

# BETTER TIMES

Published Monthly by Greater Toronto Area Intergroup of Alcoholics Anonymous

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## 50 years for Kingsway!

**A**lcoholics Anonymous got off to a running start in Toronto on May 8, 1946 when The Kingsway Group, the oldest group in the city and possibly its largest with over 350 registered members, had its first meeting. A half-century later, on May 8 of this year, Kingsway will celebrate its anniversary where it has been meeting regularly for the last thirty-two years, St. George's on the Hill, Anglican Church, 4600 Dundas Street West.

It will not be just another anniversary meeting. While details are still being sorted out, Ray L., chair of the group's committee taking on the task of ensuring an appropriately memorable occasion, is convinced it will indeed be just that — memorable. The speaker will be Linda W. of Media, Pennsylvania.

Over fifty years ago, The Kingsway Group had its genesis in informal meetings of three men who had one thing in common. They were alcoholics. For some time, Tom E., Goody G., and Doug S., had been getting together in Tom's law office at Bay and Adelaide or a restaurant on King St just east of Yonge to share their experience, strength and hope with each other. Inevitably, they attracted other like-minded people, electing to form a group. Neither Tom's office nor the restaurant were roomy or appropriate enough for meetings, so they opted for the Parish House of St. James Cathedral in downtown Toronto.

That was in November of 1945. In May of the following year, another move had to be considered. At the suggestion of one of the members, Tom G., who lived in the Kingsway area, the group moved to Our Lady of Sorrows Church on Bloor W., the "Blue Top Church" as it was known. As all three

of the original members lived in the Kingsway, this was a popular choice of name for the group. Its first meeting was on May 8, 1946.

Excepting two or three weeks in 1948, when several members of the

Monday evening discussion meetings there ever since.

Fifty years of AA history in Toronto. Something well worth celebrating, eh?

Tom G.



The fellowship marches on! This 1952 photograph of Korea taken by the Department of National Defense is kept in the Toronto Intergroup archives (and faces have been obscured to protect anonymity). It's nice to see that our slogans can be made to fit many of life's situations. . .

group led by Goody G., left to start up the Hill Group at Timothy Eaton Memorial Church on St. Clair Ave. W., the Kingsway Group has met every week since. After seventeen years, the group had to find another site. It planned a second evening each week for a closed discussion meeting which Our Lady could not accommodate. St. George's on the Hill, Anglican Church could and the Kingsway Group has had its Wednesday evening open meetings and

### Two bits! Worth it?

The first issue of BETTER TIMES is a freebie. That's right; it costs you nothing. But, as you must have noticed on page 1, it's priced at 25 cents per copy. And that is what it will cost for us to keep you informed on what's the news of AA hereabouts.

What do you think? Is it worth it? It is not a money-spinner amount, but, hopefully, it should cover our costs.

## **BETTER TIMES**

**Published monthly by Greater  
Toronto Area Intergroup of  
Alcoholics Anonymous.**

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### **Editorial Committee:**

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Tom G., John H., Kevin M., Dan  
McK., Myles W., Otto S.**

**The editors say . . .**

### **What's in a name?**

**T**hat word, "Times", adorns the mastheads of many news publications. There's the venerable Times of London, the prestigious New York Times, the oft quoted Los Angeles Times, the Trail Times and many others. Not one of them, however, has a better claim to the word than Toronto Intergroup's BETTER TIMES.

Most of us—maybe all of us in AA—have known the so-called good times, all too often lubricated by too much liquor. And the inevitable bad times of shakes and hangovers, shame and remorse, damaged careers and relationships. Then we found AA. Or vice versa! Found what was to be infinitely better times. Is it any wonder, therefore, why BETTER TIMES was chosen as the name for Toronto Intergroup's newsletter?

BETTER TIMES will report on what is going on and coming up of

likely interest to AA members. There will be occasional opinion pieces, but no "Flackery", to quote one of the members who contributed to the thinking that went into originating the newsletter. Your participation is invited. Letters, news and views, whatever is on your mind that you think ought to be shared with others in the Fellowship. Of course, space limitations may entail editing, but don't let that hinder you. BETTER TIMES is for you. Use it.

### **Letters**

**A**t a recent business meeting of our closed, "alcoholics only" discussion group, some members expressed grave concern over the periodic attendance by patients from a local treatment facility who identified themselves by saying "...and I'm an addict," instead of the more traditional, "...and I'm an alcoholic."

I've met many people in the early stages of recovery who have been uncertain whether they were alcoholics and a substantial number who were quite sure they were addicts, but who then went on to discover they also had an alcohol problem after attending several meetings.

### **Slogan of the Month**

**You are no  
longer  
alone!**

Over the years, I've also come to believe that all addictive, self-destructive habits and behaviours stem from the same disease manifesting itself in various individuals in different ways (regardless of the substance or behaviour's specific physical effects, the mental, emotional and spiritual results appear to have the same goal: to allow us to mask the pain of being ourselves).

Nevertheless, our co-founder, Bill W., was quite clear when he wrote the pamphlet, "Problems Other than Alcohol," saying he felt AA wouldn't survive if we opened our membership to all and I'm not suggesting a change in this policy. However, one of the most sacred beliefs we hold is that only I can decide whether I'm an alcoholic. Although others may apply that label to me, in the final analysis I can't be forced to accept it until I'm ready.

I'm not advocating that closed meetings invite members of the general public to attend or that people suffering from other addictions be encouraged to attend regularly—I believe we should still restrict attendance to those who qualify for our Fellowship. However, I also believe that short-term attendance won't hurt us. It will become a self-correcting problem as the individuals involved either seek other meetings or realize they qualify for ours after all.

Patience, revealing the existence of other 12-step programs and tolerance will do more good for both parties than forcefully asking self-identified non-alcoholics to seek assistance elsewhere immediately—and it just might allow them an opportunity to discover another aspect of their disease.

*Myles W.*

### **Writers Wanted**

Could you write for BETTER TIMES? Do you crave to be a reporter? How about a short interpretation of a slogan? Or a story illustrating how the Steps have worked in your life? Or a short history of your group? Or a letter to the editors?

This is a non-profit publication (so we don't pay), we maintain the 11th Tradition of anonymity at the level of press, radio and film (so you won't be famous), and we only have four pages (so keeping your submission under 300 words would be a good idea). But we want to hear from you, because somewhere there's a fellow suffering alcoholic who may be aided by your efforts. See the address below for submissions.

### **Attention, Group Secretaries**

We want to spread the word about your group celebrations and anniversaries. Forms are available through the Toronto Intergroup office for your group to publicise your members' medallions and the group's anniversaries. We need the information by the 10th of the month before the event (e.g., to get an announcement into the May edition, we need to get the information by April 10th).

Please send group announcements and/or articles for publication by mail to BETTER TIMES, c/o Greater Toronto Area Intergroup, 234 Eglinton Avenue, West, Suite 202, Toronto, ON M4P 1K5, by fax to (416) 487-5855 or by Internet e-mail to [myles@idirect.com](mailto:myles@idirect.com)

## Brevity, the Soul of Wit

(Or Words to that Effect!)

These were the instructions I received from the, BETTER TIMES editorial committee about the amount of editorial required to write "First Impressions, or a Virgin's View of an Intergroup Meeting" (the Toronto Intergroup Meeting on January 27, 1996). To say the least this scribe was delighted, as attending a meeting of this ilk for the first time seemed similar to sailing blithely into a hurricane.

"Don't tell me what to do!" - seems to me I've heard about that attitude before in this organisation. Now imagine yourself in a large room full of people just like that (Careful now! Takes one to know one!), all with their own axes to grind or hidden agendas bubbling just beneath their deceptively placid surfaces. No paranoia here. We're all OK (that's why we're here!) Just look around, keep your nose clean and your mouth shut and (maybe, just maybe) you'll survive.

The next question to percolate through the dazed mind of the virgin observer is "My God, how can you get anything done with all these people here?" Everyone knows you can't get a decision on anything when there's more than seven people involved and there's about ten times too many in here and they all seem to be talking at once!

Then you actually start hearing what people are trying to say and you realize that they're talking about a whole slew of committees, events and activities that you know nothing about! That's when the fear really sets in.

Slowly it starts to sink in that all these people are actually trying to co-operate and communicate with each other and cover off lots of hard work and service that's been going on under your nose, behind your back—right in front of you—so wake up and get involved! (Of course, if you've been set up by a cynical, scheming "higher power" to propose a quasi-heretical motion for discussion and ram through for approval, it is somewhat of a "baptism of fire" but what do you know!)

You start hearing people's reports and you note similarities—all are

see "brevity" page 4

## Anniversaries, Events, Group News

### Recent

**John H.**, 10 year medallion, Feb. 1, Thursday East End Group. The Speaker was his brother, Gord, who received his 10 year last Nov.

### Upcoming

**Alanon Day**, Saturday, April 20th, 9:00 am to 4:00 p.m., St. Gabriel's Parish Centre, Shepherd Ave. E. in Willowdale. This annual event would be a perfect way to introduce your loved ones to the Alanon way of life.

**Ontario Regional Conference**, April 12, 13, & 14, Sheraton Hotel & Convention Centre. See article on page 4 for details.

**Eastern Ontario International Area Assembly**, DCM and GSR Area 83, March 28, 29 & 30, Ambassador Hotel, Kingston. Saturday will be a Service Day with the Assembly on Sunday. Keynote speaker: W.J. (Jim) Estelle, Jr., chairperson of the General Service Board of AA.

**Kingsway Group**, 50th anniversary, May 8th.

**Dennis**, 5-year medallion, March 3, Half-Century Group.

**Claude**, 10-year medallion, March 24, Half-Century Group.

### New Meetings

**Spiritual Progress Meeting**, Grace United Church, Main & Church, Brampton. Every weekday, 12 noon. Step/Tradition alternate days. Closed.

**Rexdale United Discussion**, St. Paul's the Apostle Anglican, 2182 Kipling & Rexdale. Wed., 8:00pm. Step discussion. Closed. (Note: different location to open meeting.)

**Rexdale United**, St. Benedict's R.C. Church, 2194 Kipling & Rexdale. Thurs., 8:30 p.m. Open. (Note: different location to closed meeting.)

**Sweetgrass Circle Group**, Pedabuu Lodge Treatment Centre, 1330 King St. W. Wed., 7:00 p.m. Closed. Must sign in and then go to coach house in back.

**Downtown 5:15 Discussion**, Trinity Anglican Church behind Eaton Centre. Fri., 5:15 p.m. Closed.

**New Beginning**, Peel Memorial Hospital Chemical Withdrawal Centre, 135 McLaughlin Rd., South Brampton, between O.C.I. & Vanier, same side, front door. Thurs., 8:00 pm. Open.

**One Day at a Time Discussion Group**, Driftwood Community Centre, 4401 Jane St., Rm. 5, at Driftwood, north of Finch. Fri., 8:00 pm. Closed.

**All Hope**, Ralph Thornton Centre, 765 Queen St. E., 3rd floor, 2 blocks east of Broadview. Sat. 6:30 am. Open topic discussion. Closed. (Open meeting follows.)

### Meeting Changes

**Bellamy Group**, Mon. new time: 8:00 pm.

**Malvern Group**, moves from Tues. to Wed., 8:30 pm.

**Milliken Group**, Mon. Open & Wed. Closed. New time: 8:00 p.m. both nights.

**Birds of a Feather Group**, Sun. New location: Toronto Baha'i Centre, 2nd floor, Huron and Bloor St., 1 block E. of Spadina.

**New Freedom Group**, Third Thursday of the month is now the only open meeting. All other meetings are now closed.

**Markville 12&12 Discussion Group**, New times: Winter: 9:00 p.m., June to Sept.: 8:30 pm.

**All Hope**, Sat. Open. New location: Ralph Thornton Centre, 765 Queen St. E., 3rd floor, 2 blocks east of Broadview.

**Saturday Midnight Meeting**, Oasis Club is cancelled.

## The year 2005 . . . and Toronto's hopes

Hopes are high for Toronto to be the site of AA's International Conference in 2005.

Toronto is on the shortlist of sites. Let's keep fingers crossed!



# **ORC '96**

The annual Ontario Regional Conference (ORC) will be held in Toronto's Sheraton Hotel & Convention Centre on April 12, 13 & 14, 1996.

Highlights planned for this year include the following speakers: Clara S., Los Angeles; Bill O'K., New York; Russell S., Miami; Hank P., Windsor; and Bob D., Barrie. The banquet speaker will be Jack K. from White Plains, N.Y. A group from Rochester, N.Y. will conduct the spiritual panel on Sunday morning. Other panels and workshops round out the weekend.

The ORC is sponsored by Toronto Intergroup. While alcoholics from far and wide will be attending the conference, the majority are expected to be from the Toronto Intergroup area.

If your group does not have registration forms, simply mail your name address and group name to P.O. Box 38111, 550 Eglinton Ave. W., Toronto, M5N 3A8 with a cheque for \$25. The Saturday Banquet is an additional \$42. If you wish to volunteer, please note that with your registration or speak to your group secretary.

## **Why a Conference?**

Thinking about this year's Ontario Regional Conference (ORC) reminds me of being a newcomer to AA. I went to a conference in Ohio and

I got a lift back to Canada from another member from Toronto. This gentleman got me a job. This was a direct benefit to me for having gone to a conference, but this is not what is meant when we talk about the benefits of conferences.

At conferences we get a glimpse of how big AA really is. We hear at meetings about the hundred of thousands who have been helped by the Program, but it is only at a conference that we can begin to understand the size and scope of this thing we call Alcoholic Anonymous. This is where I can see some of the many thousands who are just like me. "You are no longer alone" never rings truer than when I sit in a banquet hall surrounded by hundreds of people just like me, who like me just for myself!

As a relative newcomer, I worked on conference. By volunteering my time and abilities, I became a part of the conference. I felt useful. When I found AA, I had been fired from a job as a grease monkey, and I was pretty much unemployable. It was good to feel useful. It felt good to try to repay the people who had saved my life.

In my opinion, it is good for newcomers to become involved in conference. Greeting at a conference is an incredible opportunity to meet people and to get a view of the big picture. Hearing speakers from other cities and countries helps to break down a great many barriers in our minds and reminds

us that we are all united by a common problem.

Long time members, too, can benefit in many different ways. It is a great opportunity to catch up on what's been happening in the lives of those we do not see very often. Many have shared the experience of having wondered whatever happened to so-and-so that they twelve stepped at some point, only to find them either chairing or sharing on a panel or even as the main speaker at one conference or another. There are benefits for us all—old and new alike.

The ORC is our conference. The Group Conscience decided on it, we elected a committee to put it on—WE ARE RESPONSIBLE for it.

*Dan McK.*

To volunteer as a greeter at the upcoming ORC, contact your group secretary or the ORC committee at the address mentioned in the article about the conference.

## **brevity** *continued from page 3*

working hard, trying to do more with less—support is down, contributions are down, more help is needed of every sort, we're stretched pretty thin but are coping, could use a hand, etc. Sounds familiar—better let people know and ask for volunteers, there must be something I could do.

You find that the previous Intergroup meeting was a real barnburner (i.e., it got pretty hot under a few people's collars—glad you missed that one—starting out with a fire fight is just what you need), but everyone's pulling together now, working together to make things work better in '96. It works much better that way, thank you. And ... you had no idea how many things people were trying to do!

Finally you hear the Chairperson's closing remarks on the principle of consultation (you always thought that consultants had no principles!) and you realize that that was exactly what all these people were doing—consulting with each other prior to taking action for the general good and that is what an Intergroup meeting is supposed to be about.

Your humble scribe

*Kevin M.*

*The next Intergroup meeting will be March 26th, St. Margaret's Church, Avenue Rd., above Eglinton, 8:00 pm*

## **A Small World**

At a recent banquet, I was walking past a table when a girl said: "It was you! I saw you in Dirty Nelly's pub in Shannon, Ireland last July." She explained that, although she was sure it was me, she knew I was in AA so she figured it couldn't be!

That's the beauty of the program for me. I can go into a pub, if I want to, but I don't need to drink.

*Dan McK.*

## **Yes, I want a subscription to BETTER TIMES!**

234 Eglinton Avenue, East, Suite 202, Toronto, ON M4P 1K5

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