

Produced Monthly for AA Members in the Greater Toronto Area

BETTER TIMES

February
2016



NO LONGER ALONE

73rd ONTARIO REGIONAL CONFERENCE OF ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS

March 11/12/13, 2016

Fairmont Royal York Hotel, Toronto, Ontario

Speakers

Don L. Bellingham WA.
Rich B. Ocean City MD.
Charlie P. Austin TX.
Stacy S. San Antonio TX.

and many more speakers,
from AA, Al-Anon and Alateen

Pre-Registration Early Bird Draws!

Register Online:

www.aatoronto.org

Tel: 416-640-1905

Email: orc@aatoronto.org



**Alcoholics
Anonymous**

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

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Opinions expressed in **BETTER TIMES** are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of Greater Toronto Area Intergroup.

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 bteditor@aatoronto.org. Your anonymity will be protected.

Yours in Service,
The Better Times Staff.

Jobs & Notices...

■ The Communications Committee is seeking volunteers for the following:
Desktop publisher / Graphic designer to assist with the publishing of the **BETTER TIMES**.

Helpers to assist with managing and updating the website – Training videos are forthcoming!

■ 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!

■ 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)

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

■ Twelfth Step Committee seeking secretary and volunteers

■ ORC 2016 needs volunteers as greeters, registration, etc. Website is online!

■ Info AA Day 2016 will be held on May 28th, 2016.

■ Correctional Facilities seeking people for "Bridging the Gap" program

■ We have upgraded the GTAI (Greater Toronto Area Intergroup) website! The site has a new look to allow for greater ease of access to information, such as meeting times, submitting events, finding out about the various GTAI committees, etc. It is also more 'mobile friendly' for smartphone and tablet users. The new site is also available in French, Spanish, Italian, Portuguese, Polish, and Russian, with the translations automatically being provided by Google Translate. Behind the scenes, this upgrade provides greater security and stability by allowing us to use the most current web technologies. Please send us your feedback!

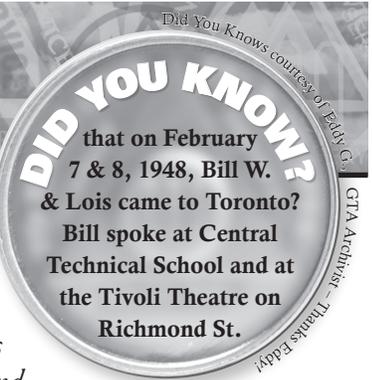
NOTICE:

Eglinton Crosstown construction is at the block which includes 234. Parking in the area will be further restricted and it is being suggested that anyone coming to the Intergroup Office leave plenty of time or take public transportation.

TO CONTACT COMMITTEES PLEASE EMAIL:

Access Ability: accessability@aatoronto.org
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Communications: communications@aatoronto.org
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Public Information: publicinfo@aatoronto.org
Twelfth Step: twelfthstep@aatoronto.org



Thoughts From the Editor's Desk

It took a long time for this alcoholic – thirteen years to be precise – to come to believe that I had a serious problem for which I needed help. Fortunately, it didn't take nearly as long for me to come to believe that a Power greater than myself could restore me to sanity. Before I could really internalize this step, however, I had to recognize the insanity of not only my addiction to alcohol, but the warped perceptions and beliefs I had about just about everything in life.

Going to meetings, sharing in fellowship, and taking on service opportunities exposed me to the healing Power that is the

heart of the AA program. And as I heard your stories of setbacks and triumphs, relapse and recovery, I began to believe that maybe, just maybe, this program could work for me. Over time, the transformations that I had witnessed in the lives of others in the rooms began to happen to me. I was growing up and relating to the world in a more responsible, loving, and caring way. While it was my job to practice honesty, open-mindedness, and willingness, you gave me the hope to persevere.

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

No Longer Alone

When I drank I was looking to escape – to escape my problems I thought I had, the situations I thought I had to endure, the people I thought were against me and, finally, to escape my thoughts themselves.

At the end I didn't even want to be me and live in what I had become. I had removed myself from much of my family connections and from social activities altogether. I truly was alone and, sadly, I wanted it that way.

One day, I finally had enough and reached out for help. My prayer was answered and the help came as a new perspective on life and an introduction to A.A. I was offered a new way of looking at life, one that changed my thoughts of self to one of being in a community – a fellowship with a 'WE' program!

Changes came with real efforts and actions, along with an attitude towards service. The 'WE' program grew around me, and all I had to do was

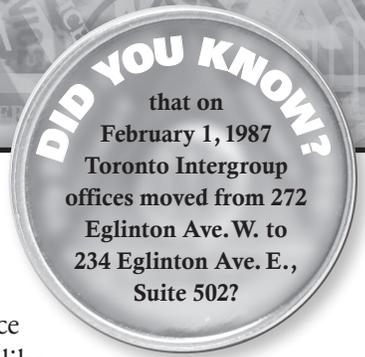
show up to be part of the miracle! The power of the program was more profoundly unveiled to me when I started attending the ORC. I heard one powerful story after another from speakers who traveled great lengths to attend the conference. I felt the strength of the fellowship of people in attendance who listened to and received these powerful messages, and who shared their own stories in the hallways and during the breaks between meetings.

Just by showing up and saying yes to this program, I became part of various committees and have now been invited to have a hands-on role on the ORC committee. The rewards have been immense, one day at a time.

We look forward to seeing you in the rooms and at the ORC!

**- Aaron K.,
Yorkville Group, 2016 ORC PI/Greeter Chair**

spotlight on



The Friendly Group

On January 3rd, 1948, Mel Reagan got sober in AA and later became a member of the Sunnyside Group, which he left after two years because it became “too big”. In October of 1951, the Friendly Group was born and Mel remained there until his passing. Over the 40 years he was there, it is safe to say that Mel was the most widely recognized member of the Friendly Group, and his leisurely guidance made the group a favourite place to go on Mondays in the West End.

The original location was the Parkdale United Church at King and Dunn. Other locations include the basement of a highrise at Dunn and Queen Streets; Masaryk Hall, off Queen; the Cafeteria in the Queen Elizabeth Hospital on Dunn Avenue; and the present location on Roncesvalles Avenue. Here, the group had an Oldtimer’s month every half year and speakers heard there had between forty-six and forty-eight years of sobriety.

During renovations at the Roncesvalles location, the group met in the basement of the West End Vocational School at Bloor and Dundas. Charlie H. received his 5-year medallion

there. The Friendly Group has always had a strong service commitment from members like Chuck D. (in the 60’s) and Bob H. as GSRs, to Steven G. who was Alternate DCM in the 80’s. Other solid members were and are Agnes, Walter and Terry, just to mention a few.

If memory serves us well, Phil B. co-ordinated the Fred Victor Mission meeting for many years, and also did a brief stint as Chairman of Toronto Intergroup. Both Friendly and Sunnyside Group have had meeting places close to each other, and Mel often remarked that he considered the Friendly Group as a sister group to Sunnyside. Any group in existence that long must be doing God’s will, for there is no better proof of a group’s effectiveness as the many people who have received and maintained their sobriety there over the years. It is a fact that the Friendly Group will be here as long as the Higher Power sees fit, and it is hoped that this will be for long into the future.

- Thanks to Dieter N. (Sunnyside) for compiling this history.



women in recovery

Celebrate the Gifts of Female Friendship

My first AA experience was an all-women's closed meeting. Broken-hearted and full of shame I walked into the room with my head lowered, avoiding eye contact with anyone, afraid that if you saw the real me, you'd reject me as I'd so often rejected myself. Thank goodness I couldn't have been more off the mark. After the meeting several women approached and asked if I'd like to join them for coffee and breakfast. Their warmth and sincerity pulled me out of my self-pity and self-hatred just long enough to say yes. I sat with them, basking in their kindness like sunshine after the long winter months, and realizing it had been decades since I'd known female friendship, maybe since high school.

What happened? In a word, alcoholism – the 'isms' of isolation, self-deprivation and rejection. Incrementally, as my drinking increased so did my fear, shame and bitterness. I had convinced myself that I was unlovable and then went on to prove it in every way I could. My heart had hardened and I couldn't bear to let anyone in or to reach out to anyone. Life

had become a miserable prison, and I couldn't find the door let alone the key to let myself out. AA changed that. AA changes me with every meeting, and with every connection I have with my now indispensable female friends.

After that first meeting, a woman with years of sobriety cared enough to get invested in my sobriety. Who does that?? We do! She told me this: Stick with the women. I didn't understand that at first. I do now. So, for every woman who has ever lent their shoulder for a friend to cry on, who has softened the blow of heart-ache, who has listened with their heart wide open, who has refused to criticize or judge, choosing instead to empathize and share their own failings, who has laughed through their tears, who has answered the phone in the middle of the night, who has not let go when another woman falls, who has extended the beautiful gift of female friendship in AA, thank you. Two little words that say so much.

- Anonymous

My Journey – My Recovery

My journey started in August of 2009 by doing a six month treatment program. After spending close to 32 years on the other side of the fence, I was ready for change – ready to have and live a better life for myself. This was my third kick at recovery and I was willing to do whatever it takes. After finishing treatment, I joined Alcoholics Anonymous, that's when there were a list of things that were suggested I do to stay sober: Get a home-group, Get a sponsor, Work the steps, Be of service, Pray if I could & Give it away.

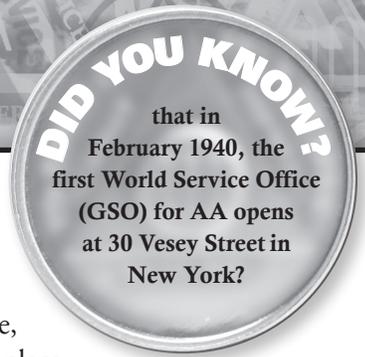
After doing these few simple things one day at a time, I started to recover. Life started getting a lot better, but I still had to face life on life's terms. I had a number of challenges along the way. At eight months I started an eleven month treatment for Hep-C. After finishing that round of treatment, two months later I did another eleven months of treatment.

Let me tell you it was no walk in the park. But with the love and care of my higher power, the support of my family and the people of the fellowship I was able to stay on the path of recovery. I'm still with the same home group, I still work the steps, I do service in and outside my group. I pray everyday and I freely give away what was freely given to me. At 55 and just over six years clean and sober, I've started my 3rd treatment for Hep-C. I have the faith that what got me here will keep me here living life on this side of the fence. By the grace of God, I will live life one day at a time.

- Ray C.

The AA Toronto website has been compromised recently and we have taken it down to make necessary changes and security enhancements. We endeavour to be back online as soon as possible.





Meant To Be?

I'm an alcoholic and my name is Elizabeth. I have just celebrated 26 years of continuous sobriety and have never been involved in starting a new meeting. I retired approximately 3 years ago and have managed to keep fairly active except... for Saturdays. For some unexplained reason I feel somewhat lost on Saturdays. I have attended a Sunday Morning Women's discussion meeting for many years and am active at that meeting. It still did not make Saturdays less empty.

I have had a couple of women come and ask me about starting a new meeting for women on Saturday, but it was not pursued for whatever reason. In March, a few women were starting to talk about getting a new Saturday morning women's discussion meeting going. One of my sponsees asked if I was interested in helping and of course I said yes. A meeting was

held to discuss particulars as to what type of meeting, time, location, etc. We had a good place to hold the meeting, ie a church that is very accommodating to AA. The rest of the details have been decided as we've gone along.

The first meeting was held in May 2015. Our attendance ranges from 5 to 10 but have a great discussion even with 5, and we are managing to pay the rent. We invite any women to come and check us out. The meeting – WOMEN'S SATURDAY MORNING SERENITY - is held at Wexford United Church in Scarborough at 10:30 am. The format is Step/Open Topic discussion.

- Elizabeth

The AA Spirit

I attended my first AA meeting, in Santa Monica, California, about twelve hours after a three-day non-stop drunken binge; strange nonexistent music was still ringing through my booze-saturated mind as I mumbled to myself in turns. Memories of that Friday night meeting remain a blur, but I will never forget that after the closing prayer (The Lord's Prayer), I somehow knew that AA was going to work for me . . . and I was right, because I haven't had to drink since!

This was rather amazing because not in one of the previous twenty years had I not quit drinking forever, ending up soused within a few weeks. Why did that AA meeting give my still drunken mind such hope and confidence? I believe I felt the hand of God at that moment. What desperate and hopeless drunkard has not felt that fragile, yet powerful, God-given AA Spirit as they enter the door of a meeting?

I will never forget the outgoing love of a small gang of four, who would pick me up for meetings during those first weeks. Nor will I forget the lady who—some months later— informed me that I looked very mean when I first came in, but she stated: "We knew you weren't mean, you were just crazy." Of course, she was right!

I was thrilled to join the spirit of AA—I went to meetings non-stop. There exists a cliché: "Survival on the fellowship is untreated alcoholism." There could be much truth in this statement, but had I not become immersed in the AA Spirit (meetings) those first crucial months, I surely would have not maintained the continuous sobriety I am enjoying today.

- Bob S.

PAST MEDALLIONS

Heather Y.	10	Keep it Simple Group	Jan 3	Charlie A.	5	Scarborough Group	Jan 8	Gord H.	5	Traditional Group	Jan 11
Matthew T.	1	Crossroads Group	Jan 3	Bob K.	20	Bellamy Group	Jan 11	Kristen B.	1	Lakeshore Group	Jan 17
Jackie M.	45	Mississauga Group	Jan 3	Jean F.	35	Reaching Out Group	Jan 12	Helen O.	5	Reaching Out Group	Jan 19
Glenn C.	18	Friendly Group	Jan 3	Caroline S.	5	12 Traditions Group	Jan 13	Wayne O.	35	Anniversary Group	Jan 20
Carole P.	1	Mt. Royal	Jan 5	Jaz M.	5	Willowdale Group	Jan 14	Brian F.	10	Willowdale Group	Jan 21
Kara M.	1	Reaching Out Group	Jan 5	Annie A.	1	Markland Wood Group	Jan 14	Pat Q.	20	East York Group	Jan 26
				Jaz M.	5	Willowdale Group	Jan 14	Darryl F.	5	Noon Rap Group	Jan 29
				Timo M.	35	Scarborough Group	Jan 15	Marlene F.	25	Leslie Group	Jan 30

ANNOUNCEMENTS

■ **TOYPAA 4th Sponsor/Sponsee Breakfast**
 Saturday, February 27, 2016

■ **73rd Ontario Regional Conference: No Longer Alone**
 March 11, 12, 13, 2016
Fairmont Royal York Hotel, Toronto
 416-640-1905
 ORC@aatoronto.org

■ **Phone Greeter Training**
 Saturday, Feb. 13, 10:30 am
 AND
 Sunday, Feb. 21, 1:30 pm
234 Eglinton Ave. East, Suite 202

Find the hidden word with the letters left over after completing this puzzle. Email your answer to bettertimes@aatoronto.org or wait until next month's Better Times. We will publish it there.

----- **Xxxxxx** -----

BEGINNING | BELIEVE | CONFRONTED | DEFIANT DEGREE
 DILEMMA | DISCOVER | DIVERTED | FAITH | HOME
 HOOP | LISTEN | LOST | MORALITY | MYSELF
 NEWCOMER | OPINION | PLIGHT | POWER | PREJUDICE
 PROVE | RESEARCH | RESTORE | SANITY | SCIENCE
 SPONSOR | SUGGEST | VICTORY | WISH | ZERO

Hidden Word:

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

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...

- Big Book, 1st Edition, 8th printing, February 1945, w/Adam C., 1st Delegate in Ontario 1951 signature from Dale McL., Royal York Group
- ORC 2014 & 2015 minutes from Linda T. Erin Mills Group
- 12 Concepts Book, 2008 from Mississauga Group
- GTA Meeting Book, September 2010 from David B. Lakeshore Group
- six 50th Anniversary Group book markers from Helen MacC. Anniversary Group
- A Place To Share meeting history from Carolyn MacC. A Place To Share.

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

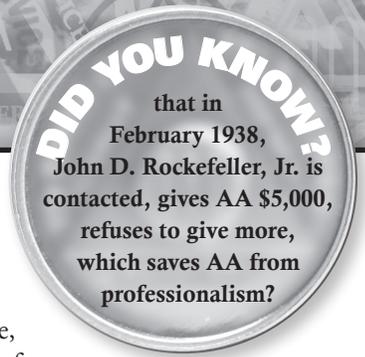


50 Years – The History of AA in Ontario is for sale at the Literature Department at 234 for \$10.00. This book was produced in 1993 by the Archives Committee of Toronto Intergroup (today GTA Intergroup). It's a great gift to give to a member on their anniversary.

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

Old GTA meeting books are needed for the GTA Archives.

step 2



Step 2 *Came to believe...*

“There are those, too, who suffer from grave emotional and mental disorders, but many of them do recover if they have the capacity to be honest.” That quote from the Big Book describes me. I have a mental disorder--severe clinical and chronic depression--but I am in recovery. The program works.

When I first came into the Fellowship, I was in a depressive state, and a few days later was hospitalized for the fifth time. In the hospital, I learned about the illness of alcoholism: the mental obsession and the physical compulsion. When I was released from the hospital a month later, I began attending AA meetings in earnest.

At first, staying sober was not as difficult as I had envisioned. The physical compulsion had left me while I was in the hospital, and though I was left with an occasional thought or desire for a drink,

there was nothing upon which I had to act. Within a short time, I began to notice some benefits of sobriety that were special to me and became self-reinforcing. Without ingesting alcohol, which was a depressant, my depression finally had a chance to improve. It wasn't over yet, but through the grace of God, I could see change. More than that, sobriety seemed to coincide with freedom from the hospital. I had stopped attempting suicide (something I'd only done while drinking). And now, thirty-seven months into sobriety, I haven't been back in the hospital.

Taking the First Step was easy. Hospitalizations and drunk driving citations had clearly made my life unmanageable, and I knew I was powerless: that the first drink would get me drunk.

It was the Second Step that I eyed with intense interest: “Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.” Did that mean that my Higher Power would eradicate my mental illness? That is what I believed and prayed for. If the God of my understanding could offer me recovery from alcoholism, could he not offer me recovery from this other illness as well?

As I continued to attend AA meetings and listen carefully, I heard experiences with the Second Step that didn't quite apply to me. One common definition of insanity was “doing the same thing (i.e., drinking) over and over, expecting different results.” That definition fit me as far as my alcoholism went, but was too narrow to help with my mental illness. I resigned myself to a continuing mental illness.

However, I also continued my journey with the Steps. Doing each to the best of my ability, with painstaking care, I completed all twelve, until in the end I found a new definition of sanity. It was bigger than any definition I had heard concerning Step Two, but it was also bigger and better than my wildest imaginings. This sanity offered serenity, a feeling of wellness or well-being, possession of a center of balance from which to operate, and a feeling that my place in this world was just right. The sanity I've received through work on the Steps is far more than I could have hoped for.

Now I'm not only a recovering alcoholic but have truly been “restored to sanity,” and am forever grateful.

- Doreen C., Bowie, Maryland

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WE NEED
a
Desktop
Publisher
Graphic
Designer
to assist with the
creation
of the
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communications
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Phone Greeter Training will take place at 234 Eglinton Ave. East, Suite 202 on
Saturday, Feb. 13, 10:30 am AND Sunday, Feb. 21, 1:30 pm

