



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 Lawrence Plaza Group Requests Your Attendance



1) How many years has the group been active in Toronto?
Lawrence Plaza was established in 1958. We turn 60 in 2018! We are in the Central-North part of the city which is a meeting “lite” location. We would love to have a more robust attendance!

2) What do you like about your Home Group? What makes it great for the newcomer?
In the summer we often move our closed meeting to the church

back garden patio and in the winter we enjoy a crackling warm fire in the church lounge. Our group is small which makes it welcoming to the newcomer.

3) What is the format of your closed meeting? Open Meeting?

Both our meetings are held on Sunday evening. The closed meeting (7-8pm) is either a Step One discussion or a Big Book review. The open meeting (8-9pm) is typically a speaker meeting but we do celebrate medallions as well.

4) Are there opportunities for service?

We welcome all opportunities for service be it set-up, meeting readers and chairpersons and speakers. When you attend the open meeting, there are details about how to participate.

5) Does the location have parking? Is it close to a subway station?

We are located only steps Lawrence subway station behind the Fire Hall at the St. Leonard’s Church (925 Wanless Ave). The subway has both up and down escalators. In terms of parking, there is church and street parking for our meetings.

A.A. in South Africa - Happy Hour Group



It was almost as if they knew I was coming. It was almost, in fact, as if they knew exactly where I was coming from. In the ways that really matter, I suppose they did. When I showed up at the doors of the Happy Hour-Bryanston Group of A.A. in Johannesburg, South Africa, on the last Monday night in January, the windows and doors were open to the warm summer evening, and the scent from the lush gardens on the grounds of St. Michael’s Church perfumed the summer breeze. If the weather in the southern hemisphere was a little upside down to this travelling Canadian, my first AA meeting in South Africa was utterly familiar.

Ian, a Belfast ex-pat who had grown up about an hour’s drive from where my father was born and sobered up in Johannesburg, was celebrating 40 years of continuous sobriety. So naturally there was cake. And - impressing a North Toronto member to no end - there were china cups for the coffee and tea, just the way my group once did it. Ian’s story of experience, strength and hope outlining “what it was like, what happened and what it’s like now” was recognizable to A.A.s from anywhere in the world. To a visitor from halfway around the world, greeted warmly by people who were soon like old friends, the meeting was, but for a few tweaks here and there, just

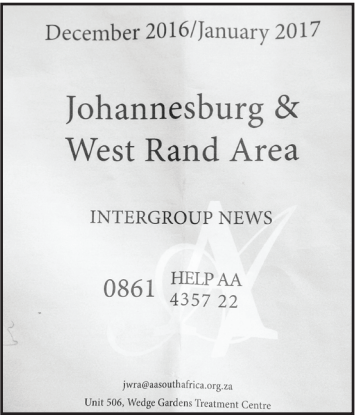
like being at home. It turned out that in 1977, after a night that ended in a Joburg police cell, Ian found himself sick and tired of being sick and tired and ready to do something about it. In the days and weeks that followed, he joined AA. His wife joined Al-Anon. His children joined Alateen. Ian and his family - most of whom were on hand that evening, including his grandchildren who had known only a sober Grampa - found in the church basements in South Africa a design for living and a new way of life. Ian told me that over his 40-year journey he had been to world conferences in Toronto and Montreal and loved Canada.

When I returned to the Happy Hour group two weeks later, I was greeted like a returning relative. John was speaking that February night. He was a local World Service rep, one of two from South Africa who had been to the annual

2016 GSO Conference in New York. John reported thoroughly to the attendees on the state of A.A. in South Africa. There were an estimated 5,000 A.A. members in South Africa, he said, but more still suffering alcoholics to help. There were plans to print the Big Book domestically in Afrikaans, Xhosa, Zulu and other languages to better reach the multilingual country (with its 11 official languages) and to reduce costs of of importing Big Books in those languages. John also said that A.A. in South Africa played a large role in the southern part of the continent, providing head office support to groups in Zimbabwe and Namibia, countries to the north that lacked the organizational infrastructure.

Another Happy Hour member said he was coming later in the year to Canada. So phone numbers were exchanged along with the stories. Kindredness was instant and the comfort of finding AA fellowship so far from home was testament to the power of what our founders created in 1935 in Akron, Ohio. Walking into a church on the other side of the world also made me realize that we A.A.s are given the gift - no matter the miles traveled - of never being very far from home.

— Jim C., North Toronto Group



BETTER TIMES

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

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How To Reach Us: 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), by mail, fax or email. Only signed submissions with a means of contact will be accepted. For subscriptions call Alexx at 416-487-8110 or subscribe at: www.aatoronto.org

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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DONT GET BAFFLED WORD SEARCH

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ACTION	COFFEE
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ALCOHOLISM	FELLOWSHIP
ANONYMITY	GRAPEVINE
ARCHIVES	GSO
AUTONOMY	HONESTY
BIG	MEDALLION
BILLWILSON	SLOGANS
BOOK	VOICE
CHAIRPERSON	WILLINGNESS

BETTER TIMES

anniversary

Celebrating 60 Years with The Welcome Group

Sunday, April 23rd, 8:00 p.m.
Glebe Road Church
2 blocks north of Davisville Ave.,
1 block east of Yonge St.

You Are No Longer Alone.

This simple message of comfort and reassurance, hand-lettered decades ago onto a big piece of canary-yellow cardboard, has greeted untold thousands of newcomers attending their first meeting of the Welcome Group. For many, this was their first meeting of A.A. anywhere as they took the initial steps on the road to recovery.

Welcome Group members have not been content to wait until the suffering alcoholic stumbles through its doors. The Group has a strong tradition of service in the Fellowship of A.A. carrying the message of hope into detox's, jails, treatment centres and mental institutions, to probation and parole offices. Indeed, anywhere that 12th Step work is carried out; you will often find a Welcome Group member helping to carry the message.

Groups are the foundation of our Fellowship and the Welcome Group has been providing that foundation since April 21th, 1957 for so many who today are living happy, useful, productive lives.

The Group extends an invitation to members of A.A. across the GTA and beyond, especially to those who are alumni of the Welcome Group, to attend on April 23rd and join in the celebration of 60 continuous years of service.

Dermot K., a Group member since 1981, will chair the meeting featuring talks from 3 long-time members.

The Welcome Group promises a warm celebration involving food, refreshments and, above all, fellowship.



BETTER TIMES

announcements & archives

PAST / UPCOMING MEDALLIONS									
Paula C.	10	St. Clement's Group	Jan 4	Jan 25	Mark L.	10	Traditional Group	Mar 20	Mar 21
Ray R.	10	Last Chance Group	Jan 29	Jan 31	Steven M.	20	Willowdale Group	Mar 18	Mar 23
Jamie O.	15	Willowdale Group	Jan 30	Feb 2					
Susan S.	1	King City Group	Jan 8	Feb 6	Steven S.	1	Last Chance Group	Mar 19	Mar 28
Brad W.	1	King City Group	Jan 12	Feb 6	Lance C.	30	Willowdale Group	Mar 27	Mar 30
Robbie R.	35	King City Group	Jan 26	Feb 6	Phillip D.	1	East York Group	Feb 23	Mar 28
Mark P.	15	Erin Mills Group	Feb 7	Feb 13	Doug M.	5	Saturday Night Live	Mar 30	Apr 8
Valerie B.	35	North Toronto Group	Feb 14	Feb 14	Gary S.	15	Frontrunners Group	Apr 8	Apr 8
Mike S.	10	West York Group	Jan 6	Feb 19	Dave B.	5	Beaches Group	Mar 22	Apr 11
Dave H.	25	Beaches Group	Mar 27	Feb 28	Nancy W.	5	Rexdale United Group	Apr 9	Apr 13
Gerry P.	35	Markland Wood Group	Mar 1	Mar 2	Peter H.	1	Beaches Group	Apr 12	Apr 18
Gord H.	30	Bloordale Group	Feb 27	Mar 5	Joe A.	25	Beaches Group	Apr 11	Apr 25
Penny L.	15	Agincourt Acorn Group	Feb 3	Mar 7	Alex	1	Spiritual Kindergarten	Apr 1	Apr 28
Emily L.	1	Primary Purpose Group	Mar 6	Mar 8	'Joan The Hat' 40		Half Century Group		Apr 30
Alyssa B.	5	Maple Group	Mar 14	Mar 14	Eddy G.	30	Beaches Group	Apr 27	May 16
Jesse P.	1	Pathfinders Group	Mar 14	Mar 15					

IN THE LISTINGS, THE FIRST DATE IS THE SOBRIETY DATE, THE SECOND IS THE DATE OF THE MEDALLION CELEBRATION
Due to ongoing submissions this list may not be current. For the latest information visit: www.aatoronto.org

WOMEN IN RECOVERY & BETTER TIMES

Here at your Better Times we publish stories of recovery, struggle, and hope from AAs all over the GTA and beyond. We have had the pleasure of including many stories FROM women in recovery FOR women in recovery. We would like to continue doing so.

If you are a woman in recovery in the GTA, please get in touch...we would be happy to publish your story.
bettertimes@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.

Recent items donated to the GTA Archives:

- 7- GV's (March 2014, July 2014, Sept. 2014, Aug. 2016, Sept. 2016, Oct. 2016, Nov. 2016) & AA Service Manual combined with 12 Concepts for World Services 2007-2008 Edition. Donated by John P. (Bloordale Group).
- 18th Annual GTA Archives Breakfast Nov. 2002- 3 flyers & 4 tickets, ORC 2016 Program, Box 459- 2-Spring 2012, Summer 2012, Winter 2012, Winter 2013, General Service Conference 2013 Final Report, Toronto Star Article 2003 "A Sobering Way to Look at Drinking". Donated by Bob D. Archives Chair District 02 Malton.
- 103 Cassette Tapes – 79 Local AA Speakers & 24 Out of Town Speakers. Belonged to Joe B. (Royal York Group) who passed away in July 2016 with 33 yrs of sobriety & were donated by Laurie B. (Royal York Group) wife of Joe.

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.

BETTER TIMES

editorial

RULE #62

DON'T TAKE YOURSELF TOO SERIOUSLY

As I write this, we are experiencing what I hope is the last March blast of winter for us in the GTA and the 2017 "Action is the Key" ORC has just wrapped up. We hope you all had a lovely time enjoying fellowship, grabbing snacks & a break at the various hospitality suites and of course, hearing the inspirational and wide ranging speakers the event program had to offer.

A heartfelt congratulations and thank you to all the trusted servants of AA, Alanon and Alateen responsible for yet

DID YOU KNOW?

that in April 1939 the Big Book was first published? 4,700 copies were published.

GTA Archivist - Thanks Eddy G.

A Letter from the Editor

another successful ORC weekend!

As you read this, it will be April. Ahhh April, the month of renewal. The longer days push a smile onto my face, I get to pull out my rain boot collection and dust the winter off me with an ever so slight spring in my step. Speaking of dusting off.... Our fourth step is all about honesty and a program spring cleaning, if you will. April also represents tradition four's theme of autonomy - that "\$10 word" reminding us to keep it simple, put sobriety first and pull out Rule 62, "Don't take yourself too damn seriously"*, whenever possible. Something this alcoholic must put into action all the time!

Have a great month folks!

(*Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions, pg. 149)

— Yours in Service, Maija P.

QUOTE OF THE MONTH

“ They are naturally incapable of grasping and developing a manner of living which demands rigorous honesty. ”

- BIG BOOK, PG. 58

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)

Contact Us

Phone Greeters Needed

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.

Phone training is now the first Sunday of every month - call the office at 234 or contact the 12-Step Committee to book an appointment.

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info / events

2017 Retreat at Queen of Apostles Centre

I have attended this retreat several times in the past and recommend it to anyone who is looking for a peaceful and serene weekend away surrounded by AA friends, insight and valuable sharing.

This centre, located in Mississauga, although not far from city life and traffic, feels so far removed from the routines and stresses of everyday living. There is usually a mix of men and women attending, from different groups throughout the city. It is a great opportunity to meet new friends. This is basically a Twelve Step Study. There is a theme for the weekend, and members are invited to speak on the steps, starting with One Two and Three the first evening and continuing throughout the weekend. Feedback is then provided by other attendees. Each session is followed by breaking up into small groups to discuss further. This can be most helpful as, as long as I keep my mind open and receptive, new insights and varied points of view emerge.

The rooms at the Centre are comfortable and cozy, looking out on the very pleasant grounds of the Centre. Walking around these grounds is also a beautiful and relaxing experience. One can also descend (and ascend!) a path down to the Credit River which flows beside the prop-

erty. Meals are provided and are excellent. Staff is friendly and there is plenty of varied literature available.

At the beginning of the weekend we are invited to write down any negative emotions, resentments or issues we may wish to discard and be rid of: on Sunday morning after the conclusion of Steps 11 and 12, these are crumpled up and ceremoniously burned in the little courtyard outside where there is a lovely lily pond.

When I have attended these retreats in the past, I have felt great benefit from doing so. I feel there is a slightly different feeling each time, perhaps because of different personnel and what may be going on with me personally. I felt a strong spiritual connection with the group and my Higher Power. Everyone seemed to share honestly and profoundly and felt safe to do so. There is a lot of intensity in the small groups and powerful emotions can emerge. If one goes with a goal of renewal it can certainly be accomplished after the weekend.

I hope AA members will be encouraged to attend this retreat, it is well worth while.

— Ann C., Lakeshore Group

12th Annual East Toronto Archives Breakfast

Just as the snow drops have peeked out, anticipating the spring, Districts 18 and 22 Archives Committees have been looking forward to hosting this event.

Toronto is a big enough place to support two Archives Breakfasts per year. There is the annual November celebration held in the west end, just across the line in Mississauga, and for those who love Archives, and can't get enough, we present the spring offering in Scarborough. It will already be our 12th Annual East Toronto Archives Breakfast, to be held, once again, at the QSSIS Banquet Hall, 3474 Kingston Road, just west of Markham Road, on June 4th, 2017. Coffee will be poured, and the fun and fellowship starts at 9 am. Breakfast will be served at 10. I mean, that's what we all came for, right.... breakfast? Well, wait, there's more!

At 11 am we will be having an open speaker meeting featuring someone who was a newcomer over 50 years ago. In my view, the whole point of Archives is to record both the changes which have occurred in the Fellowship, and also to keep track of the fundamental principles of recovery, which continue to remain timeless, as we grow

and evolve in this changing world. While documentation and the Archives repository have proven essential to this task, they remind us that Alcoholics Anonymous started as one alcoholic talking to another.

As time has gone by, and long-time members pass on to the Spirit World, I have come to increasingly value and appreciate the face to face sharing of their experience, strength and hope. To do so with a bunch of recovering alcoholics in one room, whether in service, or a small meeting, or a banquet hall, makes no difference. We carry the message because, as my passed sponsor used to remind me, this is a "We" program. He said that the only thing we can do on our own is drink. For everything else we need to be involved with fellow members in recovery.

So on behalf of Districts 18 and 22 Archives Committees, I cordially invite all to attend the East Toronto Archives Breakfast this June 4th. It's still only \$20 bucks. Tickets are available until Wednesday May 31st 2017. Proceeds will go to Districts 18 and 22 Archives Committees to help preserve our history, which continues to be an essential part of carrying the message.

DID YOU KNOW?

that on April 20-22, 1951
the first General Service
Conference took place at the
Commodore Hotel in New
York City?

info / events

2017 Retreat at Queen of Apostles Centre

BEYOND
HUMAN AIDShare In A Weekend Of
Spiritual Fellowship

Date: April 21 - 23, 2017

Where: Queen of Apostles Renewal Centre
1617 Blythe Rd. Mississauga ON L5H 2C3

Time: Check In Friday April 21, 2017 - 7:00pm

Cost: **\$240/person - \$370/couple**
- all meals, snacks and accommodations
(no dinner Friday night)

**Directions:**

Traveling east or west on QEW, take Mississauga Road exit and go North for about 2.5 km. Turn right onto Doulton Drive. Go one block, turn left on Blythe Road. Turn into the second driveway on your right.

BEYOND
HUMAN AIDA Weekend Of
Spiritual Fellowship
April 21 - 23, 2017

Queen Of Apostles
Renewal Centre

1617 Blythe Road
Mississauga ON L5H 2C3

Visit Facility at
www.qoa.ca