

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 **BETTER TIMES** is seeking a new Desktop Publisher/Graphic Designer with knowledge of Adobe products or equivalent. Please email communications@aatoronto.org
- 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!
- Finance Committee seeking Chair and committee members. Please forward resumes to the Finance Committee c/o the Intergroup Office | e-mail: office@aatoronto.org address: Suite 202 - 234 Eglinton Ave.E., Toronto M4P 1K5
- 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!
 - Winter Season Open House 2015 seeking volunteers
- Info AA Day 2016 (May 28th, 2016) - 10 of 20 committee positions still need to be filled
 - Correctional Facilities seeking people for "Bridging the Gap" program
- GSO Social Media Survey is online until December 31st. Please visit the Area 83 website.
- 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:

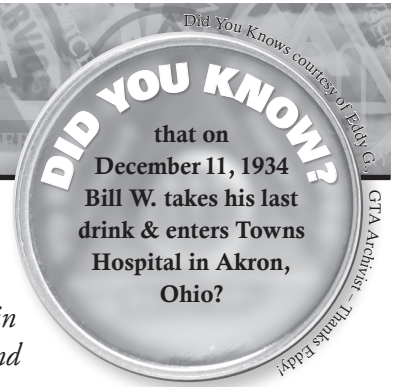
Eglinton Crosstown construction is at the block which includes 234. Parking in the area will be further restricted and it is being suggested that anyone coming to the Intergroup Office leave plenty of time or take public transportation.

TO CONTACT COMMITTEES PLEASE EMAIL:

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editorial & sharing



Thoughts From the Editor's Desk

The purpose of our Twelve Step program of recovery is to bring about a shift in perspective, attitude, and behaviour – a psychic change – to relieve us from the horrors of alcoholism. This spiritual awakening is brought about – sometimes quickly, sometimes slowly – by working the steps and joining our fellows on the “road to happy destiny”.

Once the obsession and compulsion to drink was removed by a strengthened connection to a loving Higher Power, and I became more aware of the extent of my selfishness and self-centredness, I came to be in a better position to carry messages of hope and

change. Throughout my years in recovery, I've been honoured and blessed to help others as a sponsor, friend, and trusted servant. Thank you, AA, for helping me change from a sick and broken man to one whose heart is more often filled with love than resentment, and whose mind is calmer and more peaceful than before.

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

NEARLY 25 YEARS LATER...

One of the best things for me to hear at a speaker meeting is “How did they get to AA?” and “What happened in that moment of clarity?” These questions touch me deeply because I did not experience either of these phenomena before I ‘came to’... so to speak...

When I hear a speaker discuss their entry through these doors to a better life, I feel that they have been touched by a Power greater than themselves. And when that moment of clear thinking drives them to their knees, I know that a Higher Power is now ‘driving their bus’. What a great experience!

When I think back over the 24 plus years I have trudged the odyssey of sobriety, I have had many, many moments of truth. What have I learned all these years? I could write a book, but I haven't. I did write a little column called ‘Archives Alley’ for Better Times for several years. It was well-received, and I still have AA folks ask me if I was the one who wrote it. I fell in love with a lot of ‘dead people’, you know, our forefathers: Dr. Bob, Bill W. and others - the ones who worked out the formulas for the Big Book, Twelve Steps, Twelve Traditions, and Twelve Concepts. They were our dear and wonderful forbearers who carved out a program of action that would solve our problem with the loving solution we call recovery. Loving history the way I do, I became intimately knowledgeable with their writings. The lessons they taught me came ‘sometimes quickly, sometimes slowly’. Persistence, constancy, diligence,

patience, tolerance... all those qualities that we aspire to when we pick ourselves up and start climbing the Steps.

I have made an excellent start on my assignment: the expedition of the immense discovery channel deep into my soul. The expedition of the immense discovery channel deep into my soul. And because we are told that life happens ‘a day at a time’, I continue patiently embracing the curriculum that my God lays out for me day by day. A malnourished agnostic when I arrived at the doors of my twelve-step rebirth, I have experienced the Godly ‘psychic change’ outlined in our book with a perspective on life that is as healing and soothing a balm as I can call to mind. My greatest gift so far is the peace of mind promised on page 84.

I am far from the finish line of the odyssey. How far I will go cannot be foretold, yet I am fearless. My beloved husband, John, a long-time member of recovery (44 years when he passed) was one of my greatest inspirations. He loved his Al-Anon program, AA, and the courageous alcoholics and Al-Anons who join our fellowships. He loved how these fellowships love, support, and and raise people up towards a life they could have never imagined.

Yours in service,

– Bernadette M., King City group

spotlight on

Tuesday Men's Solution Group

Tuesday 7:30pm, Room 4014 - OISE Building

It started as a men's step study on a dark Tuesday night in October 2013... In the Summer of 2013 a couple of AA members with a few years of sobriety had been talking about putting together a solution-based men's step study that resembled some of the groups they had been a part of in NYC and LA.

Over the next couple of months, they set out to recruit men who wanted to do a step study and were interested in a solution-based sobriety meeting. They asked that the men commit to making most, if not all, the meetings in order to build a strong and consistent group. In October 2013 they had recruited 10 men and kicked off the first meeting (step 1) in one of the men's living room. For the next 14 weeks – the 4th step and the 12th step both take two weeks in the format they used – they gathered and worked through the steps.

The format of the meeting was instrumental to its success. The meeting opened with the serenity prayer, then each man would read a section of the step-appropriate material out of the Big Book of Alcoholic Anonymous. Depending on the step, this usually took from 10 to 20 minutes. After the reading, there would be a 5 - 10 minute lead share. The requirement for the lead share was that the sharer had completed the steps and would discuss their experience with the step. This set an important tone for the meeting and served to keep the group focused on the topic and on the solutions working the steps provides. After the lead share, everyone had an opportunity to share on the their experience with the step. If they had not done the step, they would share about their thoughts on the step and what they had heard from the reading.

Near the end of the 14 weeks, the men had decided that they wanted to continue working together. Also, there had been others who had heard about the meeting and wanted to join. It was decided that together they would do a study of the 12 traditions for 12 weeks in another member's living room.

The tradition meeting provided an opportunity for them to gain a deeper understanding of the inner workings and history of AA. Each week a member would volunteer to do research on the tradition and be the lead share for the following week. After the serenity prayer, they would read the long

form of the tradition from the 12x12.

The lead share would discuss what they had discovered in their research, then share on their experience with the tradition. After the lead share, all the men would have an opportunity to share on their experience with the tradition working in their life.

After the tradition study, they wanted to keep the group going and again, there was more demand from other men for another step study. The men headed to another living room and kicked off another 14-week step study. The group had grown a little larger by this point and the living room was getting a little cramped. Nonetheless, they were committed and a great meeting unfolded every Tuesday.

After this step study, the demand for the meeting to become regular and make it a proper "listed" meeting that others could attend was strong enough that the men looked for a permanent space. They found a small classroom space at OISE and officially listed the meeting with Intergroup. It was decided that the meeting would continue to be a solution-based step meeting, light on meeting protocol - no announcements - and anniversaries would be celebrated at the end of every month at a fellowship dinner after the meeting. A few of the men agreed to cover any shortfall between the 7th tradition collected and the weekly rent for OISE over the first year.

Initially, the meeting would have 2 service positions: a chairperson and a speaker seeker. Necessarily, the speaker seeker was briefed on how to find men in other meetings and throughout AA who had a solution-based message built on working the 12 steps, and who had been sober for some time. The lead share also had to have completed a set of steps.

Over the past year, the group has been able draw some inspiring men working strong programs to lead the group. Many of these men have decided to stick around and join the group. At the first meeting at OISE in October 2014, there were approximately 15 men at the meeting. Today, the group attracts more than 40 on a regular basis. At each meeting, members in early sobriety introduce themselves and let the group know how many consecutive days (from 1 to 90) they have been sober. Members are also asked to announce their sobriety anniversary if it takes place in the current month.

Since September, the group has altered the format to include a reading from *As Bill Sees It*. The lead share then discusses the reading and their experience with the principle or step. This has given many more men an opportunity to share during the meeting. The group has become a home group for many men and hopes to become a "four pillar" meeting over the next year. Those that attend this group are happy to share the solution that working the 12 steps of Alcoholics Anonymous has brought to their lives, as well as their experience, strength, and hope to anyone that asks for help. If you are on the 4th floor of the OISE building, and you hear a bunch of laughter rolling through the hallway, follow it and you will be at Tuesday Men's Solution Meeting.

- Graham S.

DID YOU KNOW?
that on
December 12, 1934
Bill W. has a spiritual
experience in Towns
Hospital & finds relief
from obsession with
alcohol?



ORC & sharing

Ontario Regional Conference: No Longer Alone

“No Longer Alone” is the theme of the 73rd Ontario Regional Conference, which runs from March 11th to 13th, 2016. (Thanks to Eddy G. from the Beaches Group for the piece of history on the convention anniversary.) Our venue - The Royal York Hotel - feels very comfortable to me after all these years. Walking in for our Sunday monthly meetings brings up great feelings and memories. Before we know it, the event will be upon us!

It was back in the early 90's at the Sheridan Centre that I got hooked on the ORC. This was the first time I had heard circuit speakers other than the few we have in the GTA. It was - and still is - a great time to hear powerful speakers, catch up with old friends and really be thankful to be sober. Looking back, maybe this was the first time in sobriety that I had a real belly laugh.

I did not foresee chairing the ORC in those early years coming out of treatment. It was hard enough to go to meetings, work the

steps and do a little service. But I stuck with it and took a number of positions in AA.

I must say this has been the most demanding and gratifying commitment I have taken to date. I knew I wanted to get involved again after I took the position of Program Coordinator in 2011. I listened to 350 tapes to get 10 speakers. When it was all done I said to myself, “Thank God that’s over!” and in the same breath missed doing it some more. I have listened to some of the speakers coming this March and I think you will enjoy them. We have a lot of local speakers and panels too, not to mention the Saturday night banquet and dance.

So grab a flyer or visit the ORC 16 website, and we’ll see you there! What a way to bring in spring.

- Rick MC, 2016 ORC Chair

The Magic of the Holidays... Sober

With the holiday season fast approaching, many of us in recovery feel mixed emotions. Although the magic of the season is in the air, it can be a difficult and lonely time. Growing up in an alcoholic home, the holidays were often a time of great sadness as I felt isolated from a world of happiness that seemed to surround me. I carried that feeling forward into every subsequent Christmas in my adult years. I would pretend to be joyful, but inside the ghosts of Christmas past would haunt my thoughts. I would attach an old belief from childhood to the holidays, causing deep resentments to surface. I would relive old memories instead of creating new ones.

The spiritual awakenings I have had as a result of working the 12 Steps of Alcoholics Anonymous have forever changed my life. For a child that grew up being told to be ‘seen but not heard’, using the voice I have found by carrying the message to the alcoholic who still suffers has become my life’s purpose. These 12 Steps have allowed me to view my past childhood trauma from a different perspective. I have learned that forgiveness is giving up the hope that the past could have been any different, accepting it for what it was, and using this moment and this time to move forward. Forgiveness is not about the other person. It takes character to forgive, and I now know it is a strength not a weakness. Forgiveness to another says “I love myself more than I dislike your actions towards me.” We can forgive in love, be grateful for the lesson, and be free.

Until I could be set free from my past, I could not be fully present in the moment. God lives in the moment, but my mind often lives

in my past or future. This new way of thinking has allowed me to see that depression is thinking about my past and anxiety is worrying about my future.

How do I stay in the present moment? I need an ongoing experience of daily surrenders to remind myself to be present. Through a spiritual awakening brought about by the 12 Steps, I am more aware of my thoughts and able to see with clarity when old ideas come back to haunt me.

The holiday season is not depressing for me as it once was, as I have learned not to live in yesterday’s painful moments. My past does not have to dictate my future and when I stay awakened, I realize that today was the tomorrow I worried about yesterday. The only way to be happy, joyous, and free is to live in the present moment.

I am so grateful to my Higher Power and to the people in AA who helped change my life into one of rigorous honesty, courage and purpose. Without the mentors who have come before me, I would not have the quality of sobriety I have today. For that, I offer my heartfelt thanks and gratitude. This holiday season, hug your long-timers and thank the God of your understanding, your sponsors and sponsees for the gift of your sobriety. I know I will!

- Sheri J., Markland Wood Group

Carrying the Message

DID YOU KNOW?
that from
December 1934
to May 1938 Bill W.
works with alcoholics,
but fails to sober any
of them?

“When I first read the passage from the Big Book suggesting that practical experience shows nothing will so much ensure immunity from drinking as intensive work with other alcoholics, I thought, “that’s how they stay sober.” There are many ways to do Twelfth Step work. For me, always being at my home group, reaching out to newcomers by handing them pamphlets at the library table, introducing them to potential sponsors, and telling them I need them more than they need me are the highest forms of Twelfth Step work. I believe sponsorship is one of the greatest tools we have in AA. I have a sponsor, I sponsor, and I encourage my sponsees to start to sponsor. When I first worked with another member, I tried to push them to do things. Now I believe sponsorship is like recovery: it’s progressive. Today I listen, I pray, I share my experience, and I don’t try to get another person sober or conform to anything. Sponsees do what they will do. Sponsorship keeps me fresh within the program and reminds me that I had better be doing what I am suggesting. My self-worth has been greatly enhanced by my involvement in service, and sponsorship has been a wonderful, rewarding, challenging test, and at times, a pain. Overall, however, it is an experience I never would have missed.”

“Sharing at meetings, sponsoring people, speaking when asked, and making myself available through the 9th step (“If you know anyone who is ever struggling with alcoholism, I would love to help.” – a clear demonstration of the commitment to change).”

“I tell those in my step study to work harder!”

“I live the Program – do my best to live every day with honesty, open mindedness and willingness to change. I’m in service, and I share in meetings and in fellowship.”

“Being loving towards all.”

“I always smile and shake hands with the newcomer. I do my best to stay active at the group level.”

“How do I carry the message? With a twinkle in my eye!”

“To carry the message, while balancing dad duty and a job, I always have a service position at my Home Group and I sponsor a few guys.”

“I share at meeting and go to lots of them. I speak when asked and sponsor lots of people. I’m open about being in recovery, so people sometimes come to me when they, or someone they know, need help. I made a feature documentary about alcoholism that had two messages: you are not alone and there is a solution.”

“I carry the message by sharing at meetings and talking to fellow addicts outside of them.”

“I try to carry a message of strength and hope to everyone, especially the high needs kids I work with.”

“Just show up at the meetings early and greet each person with a warm welcome. If possible, tell them how much the program is doing to change your life.”

“By going to meetings, sharing at meetings, greeting at the door; just holding out my hand to others. Going to conferences.”

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Spiritual Awakenings

DID YOU KNOW?

that in
December 1938
the Twelve Steps
were written?

“**A spiritual** awakening happened for me one day when I realized I was living life without the need to take a drink.”

“**My first** one was in the back of a cop car, first time arrested – one year dry. I had been assaulted, yet I got charged, was pissed about that, the cuffs being on too tight, the size of the back seat, the heat of the car... And it hit me – I had taken my 3rd Step back. On Dec 23, 2014 after three plus years of (mostly) contented sobriety, I lost the thing that meant the most to me – my children. I sobbed until there were no tears left in me. In that moment of numbness I turned to the steps. I saw that I expected the world to operate fairly – according to my will. I found serenity and peace by accepting what I couldn’t change and going forth to change the things I could. When I’m uncertain, I ask for guidance or an intuitive thought from my Higher Power. Now I am grateful when I suffer, as I know it’s a manifestation of my disease of selfishness. May you all find a reprieve from self through taking The Steps.”

“**Being sober** is the first awakening of a larger awakening. The second awakening is that I’ve been a total jerk – selfish and self-centred to the extreme – and it’s not okay to treat people the way I have.”

“**My spiritual** awakening continues to reveal more truth about who I am as a person. Every time another layer of fog is removed from my sight, I see things differently. Life isn’t perfect, but the journey is amazing!”

“**A little over** 18 years ago I reached a point where my drinking had far exceeded any semblance of control. After an unsuccessful attempt to quit on my own, I had the harsh awakening that I could not do it on my own. Two more weeks of drinking brought me to my knees, and I hit bottom. After looking at the darkest of alternatives, I chose to ask for help.”

“**It’s the small,** daily, unspoken things that make a difference and connect us to each other.”

“**I’m not** who I thought I was.”

“**Spiritual** Awakenings happen for me almost daily. For me, it’s any shift in emotion, perception, or thought that changes how I see, feel or think about something in that moment. It can only happen when I show up for my life and live in the now.”

“**I have** had a few ‘events’, but the main awakening has been the loss of a sense of a punishing God.”

“**I have** a spiritual awakening every time I feel gratitude. My first spiritual awakening was in treatment, the first time I heard “Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow”. It seemed doable – to do what is in front of me and let the future take care of itself, with no regrets of yesterday.”

“**My spiritual** awakening is calm, slow, and growing.”

“**My spiritual** awakening today is to recognize we share a common need and longing for connection. Many of us have struggled to live, bound by shame. The program of AA enables us to reveal our shame and come out of our painful isolation through new friendships rooted in trust, caring, and compassion.”

“**It was winter,** and I was shoveling my car out; it was parked on the side of the street. I had finished but was afraid to drive it out in case I got stuck. I said a little prayer to God... hoping for help... I immediately heard a voice, ‘Can I help you ma’am?’ I turned around to see a young man standing there – he had just gotten off his shift as a paramedic. He drove my car out for me. I was speechless and then just said, “Thank you, God.””

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History of the Winter Season Open House

DID YOU KNOW?
that on
December 1, 1985
the first annual
Archives Breakfast was held
at the
Howard Johnson Motel
at Hwy 427 and
Dixon Rd.?

January 20, 1944:

AA Central Office opened at 1170 Yonge St.

December 25, 1944 - December 25, 1959:

Open House at 1170 Yonge St.

January 15, 1960:

1170 closed and 2 Gerrard St. West opened

December 25, 1960 - December 25, 1970:

Open House at Columbus Hall on Sherbourne St.

December 25, 1971 - December 25, 1979:

Open House at Metropolitan United Church

There reason the Open House left the Metropolitan U.C. was “rowdiness and drinking at the Church. The Church would not tolerate what was taking place. Intergroup did not feel it was in a position to police the gathering. Various elements in the Fellowship used the Steps and Traditions to prevent the necessary controls.”

December 25, 1980 - December 25, 1988:

Open House at North Toronto Memorial Gardens

Intergroup chose this site for the Open House because it wanted to remove it from the downtown problem areas. “At this time the Xmas Open Houses were the responsibility of the elected representatives of the Fellowship in Toronto. An element in the Fellowship did not feel the proper way of treating the downtown alcoholics was being followed by moving up to Eglinton West (the area where North Toronto Memorial was located) where the drinking drunks would not go. At this point the minority took it into their own hands and the result was the start in 1981 of the dinner at St. Bartholomew’s which has continued. It has unquestionably been successful but

it was not fulfilling the wishes of the majority. It is a controversial issue. The elements who have put it on have shown that it is useful.” Accordingly, “a number of members of AA who felt that AA should be helping drunks at Xmas time in the downtown area” started a dinner at St. Bartholomew’s, Dundas St. East, beginning December 25, 1981 and continuing to today and probably into the future. “In 1989, they were requested to consider realigning themselves but they chose not to (do so).”

December 25, 1989 - 2014:

Open House at Emmanuel Howard Park United Church

An Xmas Open House was started in the West end and handled again by Intergroup. “It was felt by Intergroup that the group involved at St. Bartholomew’s was in effect dealing with the East end”, while Intergroup’s Open House took care of the West end... One other note: a few years ago the assembled representatives at Intergroup decided to change the official name from “Christmas Open House” to “Winter Season Open House” to avoid the Christian bias of the traditional name. The assembly acted in response to the challenge that, as a worldwide institution now seeking to help alcoholics of all stripes, regardless of religion or irreligion, AA should avoid officially associating itself with any particular form of religion, as declared in the “Preamble”.

December 25, 2015:

Open House at St. James Cathedral’s Snell Hall (southeast corner of Church St. & Adelaide St. E.)

The above summary, written in 1991, is based on a memo from Tommy H., Archives.

announcements

PAST MEDALLIONS

Kaden D.	1	East York Group	Oct 27
Melanie A.	1	East York Group	Oct 27
Ed H.	30	Twelve Steps Group	Oct 28
Glenda C.	1	Anniversary Group	Oct 28
Ed M.	1	Rexdale United Group	Oct 29
Shane C.	1	Noon Rap Group	Oct 30
Carolyn M.	1	Back to Basics Group	Oct 30
Mike E.	1	Birds of a Feather Group	Nov 1
Stephen I.	1	Lawrence Plaza Group	Nov 1
Don S.	45	Bayview Group	Nov 1
Larissa P.	1	King City Group	Nov 2
Katharine W.	1	Anniversary Group	Nov 4
Andy C.	10	Thornhill Group	Nov 4
Judy D.	1	Scarborough Group	Nov 6
David D.	1	Back to Basics Group	Nov 6
Frieda W.	25	Lansing Group	Nov 7
Earl W.	1	King City Group	Nov 16
Kim S.	1	Anniversary Group	Nov 18
Norm P.	25	Golden Mile Group	Nov 18
Bernadette M.	25	King City Group	Nov 23
Sonja T.	15	East York Group	Nov 24
Sharon W.	10	East York Group	Nov 24
Jade S.	5	Anniversary Group	Nov 25
Christine P.	5	New Anchor Group	Nov 26
Billy B.	10	Back to Basics (Richmond Hill)	Nov 27
Chris G.	5	Leslie Group Group	Nov 28

UPCOMING MEDALLIONS

Jamie B.	20	Keep It Simple Group	Nov 29
Rich T.	25	Bellamy Group	Nov 30
Will H.	5	Mount Albert Group	Dec 1
Kathryn G.	1	New Anchor Group	Dec 3
John M.	40	Willowdale Group	Dec 3
Tim W.	5	Open Hands Group	Dec 9
George F.	15	Bellamy Group	Dec 14
Doug G.	1	Agincourt Acorn Group	Dec 15
Jon X.	25	East York Group	Dec 15
Frank P.	5	Keep It Simple Group	Dec 27
Susan P.	15	Crossroads Group	Dec 27

Anniversaries & Candlelights

Dec 9	Pathfinder's Gratitude Event
Dec 10	Willowdale Group Holiday Celebration
Dec 10	Chartwell Group Candlelight Meeting
Dec 11	Gratitude & 25 Anniversary- Noon Rap Group
Dec 12	K.F. Group Gratitude Holiday Meeting
Dec 14	King City Group Candlelight Meeting
Dec 15	Amazing Grace Candlelight Gratitude Meeting
Dec 15	Shepherd Group Holiday Celebration
Dec 15	Maple Group Holiday Gratitude Meeting
Dec 16	Sisters In Sobriety Candlelight Gratitude Meeting
Dec 16	Bayview Group Holiday Meeting
Dec 17	The Hill Group Holiday Party

Dec 18	Beverly Hills Group Candlelight Gratitude
Dec 22	East York Gratitude Meeting
Dec 23	Anniversary Group Candlelight
Dec 25	City Central Candlelight Gratitude Meeting

ANNOUNCEMENTS

■ **73rd Ontario Regional Conference: No Longer Alone**
March 11, 12, 13, 2016

Fairmont Royal York Hotel, Toronto

AA, Al-Anon, Alateen speakers

Register Online: www.aatoronto.org
416-640-1905

ORC@aatoronto.org

Pre-registration Early Bird Draws!

■ **Winter Season Open House**
10am - 4pm on Christmas Day

St. James' Cathedral, Snell Hall, 65 Church St., Toronto

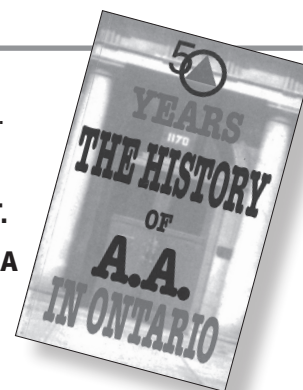


Due to ongoing submissions this list may not be current. For the latest information visit: www.aatoronto.org

I FOUND IT IN THE ARCHIVES

BACK TO THE REPOSITORY... with GTA Archivist Eddy G.

PHOTOGRAPHS OF EARLY AA MEMBERS, FRIENDS OF AA, LITTLE DENMARK TAVERN, 1170 YONGE ST. AND MANY MORE • ORIGINAL LITTLE DENMARK LAMP • LETTER FROM BILL D. (MAN ON THE BED & AA MEMBER #3) • GTA GROUP TABLE COVERS • ORC PROGRAMS (HOW THE ORC NAME WAS FORMED)
ALL ITEMS ARE ON DISPLAY FOR VIEWING AT THE GTA INTERGROUP OFFICE BOARDROOM



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 12

DID YOU KNOW?

that on
December 16, 1943
80 people attended the first
AA Banquet
at the Royal York Hotel
in Toronto?

Step 12 *Having had a spiritual awakening...*

I sat in a Twelve & Twelve meeting today and as we read Step 12, I realized how many interpersonal relationship troubles that are alluded to have disappeared for me in the years I've been sober. Some days I don't feel like I've had a spiritual awakening let alone spent any time on the "beam", but when we read about the transformation from child to responsible member of society, the observer within me nods knowingly.

I still think of myself as having many a defect, but somehow the presence of AA and a Higher Power has smudged all the edges and my days now flow smoothly. I feel a great sense of joyous participation in life. When I find myself experiencing irritation, discontentment or restlessness, I want to run to my sponsor armed with paper, pen and Big Book so we can fix me with the Steps, immediately and with a hammer. She often meets me with a giggle and a slogan ("Easy Does It" comes to mind) and reminds me that I don't do the steps, the steps do me.

I remember after the first few times going through the Steps (in order, with another or many other persons) I felt a sense of accomplishment, like a good student finishing their homework before the deadline. But something has shifted over time; I have

been worked out by the Steps and by my Higher Power.

The beauty of willingness and sticking around has made my life something appealing to people coming into the rooms seeking transformation. The Steps and God happened to me once I turned myself over to them completely, giving up my preconceived notions of how to do them properly or how they might be expressed through me. Now I'm able to share the experience of my metamorphosis with new people without pretense. When I get to read the book with someone new, I no longer feel the need to have something smart to say. I am enough. I guess that's what my spiritual awakening looks like today: I am enough.

The 12th Step isn't something I decide to do, it's something I get to experience as a result of the other Steps. I used to think that I, the great Rebecca, was now going to 12th step all the newcomers (lucky them). Now I realize that it's not even a decision or something "I do", it's just what's manifesting in this life I'm getting to live. Happy December.

– **Rebecca A.**

Phone Greeter Training

will take place at 234 Eglinton
Ave. East, Suite 202

Saturday, Dec. 12, 10:30 am
AND
Sunday, Dec. 20, 1:30 pm



The “isms” of Alcoholism

This could be a typical Alanon story. My 42 year-old son is playing out the “isms” of alcoholism and is totally oblivious that there are somersaults going on in my head. I’m the mad one; in fact, I am the alcoholic. And yet, I’m a grateful member of Alcoholics Anonymous and have been for several years.

My son accompanied me to the UK for a surprise birthday party for my sister. He had not been to England for about 20 years, but I go “home” once a year. It was supposed to be a trip of a lifetime. And it was, in more ways than one. I don’t spend a great deal of time with my son in Toronto. I know he drinks, but the birthday week was a week from hell - for me. I was living with and watching active alcoholism and did not realize it until I got back to my home in Canada.

If he wasn’t drinking he was planning his next drink. His moods and behavior were unpredictable. He sat up and watched TV and drank beer on his own til 2:00 am while the rest of us were in bed. The mornings were even more unpredictable, and I was walking on eggshells the whole time for fear of some sort of outburst from him. His “Mr Nice Guy” came out after a couple of beers and once he started he just kept going. I couldn’t believe that I was observing this without realizing this was active alcoholism.

And I was alone - so alone. Nobody understands like another alcoholic, and I had no one to talk to. My family is not in recovery and I could not get to a meeting. I woke up one morning in tears. A sleepless night worrying - concerned about him and what would or could happen. And yes, worrying what

my family might think about their long-lost nephew and my parenting skills.

My family was very accommodating. They took us on day trips in the beautiful Lake District, along the scenic Northumberland coast, and to a memorial to my dad. Not a word from the perspiring heap of misery who was sitting in the front seat. No acknowledgement of the sentimental journey. He was not present. He was “between drinks”.

I came back to Toronto and went to an AA meeting as soon as I could. I shared my tears and fears and let myself out so I could let you in. There used to be a time when I felt I did not belong or fit into AA meetings, but at that meeting I felt more at home with my AA family than I had felt all the previous week.

You listened. You understood. You let me cry (no - make that sob!). You shared your experience and gave me hope. It’s time to Let Go and Let God. Someone suggested I should have left him in a pub and picked him up after a few days. He may never have noticed that I had left him behind. (It’s good to lighten up and add some humour to the solution.)

Thank you AA for being there at the beginning of my journey and for being there during this difficult time. Thank you for my sobriety and a family of friends and fellowship that love, understand and care for each other.

With love, gratitude and blessings,
- **Liz B.**

A Higher Power and Service

I have been in AA for two years now. I love the AA meetings - put down the bottle and pick up the Big Book. I like it when we do the Serenity Prayer at the start of meetings or the Lord’s Prayer at the end. The prayers work for me - I think of my Higher Power and he/she helps me understand and work through all my wrongs. Sometimes, my higher power is God and sometimes, it’s a good rock song. Prayers also remind me that my drinking life was not like going up a stairway to heaven, but more like a highway to hell.

I love doing service - setting up meetings and taking them

down, chairing and helping with the readings. When I do service, it makes me happy and keeps me sober. I think of God everyday and take life one day at a time. I drank and drugged for 36 years to fit in, to cope with loneliness, and because I liked the effects. AA has helped me take little steps. I am cleaner-looking, I eat better, my place is neater, and I talk with my family more. I am happy. I think I’ll keep coming back. Thank you AA.

- **John W, Noon Rap Group, Sunnyside Group**