



Gratitude Is An Action Word

A little over 10 years ago, I made the decision to stop drinking and drugging. My best thinking had led me to the doorstep of Alcoholics Anonymous, at age 19. I woke up every morning with an obsession and a craving. These dictated my thinking and actions and quickly made my life unmanageable. This, coupled with my frequent encounters with the police, made it clear that things were not going so well for me. After another 6 months of banging my head against the wall knowing I was an alcoholic and just not caring, I finally accepted the simple program that was freely and lovingly offered to me.

Since that time, seemingly every aspect of my life has improved. I have a beautiful and loving girlfriend. We share a healthy, honest relationship. We just purchased our first home together, something I would have been incapable of doing when I was drinking. I have a job that I really enjoy, gives me flexibility and pays the bills. I have an incredible relationship with my family. My friends actually care about me and share common interests. Internally, I have developed self-worth and self-confidence. I am generally pretty happy and serene. I am comfortable in social situations even if I happen to be the only sober person. I am an example to others and have

become dependable and trustworthy. I have learned who I am as a person and, in short, I love my life.

After going through such a drastic transformation, how could I not feel grateful all the time? The truth is I can forget or lose sight of how incredible things are. Life happens, and it is easy to get caught up and not be grateful. I have heard the saying "Gratitude is an action word." What does this mean? For me it means that to truly enjoy what I have and feel true gratitude I have to take action. In my experience this is helping other people, staying accountable, going to AA meetings, prayer, meditation, connecting with my higher power and not taking people, places and things for granted. Vigilantly working with others gives me a barometer for how far I have come and how good things are. Also relevant is the way I act towards the things I am grateful for. For example, I am grateful for my job, but if I am lazy, ignore my responsibilities complain all the time and gossip, it is very difficult to feel gratitude. This is not to say that I am incapable of feeling any modicum of gratitude if I am not immersed in action. I have found, however, that my gratitude is amplified when I am fully working my program.

October is Gratitude Month

*It is not happy people
who are thankful.
It is thankful people
who are happy.*

masthead & service

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.

Jobs & Notices...

- Volunteers are needed for both Phone Greeters (1 year of continuous sobriety and 1 phone training session required) and 12 Step List (especially women and speakers of languages other than English).

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.

- Access Ability Committee seeking members for a "Buddy List" for members who are homebound or otherwise can't access meetings.

- Correctional Facilities seeking people for "Bridging the Gap" program. Also, volunteers are required for the correctional facility in District 02. Toronto West also desperately needs volunteers; they have expanded to 'A' Tower with special needs and protective custody and hold meetings directly in the units. Donations of literature are also needed: soft-cover materials are accepted (no staples in the binding), as well as Grapevine donations (without staples).

Check out the new aatoronto.org website.
Toronto meetings are also listed on the Meeting Guide app
- available for Android and iOS!

Communications Committee is seeking volunteers for the following:

Helpers to assist with managing and updating the website.

The Communications Committee (Better Times, Website, etc.) continues to seek two or three dedicated members to help us carry the message of recovery in print and online. If interested, please email communications@aatoronto.org. We'd be delighted to welcome you!

ALSO:

We are no longer using the bteditor@aatoronto.org email address. Please send all correspondence to bettertimes@aatoronto.org. If you've sent any articles for consideration, comments, or questions to the old address, please resend.

ALSO:

We are seeking a new Editor-in-Chief as of January 2017.
Please contact bteditor@aatoronto.org for more info!

Thank you!

TO CONTACT COMMITTEES PLEASE EMAIL:

Access Ability: accessability@aatoronto.org
Archives: archives@aatoronto.org
Communications: communications@aatoronto.org
bettertimes@aatoronto.org
Correctional Facilities: corrections@aatoronto.org

Cooperation with the Professional Community: cpc@aatoronto.org
Finance: finances@aatoronto.org
Ontario Regional Conference: orc@aatoronto.org
Public Information: publicinfo@aatoronto.org
12th Step: twelfthstep@aatoronto.org

editorial & sharing

Thoughts From the Editor's Desk

Gratitude: a state of being grateful

Grateful: warmly or deeply appreciative of kindness or benefits received; thankful; feeling or showing thanks; showing or expressing thanks, especially to another person

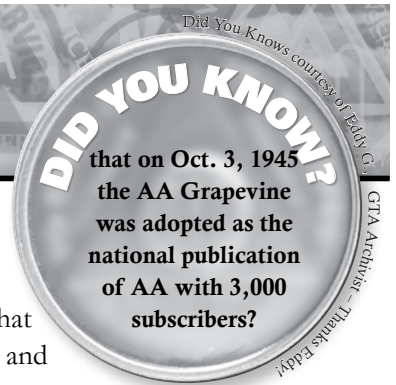
These are a few of the online dictionary definitions of the word "grateful". It seems clear to me that being grateful supposes some kind of action. In recovery, we are led on a path of service, where we learn to express our gratitude by giving back what has been so freely given to us. We shake hands and welcome newcomers, make coffee, distribute literature, stack chairs, sponsor others, sit on committees, chair meetings, and share our stories of defeat, surrender, and transformation.

Sometimes we show our gratitude by observing the 7th Tradition,

contributing a fraction of what we used to spend on booze and drugs into the AA coffers. Our money pays the rent at our local meeting, buys coffee and literature, and, if we have a big enough group, goes to other levels of service - District, Intergroup, Area, and GSO. As October is Gratitude Month, I plan on making an extra contribution to our GTA Intergroup - the service body that maintains our local website, prints meeting books and this publication, plans and organizes the ORC, Info Day, and the Winter Season Open House, and operates the 24/7 AA Toronto phone line among other things.

How about you?

Marc S. - Editor-in-Chief (bettertimes@aatoronto.org)



Beyond Freedom From Alcohol

When I first came into the rooms I thought that all that I wanted and needed was freedom from alcohol but really that was only the beginning! It was the start of both facing my problems, many of which I had not even realized that I had, and of achieving freedom from them; a freedom that I had been thirsting for my entire life but had not even known.

Once I had put down the drink all of those problems came crashing in and I did not have my trusted solution, alcohol, to deal with them. Anxiety, depression, regret, guilt, shame, self-pity and worst of all a mind that obsessively thought about all of these things and continued to create new problems every chance that it got plagued me night and day. As I continued in recovery, I became more aware that my thoughts and feelings were the cause of my problems and things got worse as I came to realize that I had almost as much control over them as I did over the outside world, which is to say: almost none!

I quickly noticed that my first thought in any given situation was almost always inappropriate. Given my lack of control over the first thought, I got even more frustrated thinking that I was not making any progress. Slowly but surely I came to accept that I could not always control my thoughts and feelings and that that they did not define me! After I have that first thought I can make a decision as to whether it is appropriate and if it's not, I can reframe my perspective and decide what my second

and third thought is going to be. It is the second or third thought and, more importantly, my actions that define me as the person that I want to be rather than that first automatic thought. This disassociation from my own mind - a mind that is constantly trying to create problems from any given situation - provides me with an immense feeling of freedom.

My mind can also be obsessive about a lot of things including resentments, regrets, fear, etc. Once it locks onto one of those things, it can be almost impossible to get them out of my head. At first, when I was obsessing about something I believed that my thoughts on that situation were the be all and end all, the absolute truth and of course the single most important thing in the universe but they were none of those things. My mind likes to constantly spin stories about situations, most of which are wrong and only lead me to feeling worse. Once I'm able to accept that I cannot force these obsessive thoughts out of my head and realize that they are not the truth, and that they did not define me, I become free to place them in perspective. Where my thoughts used to be like a child screaming for attention in the passenger seat, which I just could not ignore or get rid of, I found that I could move them to the back seat so to speak, where they would continue to scream but I could now more easily focus on what I was doing. Eventually, they become little more than a distraction.

continued on back page

It's Never Too Late to Have a Good Childhood

It's true. We believed everything they said. And didn't say. Everything they did. And didn't do. Everything was always about us. Before we learned to speak we had emotional memories, even on the change table! However privileged our childhoods, we always remembered the bad stuff. Just like vacuum cleaners, we only picked up the dirt. Sometimes it wasn't even dirt.

For it was not what they said, it's what we heard. Not what happened, but what we chose to remember. Did the mother really say, "Don't ever let anyone touch you down there"? Or was she just concerned that all her daughters would have teenage pregnancies? Or was the misunderstanding ours?

A guy once told his AA sponsor that he always had long hair because he had big ears. Then years later he remembered returning home from school and hearing his mother gossiping on the phone with his aunt about the neighbours. She would say, "Guess who's got big ears and just returned from school!" then put the phone down.

What is worse is that we are all great colluders with the truth. This is how we feel, so this is what happened. And we want affirmations of who we think we are. Alcohol worked so well for us as far as validations were concerned. We picked up an iced glass of lager, tasted that wonderful first sip, and then felt like shit for the rest of our lives.

Feeling bad about ourselves is a habit we have to break.

Someone told me once that as teenagers she and her underage sister had bedrooms on the same corridor. Her sister was consistently sexually abused by a member of family, but she wasn't. Despite the sister having a lifetime of counseling and troubled relationships, she herself was troubled to imagine what was wrong with her that she would be rejected in this way? We can choose to cling on to anything.

But the better barometer of the truth is who we are today. And here is the truth, we're not only survivors, but survivors who made it into AA. If we truly want to make a break and find ourselves (it is a choice) we have to let it all go and live in the now. It's all we have, so why not take a risk? Certainly people we meet don't see or recognize any of this stuff that consumes our inner beings. They see a noble mansion, not the rooms we painted inside.

Now that we are sober many of us discover that we're not at all who we thought we were. I thought I had a terrible childhood, but now I know it was beautiful and blessed. Once I thought all men were all predators and abusers, now I see my father and all men differently. Often this growth is achieved by leaving that pasture of the childhood we thought we had, and entering a smaller

unknown one, perhaps with only one tree. At first it's very unfamiliar, even more so when someone says, "What a nice tree!"

How wonderful are those affirmations and validations that in the end we find inside us. When we come to AA, affirmations are important and surprising. Though we often rejected that hug of welcome, or even worse hearing from people we'd never met tell us 'how they love us' (ugh!) it is of course validations and affirmations of the 'new us' that help us find our way. Soon we have a forest. Why? Because we're all beautiful. It's worth thinking about.

- Richard C., Here & Now



DID YOU KNOW?
that in Oct. 1937
AA meetings weekly
at Bill & Lois home
at 182 Clinton St.
Brooklyn, the first
NY AA group?

Phone Duty at 234: Be There and Care

I was asked to write a little 'blurb' on Phone Duty by our Twelfth Step Chair, and I thought it was a great opportunity to practice Gratitude! So here goes...

My then sponsor, Noreen F. (Thorncliffe Park Group) suggested I start doing phone duty. It was 1997 and I was about one and a half years sober...and I was terrified! I knew from Noreen and other service-oriented members

order to care and share; being present and accountable are skills that I would have never been able to practice if I was actively drinking. Thirdly, I have learned to be patient. It tells me in the GSO Guidelines sheet on AA Answering Services to 'Please remember that alcoholics and members of their families who call for help are sick people; dealing with them can sometimes be frustrating unless this is kept in mind'.

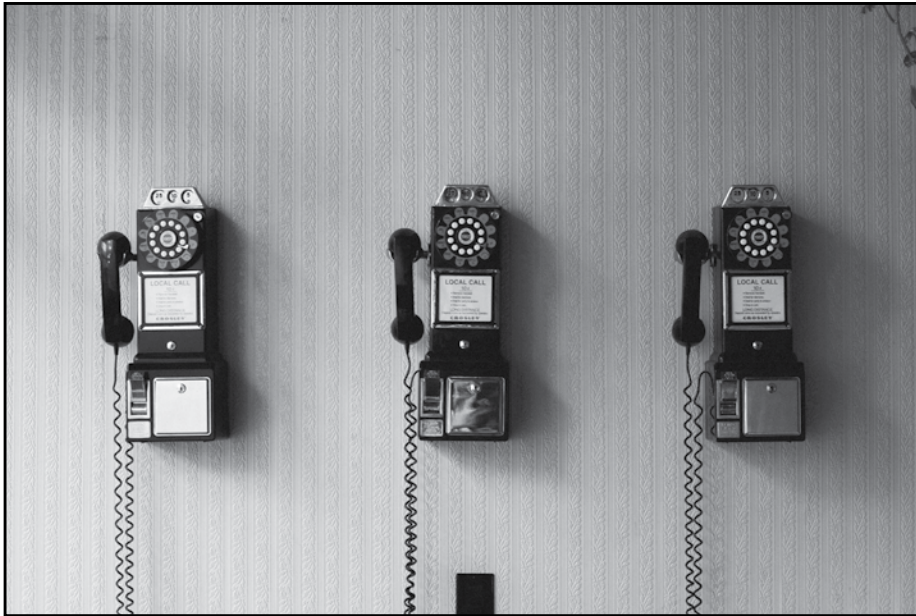
I don't know how many members I have met who came in through the doors of AA by calling the hotline at the Intergroup Office, and have such gratitude that someone was there for them, listened with compassion, and gave them basic 'tips' on attending their very first meeting ("Don't drink if you can" "Show up early" "Go to the library table, tell them you're new, and that you would like a Meeting Directory" "If you're not too shy, ask for some phone numbers from members at the meeting"). Over and over again I hear the relief in their voice that, when they made that first call for help, someone was there for them on the other end of the phone; some-

one who got their pain and gave them some hope and direction in a kind, simple, and meaningful way.

I wish I could gather up those members and have them share their story about that first call; they could relate it much better than I can! However, as a Phone Greeter I can share that over the years I have met some fine volunteers, had some excellent sharing and caring in between phone calls, and have always left my shift feeling useful and 'plugged in' to the fellowship of the spirit. I love the simplicity of giving back what was so freely given to me. I love the "Remember Whens" I get when I hear that voice on the other end of the line – someone full of fear and confusion that wants a new way of life and to talk to someone who understands.

To me, service on the phones is a very immediate and practical way of expressing my 'Attitude of Gratitude'! I encourage new members with one year of continuous sobriety to check it out; it's a great way to feel comfortable in engaging in service beyond the group level and a fun, practical way to join the AA 'service family' in the GTA!

- Alexx V., St. Clements Group



like her that service beyond the group level was super-important and an opportunity to not only grow in sobriety but grow up utilizing the spiritual principles of the Twelve Traditions and to actively practice the ideals outlined in the Responsibility Pledge.

The 'terrified' part came as a result of two things: I was still actively stuck in self-centred fear, and also I didn't want to make a mistake whilst carrying the message of hope; a factor so very important to me and one I take very much to heart as I know that this disease of alcoholism is an affliction that can kill. I wanted to make sure I got it right.

Noreen told me two things: "Get over yourself, girl!" and "All you can do is suit up, show up, answer the phone politely and share your experience, strength and hope - then for goodness sakes send them to a meeting!" This I could do, and I have been continuing with phone duty, off and on, over the past 19 years.

As a phone greeter, I have learned several things. Firstly, it has taught me to be consistent and to be on time. Secondly, I learned that I don't have to be 'perfect' in

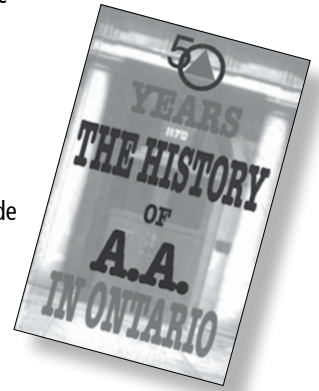
archives & sharing

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.

- Two Grapevines- June 2016 & July 2016 issues donated by the Sunnyside Group.
- Wooden frame w/ glass of the Serenity Prayer belonging to the Harmony Group received from The Church of the St. Mark in Parkdale were the former group met.
- 12 Traditions pamphlet printed on front Intergroup Reception Centre and Offices, 2 Gerrard St. W. & printed on inside the 12 Traditions, also received AA pamphlet printed by S.E. Penna.-Intergroup Assn., Philadelphia, Pennsylvania printed on front A Guide For Living & printed on the inside Just For Today & printed on the back Yesterday-Today-Tomorrow donated by Patti (Bayview Group).
- Box 459 Spring 2016 (2), Fall 2015 (2), Winter 2015 (1) Issues. GTA Archives Breakfast 1/4 " Flyers - 2013 (2), 2012 (2). Kingsway Group Pamphlet & 70th Anniv. Flyer donated by Bob D. District 02.



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.

The Importance of Step 10

My AA life began after my first meeting, but then in a different sense it really didn't begin till I learned the AA program of action and put it into practice. At first, I thought just going to meetings and trying to practice the Twelve Steps as written on the clubhouse wall was living AA on a daily basis. Indeed, I had found a new happiness and developed many new wonderful friends. My phone was ringing off the hook and I was going to loads of meetings and coffee houses with AA friends afterward. I was a regular social butterfly! I was involved with a religious organization and remained very busy. Yet I had not actually gone through the Twelve Step process with a sponsor. What's the hurry—I'm really doing well aren't I? Well, maybe not!

One night I was alone on Hollywood Boulevard after a parade and somehow marched into a bar on Las Palmas Blvd; on my lips were: "Gin & tonic please!" Thank God those words were never spoken! Rushing home, I prayed that God would bring a sponsor to take me through the steps and in a few weeks He did. Of course, one of the major parts of my post-step life was Step Ten - which I

could never have done until I had learned, and lived, the middle steps:

- 1) Continue to watch for selfishness, dishonesty, resentment, and fear - Step Four
- 2) When these crop up, we ask God at once to remove them - Steps Six & Seven
- 3) We discuss them with someone immediately - Step Five
- 4) and make amends quickly if we have harmed anyone - Steps Eight & Nine
- 5) Then we resolutely turn our thoughts to someone we can help.

Love and tolerance of others is our code. (from page 84 of the Big Book)

So, had I been living in the spirit of Step Ten, I would never have marched into that bar to begin with, and even if I had, I would have asked God at once to put me back on the beam. I have not had to drink since my first AA meeting—a long time ago—but if not for Step Ten, I certainly would have.

- Bob S.

announcements

PAST / UPCOMING MEDALLIONS

Anthony D.	1	The Hill Group	July 27	Aug 4	Edward A.	10	Lakeshore Group	Sep 19	Sep 25
Dorothy C.	55	Danforth Group	Aug 2	Aug 4	Christopher J.	5	Sunnyside Group	Sep 15	Sep 25
Paul K.	5	New Anchor Group	Aug 18	Aug 18	Wendy M.	20	Bayview Group	Sep 14	Sep 25
Marie B.	1	Anniversary Group	Aug 23	Aug 24	Wendy M.	20	Bayview Group	Sep 14	Sep 25
Harold S.	30	East York Group	Aug 26	Aug 30	Karyn H.	25	New Life Group	Sep 1	Sep 27
Tammy S.	5	Reaching Out Group	Aug 30	Aug 30					
Heather H.	25	Anniversary Group	Aug 18	Aug 31	Unah G.	1	The Hill Group	Sep 26	Oct 6
Carolyn B.	15	Sunnyside Group	Aug 19	Sep 1	Vic K.	2	Rexdale Sat. A.M. Group	Oct 10	Oct 10
Pattie S.	40	Bayview Group	Jul 19	Sep 11	Steve M.	1	Bloordale Group	Oct 5	Oct 16
Chris T.	1	Six Points Group	Sep 5	Sep 12	Harry S.	2	Prince Edward Group	Oct 19	Oct 19
Debe M.	10	New Anchor Group	Sep 1	Sep 15	Peter F.	10	Today Group	Oct 16	Oct 25
Catherine P.	30	Bayview Group	Sep 16	Sep 18					
Ron T.	5	New Anchor Group	Sep 19	Sep 22					
Kelly H.	2	Friendly Group	Sep 23	Sep 23					

*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

Other Announcements

Mississauga Fall Round-Up - The Road to Recovery Saturday, October 1st, 2016 335 Church St, Mississauga \$20 includes lunch, snacks, and speakers!	794 Kingston Rd., Scarborough \$15 The Friendly Group celebrates 65 years! Monday, October 17th, 2016 263 Roncesvalles, Toronto
North Toronto Group - 70 years! Tuesday, October 4th, 2016 35 Lytton Blvd, Toronto	32nd Annual GTA Archives Breakfast Sunday, November 6th, 2016 1036 Lakeshore Rd. E., Miss. \$25
The Bloordale Group - 30 years! Wednesday, October 5th, 2016 4258 Bloor Street West, Toronto	Cornwall & Area - District 60 Annual Conference: "Steps Into Action" November 11th and 12th, 2016 Ramada Inn, 805 Brookdale Ave, Cornwall \$10 Registration / \$45 Banquet
Toronto Gratitude Round-Up October 7th ~ 9th, 2016 552 Church St, Toronto	
5th Annual Scarborough Round-Up Saturday, October 15th, 2016	

Mississauga Fall Round Up

"The Road to Recovery"

Saturday October 1st 2016

in the
BANQUET HALL
of the

Vic Johnston Community Centre
335 Church Street, Mississauga ON

- Plenty of free parking
- Close to Streetsville GO
- Accessible by Transit

8 AM - Registration & Coffee
9 AM - Program Starts
2:30 PM - Closing

Tickets - \$20 includes Hot and Cold Buffet Lunch,
Morning Timbits, Coffee and Tea all day
Featured Speakers:

Marsha S. - AA - from Austin, Texas

Jonathan S. - AA - from Austin, Texas

John B. - AA - from Ajax, ON.

Pat H. - Alanon - from North Toronto Group

Alateen Speaker: TBA

50/50 draw tickets will be sold at the event

For more information, visit our website
www.MississaugaFallRoundUp.org

QUOTE OF THE MONTH

Classic remorse, as all the moralists are agreed, is a most undesirable sentiment. If you have behaved badly, repent, make what amends you can and address yourself to the task of behaving better next time. On no account brood over your wrongdoing.

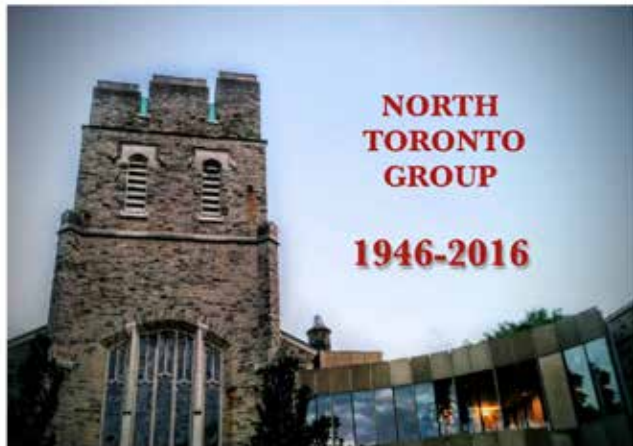
ROLLING IN THE MUCK IS NOT THE BEST WAY OF GETTING CLEAN.

ALDOUS HUXLEY

announcements

DID YOU KNOW?
that on Oct. 15, 1948
the Hill Group started
at Timothy Eaton
Memorial Church in
Toronto?

CELEBRATING 70 YEARS
EXPERIENCE, STRENGTH and HOPE



Tuesday October 4th 2016 at 8:00pm
Eglinton - St. George's United Church
35 Lytton Boulevard (corner of Duplex Avenue)

Alcoholics Anonymous

Cooperation with the Professional Community (CPC) Committees
Oakville-Mississauga-Etobicoke and Malton
(District 6 and District 2)

Present

Bring A Professional Meeting



Tuesday, November 15th, 2016 at 8 pm

St. Cuthbert's Anglican Church
1541 Oakhill Drive (off Maplegrove Drive), Oakville, ON

Members of AA and AI-Anon – bring your doctor, lawyer, accountant, dentist, your coworkers, any professional you know who may come into contact with someone who has a problem with alcohol – to a special meeting aimed simply to educate professionals to what AA is, and what it is not.

Please RSVP to cpc@aamississauga.org

Our Twelfth step – carrying the message – is the basic service that the A.A. Fellowship gives; this is our principal aim and the main reason for our existence. Therefore, A.A. is more than a set of principles; it is a society for alcoholics in action. We must carry the message, else no ourselves can wither and those who have not been given the truth may die.

The A.A. Service Manual "A.A.'s Legacy of Service" p. 31

32nd Annual GTA Archives Breakfast

On Sunday, November 6th at the Oasis Convention Centre, located at 1036 Lakeshore Rd. E. in Mississauga, the GTA Intergroup Archives Committee invites you to our 32nd Annual GTA Archives Breakfast. Coffee will be served at 9 am, buffet breakfast at 10 am, and at 11 am the open meeting will begin.

On August 6th, 1981, Tommy H., then Alternate Delegate Eastern Ontario Area 83, convened a meeting on behalf of the Ontario Provincial Committee to discuss the development of an Archives Repository: a place to gather, preserve and protect our AA history. Present at the first meeting were Al B., Bob D., Whit H. and Neil McV. The Sub-Committee Archives First Annual Breakfast Meeting was held on October 22nd, 1985 and present were Tommy H., Pat B., Orville G. and Don MacD.

The First Archives Breakfast took place on December 1, 1985 and the purpose was to raise funds for the Archives Committee and to do this without obtaining any funds which are earmarked for any other purpose. The GTA Archives Breakfast celebrates the rich history of the Fellowship, acknowledges the dedication of those who have gone before us, to "Passing It On" and to bring awareness about archives.

This year the Open Meeting chairperson will be Wes B. from the Long Branch Group and the guest speaker will be Bev T. from London, Ontario who has over 40 years of sobriety.

We would like to Thank You All for coming to this event and supporting it over the years. This year we are inviting you to come and join us for this Archival Event. Tickets are \$25 and are available from members of the GTA Archives Committee – see our flyer for names and phone numbers.

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Beyond Freedom From Alcohol

So when I find my mind thinking something like: "What did that person really mean when they said that to me the other day?" I have the freedom to choose not go down that rabbit hole where I spend the next few hours or days obsessing about, worrying about and generally suffering through whatever stories that my mind delights in creating.

This freedom from my own mind is truly amazing and it provides me with the opportunity to finally know some serenity! I was after all drinking mostly to escape from my own mind, the thoughts and feelings that caused me such pain and suffering.

Kevin L. – Love & Tolerance