

## MARCH 2024

### HAPPINESS IN SOBRIETY

What does happiness look like for recovering alcoholics? In this issue, we highlight the highs and lows that have come with our new way of living. We also explore the history of the upcoming Ontario Regional Conference and take a stroll down the memory lane in the Archives Corner.

#### SHARE YOUR STORY



Please scan the QR Code or tap this box and you will be directed to our [anonymous content submission page](#).

## INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- Finding Happiness in Sobriety
- A New Happiness
- A Brief History of the Ontario Regional Conference
- March Medallions & Committee Meetings
- Archives Corner
- ... And More!

**BETTER TIMES** is published monthly for AA members in the Greater Toronto Area.  
234 Eglinton Ave East, Suite #202,  
Toronto M4P 1K5  
Telephone Number – Literature Department 416-487-9865  
Email [bettertimes@aatoronto.org](mailto:bettertimes@aatoronto.org)  
Editorial Committee  
Ted D. Communications Chair  
Alice N. Better Times Editor  
Ken M. BT Writer  
Kelli T. OC Liaison  
Imran R. Distributions

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, event notices, letters to the editor and articles to Better Times, before the 10th of the month prior to month of issue by email to [bettertimes@aatoronto.org](mailto:bettertimes@aatoronto.org) or contact Alexx at 416-487-8110

## FINDING HAPPINESS IN SOBRIETY

I am a person who did not find the rooms until my mid-40s.

I picked up my first drink at 16 and did not put the proverbial plug in the jug until I was 45, and the trail of carnage I had left in my wake was damning. In the last few years of my drinking career, I began to drink to push every single good thing away from me and to end my own life.

At the end of the last year from hell, I realized that I could not drink enough to do what I wanted to do, and in fact, needed help. This is the point that I can genuinely say that something greater than myself whispered into this mess of a head of mine that I just needed to ask for help and it would be given. That is how I found my first meeting of Alcoholics Anonymous.

Life in shambles, my marriage falling apart, and my mind and body screaming for me to stop hurting myself, I stumbled into my first meeting of Alcoholics Anonymous. This is the point at which I found hope for the first time in my life. Hope that I was not alone, that there was a way out of the darkness, and by the looks of the people in the room that night, some sense of happiness.

I was so tired and broken that I did all the things that were suggested to me. Like getting a sponsor, finding a home group, getting to as many meetings as possible, and working the steps as honestly and as thoroughly as I could.



I had a love-hate relationship with all these things when I first began this journey.

I got my sponsor relatively quickly and a home group, both of whom I loved for the safe space, but both of whom I despised for holding me accountable for my attitudes and actions.

The meetings were torture walking to them every single day, but somehow, I always felt better once I was there and walking back home. The steps were determined to be the death of me in the beginning, except they began to do something healing to me. By the time I was living through step 3, all of the depression and suicidal thoughts I had felt for most of my life had started to melt away. I felt the grace of a Higher Power working in me that gave me more hope than I had ever felt, and that told me to my core that I would never be alone again.

It was by living through steps 4 through 9 that I started to feel a sense of freedom and the tinges of happiness starting to happen. By cleaning up my side of the street I can tell you that the fear, shame, and rage that had filled up all the empty spaces in me for the vast majority of my life had begun to leave me. And learning to live in steps 10, 11, and 12 daily gives me what I term as my true happiness in sobriety, or as I like to call it, my life.

– Cont'd on page 02 –

## A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE ONTARIO REGIONAL CONFERENCE

The Ontario Regional Conference, as it has come to be known, had humble beginnings.

**On December 16, 1943**, eighty people came together at the Royal York Hotel to mingle, and more importantly, to celebrate their newfound sobriety. This celebration was a continuation of smaller commemorations that all marked the anniversary of the beginnings of AA in Toronto, Canada.

Between 1943 and 1950, the location of the conference changed frequently. The Central office at 1170 Yonge Street or '1170', the Knights of Columbus Hall on Sherbourne Street and Central Tech High School were used a number of times, until the organizing teams returned to the Royal York Hotel every year from 1951 to 1979.

**On March 3 & 4, 1951**, The Ontario Regional Conference was held at the Royal York Hotel. Bill Wilson came to speak and gave a pitch for a General Service Conference. It was unanimously accepted by those in attendance from

– Cont'd on pg. 2 –

***A Brief History of the Ontario Regional Conference***  
*- cont'd from pg. 1 -*

the State of New York, the State of Pennsylvania and the Province of Ontario.

In the new scheme of things, the two states and the province of Ontario became entities unto themselves, after adopting Bill Wilson's plan for the Third Legacy.

It now became necessary to elect an Ontario delegate to attend the General Service Conference, which would be held the following month, April 1951, in New York.

Adam Capeling from the Friday-Young Group in Toronto was elected as Ontario's first delegate. He would go on to serve on Panel 1 from 1951 to 1952.

In 1953 he was unanimously chosen as the first Canadian to serve on the Board of Trustees from January 1953 until April 1957.

The huge task of establishing areas and districts throughout the Province of Ontario to fit into these new A.A. plans fell in the hands of Adam Capeling upon his return from the Conference in New York.

During his first year in office, with capable and dedicated help of his committee, they got this job done, in spite of the enormity of it all. Most of what was accomplished then remains in place today.

**In 1958**, the Ontario region was divided into 2 areas – the West and the East/North.

**In 1963**, the Ontario region was further divided into 3 areas – East, West & North.

**In the fall of 1964**, the 1st Assembly for Eastern Ontario was held outside Toronto. Alf McGowan from Ottawa was elected delegate at Belleville.

From the very beginning, the Ontario Regional Conference was sponsored by all groups in Ontario.

With the passage of time and growth, many parts of the province began to have their own conferences.

From 1951 until 1963, delegates were elected at the Ontario Regional Conference. The first Western Ontario Delegate was elected in London in 1957.

Gradually, the original purpose for this conference eroded, although it continued to be sponsored by

Toronto Intergroup and the Ontario General Service Committee, whose name changed to Ontario Provincial Committee in 1981.

## **ORC TIDBITS OVER THE YEARS**

**1948** - Bill & Lois Wilson were speakers.

**1953** - Bill Dotson from Akron, Ohio, AA #3, "Man on the Bed" spoke. Also Ethel Macy from Akron, Ohio, 1st lady in Akron to get sober spoke.

**1957** - 1st time Friday Night conference is held.

**1960** - Registration- single \$9.50, double \$13.50

**1962** - Saturday Night 1st Dance.

**1964** - 1st Theme "Sobriety in Action."

**1965** - ORC was not held instead the International Convention of AA in Toronto was held. More than 10,000 attendees. Theme was "I Am Responsible" & the Responsibility Declaration was recited at the conclusion of the gathering.

**1969** - 1st time Banquet is chaired by ORC Chair.

**1978** - All Canadian Speakers.

**1980** - 1st time ORC lost money (\$19,000 for coffee) on account of providing free coffee throughout the weekend.

**1981** - 1st time women chaired, Rita O. Hill Group.

**1987** - 1st time at two hotels- Harbour Castle & King Edward.

**1993** - ORC not held instead 50th Anniversary of AA in Canada held at the Metro Convention Centre. Approx. 7,000 attendees.

**1994** - In addition to ticket price 2x 7th Tradition was taken.

**2005** - ORC was not held. Instead the International Convention of AA in Toronto was held. First time a city hosted the convention twice. More than 44,000 attendees. Theme was "I Am Responsible" reprising the 1965 theme.

**2024 - Let's make history together!** Mark your calendars for March 15-17, 2024.

Eddie G., Archives

***Finding Happiness in Sobriety - cont'd***  
*from pg. 1 -*

Happiness in sobriety today looks like this for me...

Waking up, not worrying about what wrongs I have done, or trying to remember what happened the night before.

Happiness is wanting to suit up and show up for those around me, in every possible way, without the need to pull away because I feel unworthy.

Happiness is as simple as knowing I can speak my truth not as a weapon, but simply as what it is. My truth.

The angry man who lived for the first half of my life is gone, as long as I remember that my sobriety and life that I enjoy today are contingent on my daily spiritual fitness.

Today when I go to a meeting, I ask myself what I can give back. That is what I consider a happy and useful life in sobriety.

One of the biggest gifts is getting to witness this process in the still-suffering alcoholic who finds the rooms and stays until the miracle happens, one day at a time.

Michael T., Long Branch Group

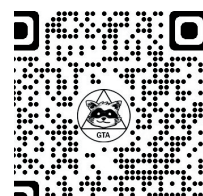
## **GRAPEVINE BOOK OF THE MONTH**



## **STEP BY STEP**

Real AAs, Real Recovery

A variety of experiences from AAs that have written about working the 12 Steps.



**Scan this QR code to access more "Better Times" issues!**





# ORC

ONTARIO REGIONAL CONFERENCE

A NEW  
FREEDOM

## MARK YOUR CALENDARS FOR MARCH 15-17, 2024

The 2024 Ontario Regional Conference is almost here!

On March 15th, at the Sheraton hotel in downtown Toronto, the ORC will begin.

The committee has been working for over a year to plan a weekend of great speakers, fellowship, and fun!

Our theme this year is “A New Freedom”, part of the 12 promises which are found in chapter 6, “Into Action”, of the Big Book.



Join us to hear from speakers who share their stories of what it was like, what happened, and what it's like now — and how they have found *A New Freedom* as they practised the program of recovery!

Onsite registration will open at 11:00 am on the concourse level. There will be AA & Al-Anon meetings Friday afternoon, with the opening meeting at 7:00 pm in the Grand Ballroom. Get your singing voice ready for Karaoke at 9:30 pm Friday night!

Meditation will be 7:30 am Saturday & Sunday morning.

Saturday meetings begin at 8:30 am on, and run through until late in the night. A few of the Saturday highlights:

- Family Panel at 11:00 am, where an AA & Al-Anon member will each share their story.
- Al-Anon is hosting a panel: “How AA and Al-Anon can strengthen Alateen”. This is your opportunity to learn about Alateen & how you can help carry the message to teenagers.
- Gabe E., who got sober young, will be speaking at 1:00 pm in Grand Ballroom. Following that, at 3:00 PM, Gabe will host a “Being Young in recovery” panel.
- The Banquet Speaker will begin at approximately 7:15 pm and will be simulcast in Sheraton E, Osgoode Ballroom and Brande Ballroom East.
- Saturday evening will end with a Dance & Talkathon.

Meetings on Sunday begin at 9:00 am. The conference will close with the Sobriety Countdown, beginning at 1:00 pm, followed by our closing speaker.

We look forward to seeing you soon!

*“If we are painstaking about this phase of our development,  
we will be amazed before we are half way through.  
We are going to know **A New Freedom** and a new happiness.”*

## GTAI/DISTRICT – MARCH SUBCOMMITTEE MEETINGS

**Accessibilities** - Sun. Mar. 17 – 11 a.m.

ID: 824 8962 1874 - PW: 799763

**Archives** - Fri. Mar. 08 – 7 p.m.

ID: 841 5376 9412 - PW: 018851

**Communications** - Tues. Mar. 19 – 8 p.m.

ID: 850 5256 7237 - PW: 984555

**CPC/PI** - Mon. Mar. 18 – 7 p.m.

ID: 854 7547 0291 - PW: 002060

**Correctional Facilities** - Mar. 05 – 7 p.m.

ID: 883 8002 9737 - PW: 950392

**Self-Support - Meets every other month.** Next

Meeting: March 28 - 6:30 pm

ID: 820 9238 0206 - PW: 319853

**Treatment** - Mar. 17th - 4pm

ID: 868 2207 4860 - PW: 787289

**Twelfth Step** - Wed. Mar. 13 – 7 p.m.

ID: 813 0646 6967 - PW: 572531

**IT Subcommittee** - Tues. Mar. 12 – 7 p.m.

ID: 814 0942 9019 - PW: 379691

**Information AA Day** - Mon. Mar. 25 - 7 p.m.

ID: 811 8277 5978 - PW: 587553

## MARCH MEDALLIONS

**Andrew S.**, Lakeshore Group, 20 yrs, March 24th

**David L.**, Living and Learning Group, 20 yrs., March 26th

**Elli F.**, Miami Beach Group, 5 years, March 16

**Renay P.**, Newmarket Group, 5 years, March 14

**Dave McC.**, Mount Albert Group, 1 year, March 5

**Tara M.**, New Anchor Group, 1 yr., Celebration Date: March 7th

## IS THERE AN UPCOMING MEDALLION?

Please send your medallion details to  
[bettertimes@aatoronto.org](mailto:bettertimes@aatoronto.org)  
in the format of:  
name - homegroup - year(s) of sobriety -  
medallion date

Kindly note that Better Times only publishes the first year of continuous sobriety birthday celebrations or every subsequent 5th year of continuous sobriety (i.e. 1, 5, 10, 15, 20...)

# ARCHIVES CORNER

## Did you Know .... ?

**On March 1, 1941**, a Saturday Evening Post article on AA by Jack Alexander was published. Over 6,000 inquiries were sent to the NY Office during 1941 because of the article. In 1941, AA membership surged from around 2,000 to over 8,000.

**On March 2, 1941**, the 2nd printing of the first edition Big Book was made, almost two years after its introduction. There were several alterations. The title page text changed from "One Hundred Men" to "More Than Two Thousand Men and Women." The story "Lone Endeavor" of Pat C. from CA was removed. It had been ghost written by Ruth Hock. Pat, who claimed to have sobered up from a manuscript copy of the Big Book, was invited to NY shortly after the book was printed & arrived in NY quite drunk. The wording of Step 12 was changed. The term "spiritual experience" was changed to "spiritual awakening" and the term "as the result of these steps" was changed to "as the result of those steps". Also Appendix II, "Spiritual Experience" was added to the book. Many members thought they had to have a sudden, profound spiritual experience similar to the one Bill W. had in Towns Hospital in NY. The appendix emphasized that most spiritual experiences were of the type that the psychologist William James called "educational variety" which developed slowly over time.

**In March 1941**, Cleveland formed the fellowship's first women's group and also the first Black women's group.

**On March 18, 1944**, the first reported women's prison group met at Clinton Farms in Clinton, New Jersey.

**On March 22, 1951**, William Duncan Silkworth M.D. (age 78) "the little doctor who loved drunks" & "medical saint" died of a heart attack at his home at 45 W 81st St. NYC. In his service as Medical Director at Towns & Knickerbocker Hospitals, he "Silky" was credited with treating over 40,000 alcoholics. Dr. Silkworth was AA's first friend in medicine. He treated Bill in the beginning & was with him during his experience in Towns Hospital. He gave us knowledge of the nature of our disease; "the obsession of the mind that compels us to drink and the allergy of the body that condemns us to go mad or die." His funeral was held at the Calvary Episcopal Church in NY City & he was laid to rest in Glenwood Cemetery in West Long Beach, NJ.

**On March 3-4, 1951**, Bill W. spoke about the proposed General Service Conference at the ORC held at the Royal York Hotel. As a result, Adam C. (Friday-Young Group in Toronto) was elected as the 1st Delegate from the whole province of Ontario. He served on Panel 1 (1951-1952) and then as Trustee for all of Canada in 1953 but fell sick during his term.

**In March 1953**, the "Ontario Regional Conference" (ORC) name was used for the first time.

## Greater Toronto Area Groups That Started in March

- March 17, 1949 - Sunnyside Group
- March 1, 1954 - Willowdale Group
- March 17, 1960 - Port Credit Group
- March 8, 1968 - West Toronto Women's Meeting
- March 19, 1970 - Golden Mile Group
- March 7, 1971 - Trial & Error Group
- March 8, 1971 - King City Group
- March 22, 1972 - Third Tradition Meeting
- March 17, 1981 - St. Patrick's Group
- March 1981 - Aurora Group
- March 17, 1984 - St. Andrew's Group - Scarborough
- March 29, 1984 - Recovery Group - Thornhill
- March 11, 1986 - Shepherd Group
- March 6, 1987 - Lighthouse Group
- March 17, 2004 - Primary Purpose Group

TO DONATE AA/GTA ARCHIVAL ITEMS TO ARCHIVES PLEASE CONTACT  
ARCHIVIST EDDY G. 416-536-7536 or [archives@aatoronto.org](mailto:archives@aatoronto.org)  
OLD GTA MEETING BOOKS ARE NEEDED FOR THE ARCHIVES.

## A NEW HAPPINESS

It's funny how we are presented with moments in our life that push us out of our comfort zone.

It seems that when we are down in the dumps, those are the times that god speaks to us and tells us that we should be doing that very uncomfortable thing.

AA teaches us that whenever we are asked to do something, we are to say "yes".

If I was asked to write this in my first year of my sobriety (around 6 months once the brain fog faded) I would have had a lot of new sobriety wisdom to share. Today, I would simply have to say that it has been interesting.

I will be celebrating 2 years of sobriety on February 19th.

Sobriety and the program awakens you. And sometimes not in the way you had hoped. Or maybe that is how it currently feels.

I have realized I am the primary cause of my own suffering.

I have control issues and I am not a very positive person (especially to myself).

I have never been so self-aware in my life. It's like the glaze over my eyes has cleared and I am seeing everything that is holding me back and trying to figure out how to be... How to just be...

One of my exes long ago gave me a book called 'the power of positive thinking.' I read about 10 pages and once I saw mention of God I tossed it aside.

But now when I think back... I think that I was more afraid of being positive than of the reference of god.

I've spent so much of my life being negative and worrying that it feels like it has become part of my DNA.

I have been able to hold off and not look at my negativity. But now that I'm reaching into my 2's, it has become apparent that I need to really reframe my outlook or I will drink again.

I am en route to discover a new happiness.

I have become humble and aware enough to see that the negativity is no longer serving me and it is truly hurting me.

This program has given me the awareness to truly look at myself and have the courage to change.

Jaki M.