possible good could it do except for causing irritation & upset being around that many people. Seriously.

So there I am standing in front of the Royal York..ok good start. I am very judgmental too. This seems a step up from the ugly church basements I have been visiting to stay sober. Got my ticket, obviously a money scam. And then I entered what was to turn my idea of AA, the program, the people and the work that goes on here completely around.

Smiles everywhere...gross... but totally infectious. Patience, people opening doors for others, "may I help you's" everywhere.

The kindness & selflessness of the program immediately demonstrated. WOW. But then I was introduced to the speakers. Now my home group had its fair share of nary do wells & scallywags with amazing stories but I had never heard anything like I heard that weekend. I've made tomato soup w ketchup.....no one ever wants to admit that but there was Wayne B up there making tomato ketchup soup & grabbing his dentures out of the toilet & putting them right back n. Of course, LOL. The truest healing balm of all....laughter. I could not believe the laughter. It was AMAZING. It was the beginning of the healing of my heart, the beginning of the mending of my soul.

I later discovered this entire weekend was put on by volunteers from AA. Another mind trip. For Free & for Fun is now my motto. The laughter, love and kindness I experienced that weekend changed my mind about a program that I now know has saved my life. The ability to laugh at myself has saved me. Rule 62. The program changed my perception which has changed my ability to be in the world. Happy, Joyous & Free is my new jam. Its the bomb and I thank God for the day 18 years ago I did what I was told (not suggested) and went to The Ontario Regional Conference. God Bless all the volunteers who have spent decades putting on conferences, conventions & round-ups. You likely have affected millions of lives....and One for sure. Thank you!!

Deborah P.
St Clements Group



VOLUNTEER

THE ORC COULD NOT BE THE ANNUAL SUCCESS IT IS WITHOUT VOLUNTEERS. WE NEED HELP IN MANY AREAS INCLUDING GREETING, REGISTRATION AND MORE!

PLEASE GO TO

WWW.AAORC.CA/VOLUNTEER/
OR EMAIL ORCVOLUNTEERS@GMAIL.COM
IF YOU ARE INTERESTED IN HELPING OUT.

Working the Phones at Intergroup

I am an alcoholic and my name is Norman. I am presently in my 10th year of continuous sobriety. Volunteering on the phones is always something that I had wanted to attempt and now that I am retired, I am grateful to have the time and opportunity to do so. I can truly say that I have never had a more satisfying and fulfilling experience, than that of working on the phones at 234 Eglinton.

For most of us alcoholics, the three hardest words to say are “I NEED HELP”. When the phone rings at 234, the suffering voices on the other end are usually those of people who have been in denial for years and have finally had enough. They find the courage to finally call AA and it just may be the first time in their life, that they are reaching out for help. I have found that working on the phones and offering understanding and compassion to those on the other end of the line, is extremely fulfilling. To have the opportunity to tell some poor soul that there is hope, that there is a way out and a better life awaits, offers me hope for others and reinstalls my belief in AA as well.

Many have very little knowledge about AA and so it is our job to share about the fellowship and what this program is all about. Perhaps they have that first wonderful and comforting experience of actually speaking to another person with the same addiction and sickness; they might just begin to realize that they are not alone. The profound and positive effect we can have on another suffering alcoholic is absolutely magical. Hopefully, after guiding distressed callers to locations of meetings near to where they live, they will actually go. We may never know what ultimately happens with that faceless caller but I do know that, occasionally,

I have received a call back with a thank you - that they have stayed sober, if only for a few days. There is no better feeling than knowing someone may have taken their first steps to recovery.

I urge all of you who wish to give back to AA, to consider volunteer phone work at 234. I promise, you will not regret the decision to. For me, volunteering on the phones has been highly rewarding and a tremendous asset to my personal recovery, as it surely will be to yours.

In service,

Norman S.

** Please email Woody at:

12step@aatoronto.org

or call Intergroup at (416) 487-5591 and ask about signing up! There is a one year sobriety requirement and a mandatory training session for all new phone volunteers. Tell them Norman sent you!

Four Leaf Clover (continued)

making the coffee. I got a sponsor. I bought and read the Big Book and the 12 and 12, cover to cover. I felt that every word had been written with me in mind. Bill's story resonated with my own. I had a long road ahead. At eight weeks sober I called my sponsor and told her that I was terribly confused. “How does this program work?” “You are doing it, you have 56 days. You are taking the suggestions and working the steps,” she responded. That's it? I was flabbergasted. It truly worked this ‘One day at a time’

program of living.

Everyday I wake up, I remind myself that I am an alcoholic and my life was so unmanageable. I read the Daily Reflections and A Woman's Spirit to jump-start my day. Sure, there are ups and downs, life still moves forward and I try to move with it, today in balance with the universe. My house of destruction has been rebuilt with bricks and mortar and a faith of my understanding. My renovations/character building is ongoing and that's progress.

According to western folklore the four leaves of the clover represent hope, faith, love and luck. I have experienced all four since entering the door of Alcoholics Anonymous and for that I am ever grateful.

Unah G, The Hill

ORC UPDATE - ONE MONTH TO GO!

From your ORC 2019 PROGRAM DIRECTOR
Jim S.
Corktown Group, Toronto

With love,

As with every year, our objective in selecting speakers, panelists, chairs & other participants, is to inspire the attendees with stories of experience, strength and hope. In doing so, we looked for people who were very much living in the solution, without forgetting the years of struggle and despair as active alcoholics.

Speakers in 2019 include:

Ben B. (Oklahoma City OK), Mary H. (Toronto ON), Earl H. (Scottsdale AZ), Juanita U. (Al-Anon) and Tom U. (AA) (Santa Fe NM), Bob K. (Whitby ON) Alida F. (Toronto ON), Susan Y. (Kingston ON), Geri B. (Duncan BC), Robert T. (Edmonton AB), Alonzo C. (Phoenix AZ), Dan F. (Toronto), Kyle F. (Edmonton AB), Jennifer W. (Austin TX), Erika C. (San Jose CA), Micheal F. (Escondido CA), Joanne M. (Toronto ON)

In addition, there will be panel discussions throughout the conference where 2 or 3 people will discuss their experience with particular aspects of the alcoholism and recovery, including hitting bottom (and continuing to dig); "solid alcohol"; sexuality; identifying with other alcoholics; and so forth. The Newcomers Room will have a busy program of discussion meetings and other less formal meetings and opportunities for socializing and relaxing. As usual, Al-Anon and Alateen also have a parallel set of speakers and events. There's a banquet and a dance, information tables, and then the "unofficial" ORC: rooms hosted by various AA home groups and recovery organizations where registrants can take a breather from the main event, and perhaps have something to eat, or purchase recovery merch.

Overall, the 2019 ORC is an ideal opportunity to do what we do best in AA: share our stories; meet others who share our plight and our solution; and do service, keeping in mind that, for some, that will mean meeting and greeting, for others it might be participating in a discussion meeting, but everyone who simply attends is also doing service by signaling to the still suffering alcoholic that they are not alone.

The 2019 Ontario Regional Conference of Alcoholics Anonymous will be at the Sheraton Centre Hotel, 123 Queen St. W. in Downtown Toronto, March 1-3.

- AA, Al-Anon, or Guest Registration Fee: \$35.00/person
- Alateen Fee – \$5.00/person
- Banquet Dinner Fee – \$80.00/person *note: this is in addition to the registration fee, all banquet attendees must also be registered*

Register online at <https://aaorc.ca/>.

Hotel rooms are available to registered ORC attendees for a special rate of \$181-\$221 a night. For more information and to book online go to: <https://aaorc.ca/room-reservations/>.

ONTARIO REGIONAL CONFERENCE of ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS

March 1 - 3, 2019

Sheraton Centre Hotel
123 Queen St. W, Toronto ON

Register now at: www.aaorc.ca

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED
please contact: orcvolunteers@gmail.com

SPEAKERS

Earl H. - Culver City, CA
Robert T. - Spruce Grove, AB
Geri B. - Vancouver Island, BC
Mary B. - Seattle WA (Al-Anon)



Pre-Registration closes Friday February 22, 2019

Group Spotlight

MARKLAND WOOD



1) How many years has the group been active in Toronto? Currently in its 49th year having been founded Oct 15, 1970.

2) What do you like about your Home Group? What makes it great for the newcomer? It's a large welcoming group with members of all ages and mix of both male and females. It's great for a newcomer due to the format (3 breakouts) which provides variety and choice as well as lots of opportunity to get involved at the group level. There are lots of people available to ask about sponsorship.

3) What is the format of your closed meeting? (Steps, popcorn style sharing) Open Meeting? Tuesday evenings (8pm) are closed meetings with 2 step-meetings- Newcomer Steps 1,2,3 and the other Steps 4-12 – and a Big Book study. They're all popcorn style sharing. On Thursdays (8pm) it's an open speaker meeting.

4) Are there opportunities for service and if so, which? Yes. There are service opportunities in a number of ways-setting up chairs for both the Tuesday and Thursday meeting, setting up the coffee station for both meetings, handling the AV and literature table setup on Thursdays, putting away chairs after both meetings, mopping after Thursday meetings, greeting for both meetings– you should be a group member to best coordinate service.

5) Does the location have parking? Is it close to a subway station? There is a ton of parking. The meeting is held at St Clement's Church so the church provides plenty of free parking. There isn't a subway station within walking distance but the #49 bus can be taken directly from Kipling Station and is only a 10 min ride (9 stops at most).

Tuesday, 8:00 pm - Closed with Wheelchair Access

Thursday, 8:00 pm - Open with Wheelchair Access

St. Clement's R.C. Church
409 Markland Dr
Etobicoke
ON M9C 1S5

Suburban West