

BETTER TIMES



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You are invited to ...

Winter Season * Open House *

Sponsored by Greater Toronto Intergroup
Saturday December 25th, 2004
Emmanuel - Howard Park United Church
Roncesvalles and Wright Avenue
(near Dundas West subway station)
Warm Hospitality and good fellowship

BETTER TIMES

Published monthly for AA members in the Greater Toronto Area

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*Opinions expressed in BETTER
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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 10th of the
prior month of issue), by mail,
fax or email. Only signed sub-
missions with a means of contact
will be accepted. For subscrip-
tions call Alexx at 416-487-8110.
Not responsible for hyperlink
content.

60 Years of Food & Fellowship!

It's almost that time again ... time for a great AA Christmas Dinner and Party! The Winter Season Open House was started way back in 1944, and while it's hard to believe that was 60 years ago, the Tradition still goes on and the Hospitality is stronger than ever!

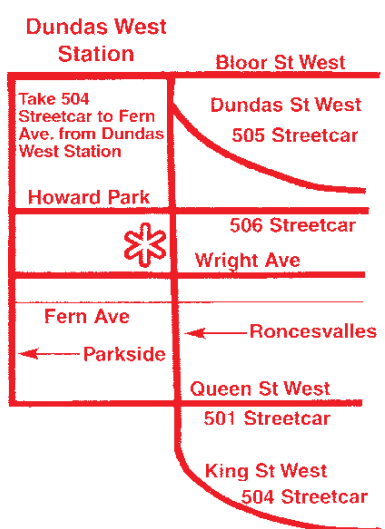
This is an occasion when AA's and their families can get together for a great day of Food (and lots of it), Fun (including live music), and Fellowship (two Open AA meetings as well as a great Christmas Dinner!)

Usually dinners are served to approximately 300 people, who come from all over. It's a great way to meet

old friends as well as new ones. This year, the doors open at 9.00 a.m. for coffee, then out comes all that great Christmas food at 11.00 a.m., "Till we run out!" The first meeting will be at 1.00 p.m., followed by a second meeting at 3.00 p.m.

Looking back, I remember that life can be pretty lonely for an Alcoholic on Christmas Day; at least it was for me. I used to hate Christmas; I sometimes wished it would never come. That was 13 years ago, and now, all that has changed for me. Christmas now has a special meaning, and Winter Season Open House has

See Open House Page 2



Cooks and Volunteers are Really Needed on Christmas Eve and Christmas Day for Set-up, Decorating and Kitchen Help!
Please call Kenny C. @ (416)762-1176, Patricia @ (647)896-3917, or GTA Intergroup @ (416)487-5591 to Volunteer at Christmas! "Don't be a Turkey - Come & Help Cook One!"
Musical Volunteers are also needed! Anybody with Musical Talent, please Call Tom S., "Entertainment Director" for Winter Season Open House @ (416) -461-8356 or Call 234 @ (416)-487-8110. Come & Share A Great Day! (And you can eat it, too! How's that for a Deal!)

Another year gone by.

It seems like only yesterday I was here introducing myself as the newly elected Editor of the **BETTER TIMES**. I had hopes of accomplishing a few things while at the helm of the editorial; to continue to bring our Constant Readers the latest and greatest information on AA in our great city, and perhaps add a bit of zest to the content to heighten awareness, and well, make you think.

It's been fun.

Somehow, however, the heart of this fellowship seems to have one constant obstacle:

The Editors Say...

When The Money Doesn't Come

money. Our Committee works tirelessly to get this newsletter out each month, writing and editing articles, and meeting once a month to cross the t's and dot the i's. In addition, we have to grapple with some tough issues.

Paid readership has not increased over the past few years, and with less money available through Intergroup, we did consider a price increase to 30 cents for a while.

Crunched the numbers, and found that at the discounted subscription rates, we only needed fourteen 25-copy subscriptions to make it. Alas, we were unable to persuade enough people.

Next month, you will see a change in the **BETTER TIMES**. You will still enjoy the same stories and articles of interest you have come to love over the years, and count on more of that added zest. But the flashy

colour emblems will be gone, as will the colour type.

And my term as Editor will be done. I know for a fact whoever takes over will still serve the membership like no other can, and that our Constant Readers will continue to be challenged on the issues that face us, and still be informed of the news that interests us.

For, in Alcoholics Anonymous, these will always be, **BETTER TIMES**.

Gord MacK.

Editor

But For The Grace Of God

She stands every night at the bottom of the stairs – one of the still hopeless. She smells of stale liquor from an afternoon toot. She hugs me when I reach the bottom, occasionally leaning to help steady her drunken stance. Although she is shunned, and left behind, by some who have apparently forgotten where they came from, she Keeps Coming Back, because we have promised to help her.

But for the Grace of God, there go I.

He still attends an occasional meeting, but they are fewer and far between. He hardly recognizes anyone anymore. His clique of friends is his only reasons for coming anymore. The Steps really helped when he was new, but somehow, they aren't making his life any better now. He considers the possibility that he was not even an alcoholic at all. His life seems hopeless once again, and he hasn't had a drink in years. Tonight, he

thinks of going to his home group, but decides against it. He walks to the local plaza, and stares in the window of the tavern. If they can't help him anymore, maybe his old friend Jack Daniels can. Just one...

But for the Grace of God, there go I.

His bottle is the only one he trusts. His wife left him, his kids won't speak to him, no one will hire him, and there is not a soul in the world who understands him. He spends each night alone in his apartment, drinking whatever he can afford. The police, the doctors and the social workers have all tried to help him. They send him to AA a few times, but they just don't understand. Alcohol is not the problem – they are. He takes a long toss of Scotch, and wonders who will miss him when he's gone. He moves the pistol closer to his head...

But for the Grace of God, there go I.

I did not reach Alcoholics Anonymous by serendipity, but some Power Greater than Myself led me in the right direction. Some Supreme Force overpowered all aspects of my common sense (at the time) and what I heard at my first few meetings moved me in an indescribable way. When, after a few years in AA, my complacency mixed with resentment and doubt, and I walked away from AA for two years, a Guiding Light led me back.

Along the way, some little miracles happened. Events or circumstance occurred at just the right time to keep me on the path I am still on today.

The second example is autobiographical. I opened the door to that tavern with one intention, and suddenly my cell phone rang. My ex-wife had called to ask me something, heard the desperation in my voice, and after hearing where I was and what I was doing, told me that after all the things I had done wrong in my life, the one thing that she and the kids were most proud of was the fact that I was able to get and stay sober.

That was the night that, if I had been attending meetings, I would have received my five-year medallion. My date with JD never happened, and I picked up my eight-year Chip two weeks ago.

What separates me (and you) from these three tragic examples are more than coincidences – they are the Grace of the God of our understanding. Beyond our Primary Purpose, I believe there is a Great Purpose for each one of us; having made it this far when so many others never do. So many more will die never having the chance.

It is said that "Grace is an unmerited gift." When you open the presents under the tree this year, perhaps you might consider saying "Thank You" for this one.

Gord MacK.

Open House from page 1

played a huge part in my personal recovery. I have not missed the Winter Season Open House in all those 13 years. For the past five years I have been involved with the WSOH committee, serving in many positions.

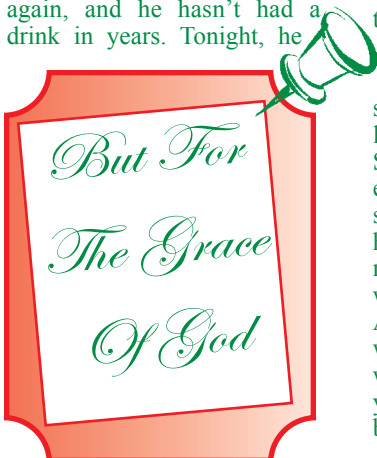
This will be my last year serving on the Winter Season Open House Committee, but you will still find me there every Christmas. It is an amazing Event and I wouldn't miss it for the world! Where else can you find 300 sober alcoholics in one room at Christmas time AND get Christmas Dinner too?

And HOW do you find it? The Winter Season Open House is at Emmanuel-Howard Park United Church, 214 Wright Avenue; at Roncesvalles Avenue (the church is located right on the corner). TTC Directions: Go to the Dundas West Subway Station. From there, take the 504 Streetcar down Roncesvalles, OR go to Broadview Subway Station, and take the 504 Streetcar, which goes west along King Street, and then goes north on Roncesvalles.

Watch for our Event Flyers with the Snowman!

All are welcome and I hope to see you there!

*Kenny C.
(Westmoreland Group),
Winter Season Open House,
2004 Chairperson.*



Archives Alley

International Convention

Toronto, our beloved city, will host the International Convention June 30-July 3, 2005. Held every five years, we will join together with the AA World community to celebrate seventy years of Alcoholics Anonymous.

The first International Convention was held in Cleveland July 28-30 in 1950. Texas was planning to hold its own International Convention independent of New York. Bill W. persuaded them not to call it an International Convention because others would follow suit. The ultimate decision to hold the first International Convention in Cleveland was an example of how Bill W. was able to stay ahead of trends that threatened to divide AA.

In 1946, there were two thousand members of AA in Cleveland, one of the largest concentrations of sober alcoholics. The planning of such an event would bring Akron, Cleveland and New York together and help neutralize ongoing friction. Cleveland was also the home of Clarence S. who had begun to claim he was the founder of AA. Basing the Convention in Cleveland would be advantageous in resolving a number of conflicts. Especially for Dr. Bob who was very ill with cancer. He would be able to attend.

The opening of the convention was profound; with Bill W. wearing a lei to represent an AA group at a leper colony in Hawaii, whose members, he explained, would never attend a gathering such as this. Dr. Bob gave his last inspiring talk significantly ending with the phrase, "Let us also remember to guard that erring member, the tongue, and if we must use it, let's use it with kindness and consideration and tolerance." He spoke briefly and died within six months.

It was here that Bill W. asked AA to put into place the AA Conference and to approve the AA Traditions, the bonds that keep AA together.

Bernadette MacL

Have You Heard?

DECEMBER 2004

RECENT MEDALLIONS

Manny C., 1 yr, *Rexdale United*, Oct.28
William I., 1 yr, *Pathfinders*, Nov.1
Dan M., 40 yrs, *Lawrence Plaza*, Nov.21
Heink H., 15 yrs, *Rexdale United*, Nov.25
Peter P., 1 yr., *New Anchor*, Nov. 25

UPCOMING MEDALLIONS

Andrea O., 5 yrs, *Sunnyside*, Dec.2
Linda R., 1 yr, *Sunnyside*, Dec.9
Marcella C., 10 yrs, *Rexdale United*, Dec.9
Francis A., 15 yrs, *Crossroads Big Book Discussion*, Dec.12
Bill McK., 1 yr, *Westmoreland*, Dec.14
Hughey D., 10 yrs., *Scarborough*, Dec. 17
Derl D. & Gaby P., both 10 yrs, *Spiritual Progress*, both celebrating Jan.8
Rick P., 10 yrs, *Spiritual Progress*, Jan.15
David S., 20 yrs, *Glenholme*, Jan.17
Charles M., 30 yrs., *St. Jamestown* Jan 23
Bob S., 20 yrs, *Glenholme*, Jan.31

GROUP ANNIVERSARIES

Six Points Group (WEST) Jan.10. All Welcome!
Saturday Noon Meeting Celebrates 25 years of service January 8th.

MEETING CHANGES:

Please contact 234 for most recent information. (Info not printed in this month's Newsletter in order to allow space for Holiday Announcements)

SPECIAL EVENTS, CONVENTIONS, AND CONFERENCES

28th Annual SPIRITUAL NEW YEAR'S EVE & DANCE Fri. Dec.31 at Holy Rosary Parish Hall, 354 St Clair Ave West at Bathurst (St Clair west subway station). Parking in rear of hall (enter drive on west side). Doors open at 9 p.m. 9:30 p.m. – 11 p.m.: AA meeting in Main Auditorium. 11:30 enter adjoining church for Candlelight Interfaith Gratitude Service, to be followed by a Pot Luck Buffet and Dance. **Tickets \$10 in advance; \$12 at the door. Ticket information, call John P. (416) 698-0395.** Food Donations (Casseroles, Cold Cuts, Cheese and Crackers, Desserts, etc.) appreciated. **Volunteers for this committee needed and welcome! Next Committee Meeting: contact 234 for details. Watch for flyers.**

SPECIAL ANNOUNCEMENT

WINTER SEASON OPEN HOUSE NEEDS MORE COOKS!!! Due to expansion and a bigger kitchen, the Winter Season Open House Event needs **MORE VOLUNTEER COOKS** for Christmas Day 2004! Don't be a 'turkey', come out and cook one! Musical Volunteers are also needed! Anybody with Musical Talent, please Call Tom S., "Entertainment Director" for Winter Season Open House @ (416) -461-8356 or Call 234 @ (416)-487-8110. Come & Share A Great Day! Free dinner, too! **Call Kenny C. to volunteer (416)762-1176.**

Holiday Meeting Announcements and Candlelight Meetings

The following is a list of meeting openings and cancellations over the Holidays. If your group wishes to announce information for the January edition (to be available at the December 14 General Meeting), please submit it to 234 by Friday, Dec.3.

MEETING OPENINGS & CANCELLATIONS

Glenholme Group (CENTRAL) OPEN Mon. Dec.27 and Mon. Jan.3
Frontrunners Group (CENTRAL) CANCELLED Sat. Dec.25 and Sat. Jan.1
Noon Meetings at the Sanctuary (CENTRAL) OPEN Thurs Dec.23 and 30, Fri. Dec 24 and 31, Sat. Dec.25 and Jan.1, Sun. Dec.26 and Jan.2. *Watch for flyers.
Friday Women's Discussion (WEST) CANCELLED Fri. Dec.24; OPEN Fri. Dec.31
Restoration and Recovery Group (SUB.WEST) OPEN Fri. Dec 24, Fri. Dec.31; Tues. Dec 21, Tues. Dec.28

CANDLELIGHT / GRATITUDE MEETINGS

Glenholme Group Candlelight Meeting DEC.13 (CENTRAL)
Saturday 2 p.m. Meeting (at the Scott Mission) Gratitude Meeting DEC.18 (CENTRAL)
Six Points Group Gratitude Meeting DEC.20 (WEST)
Westmoreland Group Candlelight Meeting DEC.21 (CENTRAL)
Don Valley Group Candlelight Meeting DEC.21 (NORTH)
New Anchor Group Candlelight Meeting DEC. 23 (EAST)
North Toronto Group Xmas Party Meeting DEC. 14 (CENTRAL) St. George's Church, Duplex Ave. N or Eglinton

Archives Breakfast 2004

“The soil in Akron was well prepared by God long before Bill W. made a telephone call from the Mayflower Hotel to Henrietta Sieberling.” So began the history of Alcoholics Anonymous by Akron Archivist, Gail L. With rapt attention, the audience at the Oasis Convention Center listened to her instructive and informative Power Point presentation.

“Akron is a city on a hill - why did God choose Akron, an industrial town, in the midst of a depression to be the genesis of the greatest spiritual movement of this century?”, pondered the Akron Archivist. In the late ‘70’s, Nell Wing, Bill W. ‘s secretary, asked Gail to start preserving the Akron records. “Our story would be myth if we did not keep good records”, said the Archivist.

The Oasis Club on Lakeshore Drive E. in Mississauga has been the host for the Annual Archives Breakfast for many years. The buffet breakfast is most enjoyable and the hall lends itself to the large crowds who attend. Proceeds from the Breakfast provide the committee with funds to continue ongoing work in preserving archival history of AA in the Toronto area.

Chair of the meeting was Pat P. of the Bayview Group. Dorothy C. of the Danforth Group read the Twelve Steps and Bryon G. of Cobourg, DCM of District 30, read the Traditions. Maire O., our Toronto Archivist, spoke of the singular importance of the members in preserving the history of their group. She acknowledged Tommy H., Al B., Bobby D. and Marg M. The

audience was then asked to call out AA members who had passed away in the last year.

Always held before Remembrance Day, the Archives Breakfast has been well attended, this year serving well over four hundred breakfasts to an enthusiastic gathering.

Bernadette MacL.

Top Ten “Memorable Gifts”

Let’s face it – some people are just impossible to buy for. Giving someone the “same old, same old” does not really leave an impression. Here are ten humorous suggestions for gifts your AA friend will definitely remember.

10. A Big Book - Tear out a few important pages and see if it takes them until June to notice (if they ever do).

9. An Inflatable Likeness – To send to their home group when they would rather stay home to watch the football game.

8. An Empty Bottle, An Empty Wallet and an Empty Journal - Reminding where they came from

7. A fifty-year medallion – With a card saying it is probably the only one they will ever see.

6. A cell phone – That never rings, so they will never interrupt a meeting again.

5. A T-shirt – With white letters saying “AA is for Quitters”

4. A 20-minute timer – That beeps when done, and says “... and today, life is great – now sit down!”

3. A Gossip Journal – To write down all the sludge they can come up with instead of sharing it at the coffee shop.

2. A Whiners Calling Card – To call someone who cares.

And finally, for those AA’s who think they have everything...

1. A 15 Minute Pass – To be used after a meeting, reminding them that, although the meeting is over, a newcomer may still want to talk.

2005 International Convention

“I am Responsible.”

June 30th – July 3rd 2005

“Come and celebrate The 70th Anniversary of Alcoholics Anonymous”



AA members from around the world will be coming to Toronto in 2005 to celebrate their sobriety and to share their experience, strength and hope in meetings, panels, workshops, and over coffee, at the Metro Toronto Convention Center, the SkyDome, and at other locations throughout this exciting city.

AA volunteers will be needed everywhere to meet and greet our visitors, to help them get to where they want to go and to show them that AA is alive and well in Toronto.

The Toronto Core Host Committee is working closely with the General Service Office to plan and implement the volunteer committee structure needed to provide this critical support. AA volunteers are the “heart and soul” of all International conventions.

Here are some Frequently Asked Questions:

Q: How many volunteers will be needed?

A: We will need about 4,000 volunteers on hand to welcome visiting members to Toronto.

Q: When can I sign up to volunteer?

A: The VOLUNTEER KICK-OFF event will be held on Sunday, January 23, 2005 at the Metro Toronto Convention Center. All AA members are welcome. This event is in the planning stages and flyers with

complete details will be distributed later this month.

Q: If I’m volunteering, will I still need to register for the Convention?

A: Yes. ALL International Convention attendees, including volunteers, must be registered. The International Convention is fully self-supporting through registration fees.

Q: What is the cost of registration?

A: Registration for the International Convention is \$115.00 CDN prior to May 16, 2005 and \$130.00 CDN after May 16, 2005.

Q: How can I register for the International Convention?

A: Registration forms have already been sent to all AA Groups, Districts and Intergroup offices. You can also register online at www.aa.org. Forms will be available at the Kickoff meeting in January.

Q: What can I do NOW?

A: Stay sober, register early and show up to sign up at the January Volunteer Kickoff meeting on January 23rd. In the meantime, remember:

Yours Truly,

*The Toronto 2005 Volunteer
Host Committee*

A Christmas Story...

You know how the Christmas Carol starts “‘Twas on a Midnight Clear...” Well here’s a Holiday Season story that may give you a chuckle. We’ve all heard the words “We shall never be organized...” in the Fellowship, but this one carries it to the Far Side.

To quote Rod Serling’s style in *The Twilight Zone*: “Picture, if you will, a cold winter’s night - getting close to Midnight, or even a little past it. Danny’s van is trundling through the snow, bearing a bunch of tired AA’s home after putting together the January issue of **BETTER TIMES**”. That would make it late on the third or fourth Wednesday evening in December - pretty close to Christmas - and after about four hours of “Dotting i’s and crossing t’s” everyone was a little whacked.

However, spirits were high - we’d done the job and we were heading home, even though there had been a heavy snowfall and it was very cold. Suddenly, traffic started to bunch up, the cars were lining up - something was wrong.

Next thing we knew - we were stopped. A figure loomed out of the night.

Danny cranked the window down to face a young, earnest-looking Lady Cop with a flashlight. It’s the Christmas RIDE Program! “Good

evening, sir. Have any of you people been drinking tonight?” she said. Danny looked at her and said “Hi. We’re all Alcoholics!” Well. That certainly set the cat among the pigeons. She probably thought she was going to have to arrest six people in a van right at Midnight! And to make matters worse, they were all laughing at her!

After flashing a bunch of Medallions at her and explaining why we were all laughing - she told us to go on home...but wait, there’s more! Remember, I said we were in Danny’s van? That particular van was famous for weird things happening - the speedometer running backwards, the gas gauge turning

upside down etc. After our narrow escape from the forces of Law & Order the van suddenly decided to run out of gas! Where’s our buddy the Lady Cop? It seems you can never find a Lady Cop when you NEED one! Several peo-

ple had cell phones, and we called a cab to a gas station that was still open at that hour, got gas, got back to the van and EVENTUALLY we all got home!

So as an added benefit to being in the Fellowship - we don’t have to worry about RIDE Programs any more!! Also, Danny’s new van is much more reliable than his old one. Merry Christmas!

Kevin M.



The Holiday Season – Simply the safest time of the year!

It seems like yesterday; that fateful day in my apartment as I weighed the pros and cons of joining AA; yet it has been almost 2 decades.

It was near the end of December, and one of my major concerns was how would I manage to get through the holiday season. Clearly, at that time, I had a firm grasp of doing this one day at a time - NOT!

It is common for most newcomers that I have spoken with to fear staying sober through the Holiday Season. It is a healthy fear; however, the irony is that the Holiday Season is perhaps the safest time of the year for an alcoholic of my type.

Why do I say that? Doesn’t that go against conventional wisdom? Having lived a long time with no clear understanding of what “conventional wisdom” is, I leave that answer to the reader, but consider this.

If you are reading this, then you are holding in your hand the Holiday Edition of **BETTER TIMES**, and there has historically been much advice here on how to get through the Holiday Season sober. Historically, there have been all day sober events in Toronto and there are several Sober Dances for New Year’s Eve.

While the Holiday Season was very dangerous for me, I have learned that it is not as dangerous as that non-descript ‘Any Day’, when there will be no Special Edition of the Grapevine or **BETTER TIMES** to read, nor any all day special events. I am more likely to not be paying attention to the day

at hand, and may have forgotten to ensure that sobriety is my number one priority, and that places me on shaky ground. I may not have been to a meeting for a few days, and my serenity, if any, may be fast fading.

The secret for staying sober, the long-timers told me, is to follow the same approach each day, whether it is December or April. They told me to ask for help in the morning as well as throughout the day, to go to meetings, to call my sponsor, to share my journey with another member, to reflect on the day that night and turn it over, with thanks, to my Higher Power.

Yes the Holiday Season is a higher risk time for many, but I am on alert during this time,

“... the irony is that the Holiday Season is perhaps the safest time of the year for an alcoholic of my type.”

and am much more likely to go to an extra meeting or two.

This heightened awareness makes me a little more diligent in applying the Program, a little less likely to skip meetings, and more likely to ask for help, I am in safer waters than I

am the rest of the year.

I try to look at every day as if it was the Holiday Season. I have found that when I do that, I go to more meetings, I am willing to follow the Program of Action more, and life is easier. I do not take my sobriety for granted, and alcohol is not foremost on my mind as an option.

May you enjoy this holiday season sober, and may you bring the spirit of the holidays into the rest of the year and enjoy enriched sobriety as a result.

Rick A.

The World is Coming to Toronto in 2005!

AA members from around the world will be arriving in Toronto by plane, train, bus, car, boat, motorcycle, and maybe even on foot from June 30-July 3, 2005, to celebrate AA's 70th birthday.

AA's International Conventions started in 1950 and have been held every five years since then. 2005 marks AA's 12th International Convention, and is the second one to be held in Toronto. The 4th was held here in 1965.

The objectives of International Conventions are:

To provide opportunities for the rededication of attendees to the primary purpose of AA

To enable attendees to witness the success of the AA program around the world.

To let the world know that AA is alive, flourishing and available as a community resource, locally and internationally.

The theme for 2005 is "I Am Responsible", which has historical significance for us since the Responsibility Pledge was adopted by the membership at the 1965 Convention here in Toronto.

Our General Service Office (GSO) in New York makes all arrangements for Conventions. Toronto members, however, have an equally important role to play. It is our job as the host city to greet attendees as they arrive, get them to where they want to go,

and to make them feel welcome during their entire stay in Toronto. Volunteers are the heart and soul of all International Conventions. Years later, visitors will remember the people they met and the hospitality they received in Toronto more than anything else.

To make sure we are prepared to do our part, a Local Host Committee has been working behind the scenes for the past several months to put a structure in place to ensure that we have enough volunteers in the right places and the right times to meet our commitments as the Host City.

The time is now approaching for the AA members of Toronto to do their part: to show up and sign up as volunteers for the 2005 International Convention. On January 23, 2005 there will be a Volunteer Kickoff Meeting at the Metro Toronto Convention Centre (South Building, Level 800, Room D, 222 Bremner Blvd, www.mtccc.com). The doors open at 11:30 a.m. for coffee & chat, with an Information Session at 1:00 p.m. and Volunteer Registration at 2:00 p.m.

This is what you've all been waiting for; a once-in-a-lifetime chance to participate in an International Convention in your own backyard! We need about 4000 volunteers, so there are jobs for everyone.

*Barry W.
Chair, Toronto 2005 Local
Host Committee*

The Life Line

You're home alone, scared, hung over, out of alcohol, and there's a certain silence and fear that only the alcoholic can feel. The phone suddenly rings with the loudest ring you have ever heard, and it won't stop. But fear won't allow you to answer it. "When will it STOP? I'll hide in the corner and be safe, or pull a blanket up over my

head...and the world will go away." This is just a 'Remember When' now but it was a full-time reality before I found AA.

Let's reverse the scene, and you have the same thing – only, perhaps, even worse. You're home alone and time is running out. You look at the phone and think, "I can get help".

Changes

I have been a member of A.A. for the past 4 years. During that time I have heard that the only book I need is the *Big Book*. There has been discussion that the *12 and 12* is misleading and not necessary.

Today I believe that the *Big Book* and the *12 and 12* both play a part in my sobriety, however, no book alone will keep me sober. What keeps me sober is going to *Big Book* discussions, *12 Step* discussions, *Topic and Open* meetings, being a part of my group and being active in AA.

I recently tried to have the "24 Hour a Day" book displayed in our group library

(unsuccessfully, I might add). Now, I feel it's time to put the issues of the *Hazelden Books* aside and remember that we are "self supporting through our own contributions". There are plenty of members who will recommend other books to the newcomers if they stay around long enough.

We Alcoholics who spend so much time trying to change the Program should just stay quiet and get active, trying to bring the message to the still suffering Alcoholic, such as visiting Hospitals, Schools, Doctors offices. "If it ain't broke, don't fix it!"

*Gabby.
New Anchor*

You vaguely remember someone saying, "Get help. Phone AA." You take what seems forever to find the number in the phone book. You dial each number, looking back at the phone book, because you're not sure you've dialed right...

The phone starts ringing on the other end, and you say, "God, please – let it be the right number." Three, four, five rings, and real fear sets in. "Did I dial the right number? What if no one answers? God please don't let it be an answering machine. I've been hiding for so long..."



a little back in gratitude?" And the answer came: Go to 2 Gerrard Street, and do the phones. Pick a date in the month, be there on time, and leave when the shift is finished.

I did this for nine straight years, and – not bragging! – even came down from Lake Simcoe where we had rented a cottage for two weeks while on my vacation from work, since the date of my phone shift happened to come up while I was away.

I had to be there. I loved it, and my partner Bob C. would be there, and I could not let him down.

We worked as a 'team' then, and I needed to be there for two reasons: I could not let anyone phone in and get no answer, and my partner Bob C. needed me.

I now do a day shift at 234. I never did sponsor anyone. I never did belong to any important Committee. But I am 'the happiest guy in the world' when I'm on my phone shift and trying to give a little back for all I have received.

Try it – it WORKS!

*Walter C.
Scarborough Group*

All of a sudden, a real voice comes on the line, and you hear the words "Alcoholics Anonymous – how can I help you?". A new life journey begins.

Put no one on the other end of the phone, and that journey may never begin.

In 1968 I came to my first AA meeting, and the hand of AA was out. In 1969, I had done all the things my sponsor, Al H. of the Triangle Group, had told me to do, and it was my turn to put my hand out.

I thought, "How can I give

Before

By the Book

In today's world, it is not appropriate to refer to 'Christmas' when describing the upcoming time of peace, shopping and RIDE programs. We have labeled this title 'Politically Incorrect', as we are a society of many different faiths and beliefs.

To maintain our wish not to "engage in any controversy", AA follows this custom as well. We use terms such as 'Festive' and 'Holiday Season', and refer to our special events as 'Candlelight Meetings' to reinforce our principle that AA allows every member to choose a Higher Power of their "own understanding", and that people of all religions are welcome.

As our preamble says, "AA is not allied with any sect, denomination, politics, organization or institution".

Or is it?

It is no secret that the foundation of AA was based on 'Christian Beliefs', and that the Bible was the primary reading source before the Big Book was written. But how many realize that, at most meetings in Toronto, it still is? We recite from the New Testament Matthew 6 : 9-13 and Luke 11: 2-4 somewhere in Toronto every single night. 'For those who will', of Jewish, Moslem, and Hindu faiths in most Toronto meetings may recite the same words reportedly spoken by Jesus Christ over 2000 years ago if they wish.

The very same Jesus

Christ that we carefully avoid referring to when we described the celebration of His birth.

While I am not as worldly as some, I do know that there are places where 'The Lord's Prayer' is not recited at the end of meetings, and that there are some Groups in the GTA who have abandoned the practice.

While each group is autonomous, I must question whether this practice affects AA as a whole, for there appears to be a dichotomy here.

When I approached my Group with the suggestion that we stop reciting 'The Lord's Prayer', and conclude our meetings with the 'Responsibility Pledge', you would have thought I had suggested serving Lite Beer instead of coffee. I was called a 'stuff disturber' (not exactly the term, but you get the picture), an 'atheist' and even a 'bi-sexual' (still can't figure out that one). After the meeting, it was suggested by a couple of members that I find a new group. The only thing better than determination in AA is heart-felt religious passion.

Since then, I leave meetings before The Lord's Prayer is recited. Not because I'm a stuff disturber, atheist, or bisexual, but because I believe that AA is the only place where we should be free to decide our own beliefs, and not shunned or pressured into someone else's.

None the less, Constant Readers, I will still wish you all a very, Merry Christmas. God Bless.

Bible Gord

Watch for our followup on this in January.

The Sculptor's Attitude

I woke up early today, excited over all I get to do before the clock strikes midnight. I have responsibilities to fulfill today. I am important. My job is to choose what kind of day I am going to have.

Today, I can complain because the weather is rainy or...I can be thankful that the grass is getting watered for free

Today, I can feel sad that I don't have more money or...I can be glad that my finances encourage me to plan my purchases wisely and guide me away from waste.

Today, I can grumble about my health or...I can rejoice that I am alive.

See Attitude Page 8

Our Primary Purpose

Ten to fifteen years ago I would receive the occasional call from Intergroup "There's a fellow wants to talk with someone ..." or "There's a fellow sitting in a donut shop ..." and I would happily call the guy, or trot off to meet him. Such a meeting would sometimes result in us going to several meetings together in the fellow's area.

About seven years ago the practice of Intergroup passing call-ins to members of AA groups for 12 Step calls seems to have slowed down.

My understanding is that today,



callers are directed to go to a meeting of AA, without the intervention of an individual member of an AA group being met. The direction has moved away from passing call-ins to members, and towards the newcomer making their own way to their first meetings.

What negative results might we expect from this?

1. Group members would become less aware of the newcomers walking in the doors of AA, especially at the larger groups, or those groups with a high proportion of visitors to members.
2. As a result of this we might expect to see a general decline in group membership as groups fail to attract

the invisible and now truly anonymous newcomer.

3. Members who have joined AA within the past seven years – representing over 50% of the typical group membership – will have no recognition of the value of obtaining newcomers through Intergroup's services.
4. As a result of this, we might expect the majority of members to dismiss appeals to "Man the phones at 234".
5. Long-standing members, who at times wield fiscal influence in home group business meetings may now reason that there is even less justification for Intergroup services, since Intergroup is NOT passing harvested call-ins for one-on-one contact.
6. As a result of this we might expect a real decline in individual contributions to Intergroup, and a general decline in Group level contributions either by quantity or by frequency.

I deeply regret the diminishing of this personal contact approach. My 3rd edition copy of The Big Book, page 89, suggests that my immunity from drinking is strengthened by intensive work with other alcoholics. My discussions with other members of AA suggest that Intergroup's diversion of callers away from individual members could be interpreted as a failure to provide an essential service to members. In other words, "Intergroup's telephone service is inhibiting my contact with newcomers".

Christopher G.

What do you think? Let us know.

Garbage Collection

After 18 months, Matti H. discovered that the 'garbage' he had heard about at Toronto Intergroup was really nothing more than a lack of 'Principles before Personalities'. I have always said that the Nay sayers should complete a stint on the Operating Committee to straighten out their thinking.

Three more newcomers are doing just that. By acclamation, Alex P. (Welcome), Phil M. (Bayview), and Tim R. (New Anchor) will spend the next 18 months learning more about Toronto Intergroup than they ever wanted to know. Lynn B. (St Jamestown) is our new Chair.

I'm sorry, but what conflict of interest is there to prohibit Alex P. from serving on the Operating Committee and continuing as Webmaster of www.aatoronto.org? What does one have to do with the other? What's best for the fellowship?

Barry W. introduced the 2005 International Convention by reviewing the process that makes it all happen. He also

Intergroup Report



announced a 'Kick-off' meeting for volunteers at the Metro Convention Centre on Sunday, January 23, 2005. "This is your time to 'Show up and Sign Up!'"

Archives has their shelving and taping equipment, they just need a film strip and 8mm projector to view things.

The Grapevine tapes discounted a few years ago, below actual cost, are still discounted, still Grapevine tapes, and still available.

Corrections is suffering from the infamous 'No-Show'

syndrome, and this is seriously affecting their effectiveness. As a wise long-timer once told me, "People will SAY they will do something all the time, but whether they do it or not is another matter."

Rather than list all the Committees that need volunteers, perhaps I will just list the ones that don't.

None.

That being said, it goes without saying that they would only be interested in the type of Volunteers that actually DO what they SAY they will.

The Winter Season Open House is approaching their Day, announcing two speakers for the Christmas Day event at 1:00 and 3:00 p.m.

The Web Site Committee continues to Work on a downloadable database of meetings (which was suggested over two years ago by yours truly) and will have a page on the site reporting the Holiday Season meetings 'Open and Closed' status.

As stated last month, we will have to wait until the December meeting to find out about the Hazelden book idea; to give everyone a chance to run it by their groups. Keep your fingers crossed.

Matti was right, you know. Intergroup gets a bad rap from some members, who pollute the rumour airwaves, feeding resentments like spoiled meat to hungry tigers. Intergroup does the best it can, and while it is a perfect institution, it occasionally pulsl off the impossible to ensure there's someone to call, there's somewhere to go, and AA in Toronto will survive another day to fulfill our Primary Purpose. And that's important.

Gord MacK.

Holiday Meeting Information

The Twelfth Step Committee request that all groups **contact 234** regarding **openings or cancellations of meetings over the Holidays.**

This is important

as this ensures that the correct information is available for Phone Greeters, the Holiday issue of **BETTER TIMES**, and for inquiries on the website.

WITH APPRECIATION,
GTA Intergroup
Twelfth Step Committee

Attitude from page 7

Today, I can lament over all that my parents didn't give me when I was growing up or...I can feel grateful that they allowed me to be born.

Today, I can cry because roses have thorns or...I can celebrate that thorns have roses.

Today, I can mourn my lack of friends or ...I can excitedly embark upon a quest to discover new relationships.

Today, I can whine because I have to go to work or...I can shout for joy because I have a job to do.

Today, I can complain

because I have to go to school or...eagerly open my mind and fill it with rich new tidbits of knowledge.

Today, I can murmur dejectedly because I have to do housework or...I can feel honoured because the Lord has provided shelter for my mind, body and soul.

Today stretches ahead of me, waiting to be shaped. And here I am, the sculptor who gets to do the shaping.

What today will be like is up to me. I get to choose what kind of day I will have!

*Author Unknown ...
Submitted by Ronny H.*