



The GTA is fortunate to have over 500 meetings every week. These meetings come in all sizes, all formats and even a few languages. In an effort to encourage all members of AA to visit groups from all over the city in addition to their home group, we spotlight a meeting every issue. Could your group use a few more folks in the chairs? Are there opportunities for service? Is it a new group that we may not know about? If so, please submit your request for a feature to bettertimes@aatoronto.org and be sure to use “Group Spotlight Request” in the subject line.

The Silverbirch Group

- 1) How many years has the group been active in Toronto?- Silverbirch has been active since June 6th, 1958.
- 2) What do you like about your Home Group? Silverbirch is a very eclectic, mid-sized (20-40 people at open meetings on average), East end group. There are always new faces coming through the door and they are openly welcomed with a smile, a handshake and fresh cup of coffee. There is a dedicated core group of members that are very committed to the basic services and responsibilities of running the meeting. That said, Silverbirch is very welcoming to new members and has a number of service opportunities available on a regular basis. Lastly, Silverbirch is a family-style meeting that loves the odd potluck and hosts an incredible and bonding musical Christmas party each year.
- 3) What is the format of your closed meeting? (Steps, popcorn style sharing) Open Meeting? Closed Meeting - Friday at 7pm - Two pages of the Big Book then open discussion. Open Meeting - Friday at 8:30pm - Speaker format. Silverbirch group is not only known for giving out chips for each month of continuous sobriety in your first year, but we also give out marbles each week, for anyone who thinks they may have lost theirs (yes, this group has a great sense of humor).
- 4) Are there opportunities for service? Set-up and tear down help (coffee, chairs, tables, etc) and door greeters are always appreciated. In the spirit of rotation there is a scheduled change of hands for a variety of service commitments: GSR, Intergroup Rep., Secretary, Treasurer, Master Chair for Open Meetings, Supplies Manager, Business Meeting Chair..
- 5) Does the location have parking? Is it close to a subway station?
Parking- The Church has a huge parking lot, Transit - From Woodbine Subway Station, take the 92 Woodbine South bus towards Lakeshore (5 stops). Exit at Woodbine Ave and Eastwood Road and walk from there to St. John’s Norway Church. The meeting is normally conducted in the basement of the church.



Thanks to Silverbirch member Kevin M!

Day 366 - My Post Medallion Expectations

Expectations have always weighed heavily on me. By the time I stopped drinking I had lost all hope, so the only expectation left was to get better or keep drinking until the end. Not long after I got sober was I able to rebuild all sorts of plans for myself, and by the time I hit the one year mark I was certain I would have an abundance of accomplishments to boast and that all the promises would most certainly have come true for me. I had this idea that since life no longer had to be black and white, it could be technicolor; living in the grey was too boring for an alcoholic like me!

My medallion snuck up on me and before I knew it I was back at home sprawled on the floor, bawling and deflated. Sober, but let down. It was a lovely evening with my family, friends and homegroup, don’t get me wrong, but I didn’t “have” all of the things I was sure I would after one year sober. I had placed a great deal of pressure on the day after that medallion celebration and so, on day 366, I officially hit a rough patch, and a few months later I am only starting to come out of it. And that’s OK. My sponsor talks to me about a similar experience she had post her first medallion.

Growing up with such strict expectations is part of what made me drink, and if I want to stay sober, I have to practice this new way of life that AA has taught me. I can be present. Grateful. Attending meetings and calling people just isn’t enough for me. I have to do the work & service every day, and I’m OK with that too, because this is the solution I have seen work for others and in my experience, nothing easy was ever worth it anyway.

So today I do that work, daily, hourly, and sometimes minute by minute. I hope that one day this will become less of a conscious effort, but I know expecting it won’t do me any good either. I know that if I practice the program in all of my affairs then I am able to have a beautiful life. I really can live in technicolor – we all can. I can be on a pink cloud some days, I will feel blue at times, and it is most probable that I will, in ways, always be green in this program. Knowing that the

solution is there when I chose to use it is a gift. I can choose to be crushed under the weight of my own thinking, or I can enjoy life as it comes. When I look around me, I do see that many of the promises have come true, some quickly, and yes ... some slowly. I am so grateful.

I have learned to adjust my expectations and simply do the work. Plus, I truly believe that expectations are just resentments waiting to happen. The AA way has given me a greater sense of hope than I could have asked for, and each day that I re-commit to this program gives me more out of sobriety than I ever could have expected. Life certainly is full of possibilities isn’t it?

— Lindsay M.



“ Blessed is he who expects nothing, for he shall never be disappointed. ”

BETTER TIMES is published monthly for AA members in the Greater Toronto Area.

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CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS

The Better Times publication strives to offer its readership the voice of the Toronto AA community. Your article submissions are a vital part of the Better Times publication and allow you to share your experience, strength and hope with your fellows.

Submissions should be between 200-500 words, and may be made online at www.aatoronto.org or by emailing bettertimes@aatoronto.org directly.

For any inquiries or comments, please send your name and phone number to the Editor at bettertimes@aatoronto.org. Your anonymity will be protected.

Yours in Service,
The Better Times Staff.

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DON'T GET BAFFLED WORD SEARCH

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

- ACCEPTANCE
COMPLACENCY
FEAR
GRATITUDE
HONESTY
INVENTORY
PRIOR
SERVICE
- ATTITUDE
CONTEMPT
FORGIVENESS
GROUP
HOPE
INVESTIGATION
RIGOROUS
INVENTORY
- BELIEF
DEPENDENCE
FREEDOM
HIGHER
HUMILITY
POWER
SERENITY
SOBRIETY

A Meeting is a Destination

I never cease to be amazed and filled with gratitude when I go to a meeting of Alcoholics Anonymous. I can never underestimate the power of what happens when I get myself to a meeting and take a seat in a room full of other people who understand what it was like, what happened and what it's like now. My sponsor likes to say that when we're stuck in our heads or feeling restless, irritable and discontent, and then listen to a speaker or shares in a discussion meeting, we are "air-lifted" right out of that messy place, into a higher place.

There's a grace in every meeting, granted to us by our higher power, and by the common bond we share with our fellows. I might see a friendly face at the door and find myself smiling for the first time that day, freeing me from my self-centeredness or my fear. Often, I've found myself sharing my issue with somebody and find they have a fresh perspective or even experience with the same problem. I might even recognize the look of desperation or uneasiness on the face of a newcomer and be guided to offer my phone number, and suddenly, there's a shift: instead of needing to fill my own need, I feel compassion and understanding for the suffering of another.

A meeting is a good place for me to be, and a destination, even when I don't really feel like going. I am so grateful that Toronto has 521 meetings every week and I never want to take that for granted. New in sobriety, I went to a morning meeting that takes place every day of the week. My schedule has changed, and I'm now at noon meetings, almost every day. Just knowing that there's an evening meeting I could go to if I needed, helps me stay sober. Some people say a meeting is like getting the medicine we require to combat our disease, or like filling our lungs with the fresh air we need. I know for sure that I need that medicine and that fresh air and all of you, if I want to stay sober.

— Jana S., Birds of a Feather

The Step Five Timetable

The information for Step Five began with a sincere session of spontaneous writing where I asked God to make clear my selfishness, dishonesty, resentment and fear. This awareness, plus my "official" Fourth Step inventory process (directly out of the Big Book), provided a new awareness of the lurking demons (grosser handicaps) that had kept me drunk year after year. These destructive fiends freely frolicked in my unapproachable subconscious. They were protected from the Sunlight- Of-The-Spirit of truth by a dense dark and distorted fog of falsehood and deceit. This Fourth Step awareness did not make them disappear, but, at least, I had found honest information for use in Step Five. Someone said, "The truth will set you free," but I have come to believe there is more to it than simple awareness. I have found that continued action is needed to face and be rid of my now-obvious shortcomings and defects. This was to take place in Step Five.

Following my Fifth, I knew what imperfections to ask God to remove in Steps Six and Seven. It was very important that I acted before my mind decided to remember only what it wanted to remember. I believe that the Big Book timetable is very important here! We are told to do Step Four 'at once,' Step Five at 'First opportunity,' review for a short period and 'then' (not later) do Step Six, go right into Step Seven 'when ready.' My sponsor helped me via the Big Book time-table directions. I haven't had a drink of booze since!

— Bob S., Richmond, IN



THE EVER PRESENT NOW
(For M.)

The morning wakens clear with blue, and bright,
Or blackened skies retaining darkest night.
In either case, the day is newly born;
The ever present now defines the morn.

So, tender is the day in sun or storm,
Cold wind and rain is naught - my heart is warm.
Soft prayers bring a peace I can't describe,
And meditation hums its healing vibe.

I marvel at the planet's mystery
Each morning newly starting history.
My yesterdays are locked behind a door;
Tomorrows and todays will I explore.

New joy, new love, new life is all about,
Exhilaration has me moved to shout
"Hell, yes" to life; and universe please bless
Each moment's preciousness - I ask no less.

So bathe me now in newness, freshness too,
A magic ne'er-beforeness that's my due.
My heart is true; my naked soul is white;
My mind's in gentle peace, as all is right.

Bob K.
Twelve Traditions Group (Pickering)

BETTER TIMES

announcements & archives

MEDALLIONS											
Sidrah A.	10	St. Clements	April 26	Ed H.	45	Pine Hills	May 1	Maureen K.	1	Willowdale	May 25
Mike P.	20	Willowdale	April 27	Audrey M.	20	Lakeshore	May 7	Corinne S.	1	Willowdale	May 25
Rod McL.	35	Rexdale United	April 27	Mike D.	45	North Toronto	May 9	Louise M.	5	Markland Wood	June 1
Alex	1	Spiritual Kindergarten	April 28	Terry T.	40	North Toronto	May 9	Manuel L.	25	Portuguese	June 15
Joan	40	Half Century Group	April 30	Eddy G.	30	Beaches	May 16				
Charlene S.	35	Keep It Simple	April 30	Rich G.	10	Fifth Tradition	May 23				

Due to ongoing submissions this list may not be current. For the latest information visit: www.aatoronto.org

I FOUND IT IN THE ARCHIVES

BACK TO THE REPOSITORY... with GTA Archivist Eddy G.
Archives Committee meetings are held on the 2nd Friday of each month in the boardroom at the GTA Intergroup Office, 234 Eglinton Ave. E., Suite 202, Toronto.

75th ONTARIO REGIONAL CONFERENCE COMMEMORATIVE BOOKLET
The GTA Archives Committee is putting together a history celebrating the ORC in 2018. This is an opportunity for members to share significant events important to this history. Please contact the GTA Archivist Eddy G. at 416-536-7536.

50 YEARS THE HISTORY OF A.A. IN ONTARIO

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

50 Years – The History of AA in Ontario is for sale at the Literature Department at 234 for \$10.00. This book was produced in 1993 by the Archives Committee of Toronto Intergroup (today GTA Intergroup). It's a great gift to give to a member on their anniversary.

... and please don't forget ...

Old GTA meeting books are needed for the GTA Archives.

DO YOU KNOW YOUR GROUP HISTORY? IS IT WRITTEN OUT ON PAPER?
IF NOT, ASK YOUR GROUP LONGTIME MEMBER(S) IF THEY WOULD ANSWER THE GROUP HISTORY QUESTIONS BELOW AND SUBMIT A COPY TO THE GTA ARCHIVES.

☐ What was the founding date of the group; if unsure, when do you think the founding date was?

☐ What was the group's name when it was formed? Why was the name chosen?

☐ Has the group's name changed over the years? If so, when did it change and why?

☐ How did the group get started? Who were the founders of the group? (If uncertain, who may have started the group?)

☐ Were there any spin-offs of your group? Was your group created as a spin-off? What group did it spin-off from?

☐ When the group started, how often were meetings held? Has this changed over the years?

☐ What was the format of the meeting (open, closed, discussion, speaker, etc.)? Has this changed over the years?

☐ Any item(s) made by a group member(s) that is used at the meeting? (i.e. table cover, slogans, slogan board, wooden steps, book holders, painted pictures etc.) If so, who made them and in what year?

☐ Does the group hold social or special AA related activities? (i.e. holiday parties, candlelite meetings, picnics etc.)

☐ During the group's history has their location, date and time changed? If so, please list. (month/day/year)

☐ How many members are in the group today?

☐ Has there been an increase or decrease of group members over the years? Please describe.

☐ Does the group have any links with Al-Anon or Alateen? If so, what are they and when did they start?

☐ Does the group have any customs, traditions or interesting anecdotes? If so, will you share them?

BETTER TIMES

editorial

A Letter from the Editor



When I was actively drinking, the month of May meant three important things at the time; 1) the opening of patios everywhere, 2) heading back up to the cottage and of course 3) Victoria Day Weekend, ‘May Two-Four’ , with the emphasis placed knowingly on getting wasted. Now, in sobriety, patios are enjoyed in “hair-of-the-dog” free fellowship, weekends at the cottage are full of activity and safe, good behaviour and the number 24 represents something very different because I have a program.

May also symbolizes the truth asked of us in step five when we sit down with our sponsor and reveal our step four lists. This starts the process of cleaning our side of the street. A daunting step the first time taking it because we don't know the freedom that can be found on the other side. In this program, freedom may not be achieved without truth and without sponsorship, truth is a bumpy ride.

The ‘purpose’ detailed in the 5th tradition is critical to our survival. “Shoemaker, stick to thy task! Better to do one thing supremely well than many badly.” A truly great life slogan as well. As alcoholics, we can not be all things to all people and run the whole show alone. This “singleness of purpose” means bringing different things to the table as individuals (we are human after all) but always remaining true to the end goal of unity and carrying the message. Speaking of doing one thing well, please see our calls for service in this issue, we currently have some critical service positions at the Better Times free that badly need filling with skilled and dedicated alcoholics.

Have a great month folks & as always, please send me your musings, thoughts and suggestions!

Yours in Love and Service,

Maija P., Editor-in-Chief

QUOTE OF THE MONTH

“Each Alcoholics Anonymous group ought to be a spiritual entity having but one primary purpose—that of carrying its message to the alcoholic who still suffers.”

- TWELVE STEPS AND TWELVE TRADITIONS, PG. 190

WANT TO CONTRIBUTE? THE BETTER TIMES IS ALWAYS LOOKING FOR CONTENT AND WOULD LOVE TO PUBLISH YOUR STORIES! YOUR UNDERSTANDING OF THE STEPS OR TRADITIONS, THOUGHTS ON THE PRINCIPLES OF THE PROGRAM OR YOUR STORIES OF EXPERIENCE, STRENGTH AND HOPE ARE MOST WELCOME!

EMAIL YOUR IDEAS TO [BETTERTIMES@AATORONTO.ORG](mailto:bettertimes@aatoronto.org)

(SEE PAGE 2 SIDEBAR FOR MORE DETAILS)

info / events



HAVE SOME TIME?
A SERVICE OPPORTUNITY
 AT BETTER TIMES IS
AVAILABLE
 FOR THE POSITION
OF LAYOUT
EDITOR STARTING
 ASAP. PLEASE EMAIL
 BETTERTIMES@AATORONTO.ORG
 FOR A POSITION
DESCRIPTION
 USING "LAYOUT
 EDITOR" IN THE
SUBJECT LINE.

DISTRICT 18 & DISTRICT 22
 PRESENTS:

12th ANNUAL EAST TORONTO ARCHIVES BREAKFAST

SUNDAY JUNE 4th, 2017

QSSIS BANQUET HALL
 3474 KINGSTON RD.
 (Just West of Markham Rd.)

AGENDA

9:00 am-10:00 am - Coffee & Fellowship
 10:00 am-11:00 am - Buffet Breakfast
 11:00 am-12:00 pm - Open Meeting
 12:00 pm-12:30 pm - Prizes & Closing

AMPLE FREE PARKING AVAILABLE
 FULLY ACCESSIBLE & SIGNERS WELCOME

TICKETS ARE AVAILABLE UNTIL WEDNESDAY MAY 31st, 2017

TICKET PRICE \$20.00
TICKETS ARE NOT AVAILABLE AT THE DOOR

FOR MORE INFORMATION & TICKETS PLEASE CONTACT YOUR
 GSR OR

Lynn E. 416-624-8098 Michael A. 416-456-6359
 Tom S. 416-750-9026 John M. 416-277-4285

info / events



38th ANNUAL INFO AA DAY - "ENCOURAGING THE SPIRIT OF SERVICE"

519 CHURCH STREET COMMUNITY CENTRE

SATURDAY, MAY 27, 2017



THE GTA INTERGROUP AND THE GENERAL SERVICE DISTRICTS OF THE GREATER TORONTO AREA,
 PRESENT THE 38th ANNUAL INFORMATION AA DAY ON SATURDAY, MAY 27, 2017 AT THE 519 CHURCH
 STREET COMMUNITY CENTRE. YOUR, "INFORMATION DAY" IS A GREAT OPPORTUNITY TO SEE HOW
 YOU FIT INTO THE SERVICE STRUCTURE. A.A. IS A VERY DIVERSE FELLOWSHIP WITH MANY OPPORTUNITIES
 TO SERVE!

THERE WILL BE AN OPPORTUNITY TO HEAR FROM THE TORONTO YOUNG PEOPLE IN AA (TOYPAA)
 GROUP, A CHANCE TO ASK QUESTIONS ABOUT SERVICE USING THE "ASK-IT-BASKET" AND ENJOY AN
 INVITED A GUEST SPEAKER FROM THE GENERAL SERVICE OFFICE IN NEW YORK TO SHARE THEIR
 EXPERIENCE, STRENGTH AND HOPE.

TICKETS TO THE EVENT ARE \$5.00, WHICH ALSO INCLUDES A POTLUCK LUNCH. YOU ARE WELCOME
 TO BRING ITEMS TO ADD TO THE TABLE. TICKETS ARE AVAILABLE FROM YOUR INTERGROUP REP.,
 YOUR GROUP'S GSR OR AT THE DOORS WHICH OPEN AT 8AM. WE ARE LOOKING FORWARD TO THIS
 YEAR'S EVENT, AND HOPE TO SEE YOU ALL THERE.

YOURS IN SERVICE,

DAVID B.

2017 INFO AA DAY COMMITTEE CHAIR

WOULD YOU LIKE TO SEE YOUR TORONTO AREA GROUP
 FEATURED IN AN UPCOMING ISSUE OF
BETTER TIMES?

Contact us
 bettertimes@aatoronto.org

