

BETTER TIMES



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BETTER TIMES
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How to reach us
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CONCEPT III
To insure effective leadership, we should endow each element of AA - the Conference, the General Service Board and it's service corporations, staff, committees, and executives - with a traditional "Right of Decision."

Sober Over Sixty

The disease of alcoholism in the senior population is under-recognized, under-diagnosed, mis-diagnosed, and under-treated. It is a growing problem worldwide and has become an invisible epidemic.

Older alcoholics are unlikely to seek help because of stigma, shame, cost and transportation issues. They are often called "invisible" alcoholics and tend to hide their drinking. Older folks who have barhopped for years and years claim they do not want anyone to know they have joined. AA Even those with years of recovery are reluctant to share their story for fear of being ostracized by the community.

For years I lived in a jail of my own making. Finally at the chronologically-gifted age of 61, I found a home in AA

These past 15 years of continuous sobriety have given me the greatest joy and peace of mind I have ever known. I have become deeply immersed in service in carrying the message to the older alcoholic.

One member who entered the program at the same time he became eligible for Medicare, said, "With AA as a lifeline, it's never too late to cork the bottle and start living a full, rewarding life. We can help folks to understand that in A.A, they do not have to do it alone."

We "chronologically-gifted" folk are sometimes "chronologically challenged". We prefer to move at a slower pace. We may have hearing problems and transportation problems. We may abhor bad language. We may have difficulty relating to the "issues" at

younger folks' meetings. Tailoring groups to older adults is a beneficial way to address some of the problems described. "Sober Over Sixty (SOS)" is the name of a group we launched in our West Hawaii district to provide an opportunity for older folks to explore our program in a comfortable, safe, and hospitable environment.

To find out more out about us, do drop in to the "Sober Over Sixty" Hospitality Suite at the 2005 International Convention.

Much aloha,

Marion B.

For further information, or to volunteer for "Sober Over Sixty" please contact Wes B. by email at wesbford@sympatico.ca or call him at 416-233-5732.

4 Months and Counting!

It's March 2005 and we are just 4 short months away from the 2005 International Convention of Alcoholics Anonymous; just 4 short months away from an event that has been 18 years in the making. In 1987, Toronto bid for the 1995 Convention that went to San Diego. In 1991, Toronto's bid for 2000 was second to Minneapolis. In 1996, the bid for 2005 was successful.

Based on pre-registrations to date, we may see as many as 50,000 people attending this event. An analysis of the first 25,000 registrations shows that:

- 65% are Alcoholics, 35% are additional registrants like family and friends
- 80% are from the USA, 12% from Canada, and 8% from 60 other countries such as Argentina, Australia, Belgium, Bermuda, China,

France, Germany, Guatemala, Ireland, Japan, Mexico, New Zealand, South Africa, Spain and the UK, just to name a few.

Our job is 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. Your Local Host Committee has put in place the committee structure needed to make this happen and is now working towards finding AA volunteers to fill approximately 4,000, 4-hour shifts.

The first step towards this was the January 23rd Volunteer Kickoff Meeting at the Metro Toronto Convention Centre. Our second Kickoff Meeting was held in Montreal on February 24th. As a result of these meetings and the flood of mail, fax and email registrations we have received, we are well over half way to filling these 4,000 shifts. Several hun-

dred out-of-town members traditionally volunteer after arriving at the Convention.

So, if you were wondering when would be a good time to volunteer, NOW would be a good time, while positions are still available. You can register at www.Toronto2005.ca or by mailing or faxing a completed Volunteer Sign up form. These are available from Committee members or Toronto Intergroup.

Over the next four months, your Local Host Committee will be assigning volunteers to shifts, contacting them to let them know their time and location and providing the necessary training for their specific duties.

Keep an eye out for more news in next month's **BETTER TIMES**.

Barry W.
Chair, Local Host Committee
Toronto 2005

While counting the monies collected from our Home Group's Seventh Tradition, it became clear that the phrase "if you got a fin, put it in" had lost its luster. There were more toonies than fives, more loonies than toonies, and more quarters than loonies. It was obvious that the attempt to influence members' personal contribution habits was unsuccessful.

This reminded me of a story about 'change' as it relates to human behavioural habits. The story goes something like this...

There was a woman who had a piano since she was a small child. She would play the piano religiously, practicing daily, however, one day she

stopped playing her piano (the story does not say why - perhaps she went on a bender for twenty years).

As she approached her late forties, she returned to playing her piano. She had been quite an accomplished player in her younger days, and she yearned to revive the feelings that playing the piano afforded her. She sat down to play her old piano and, much to her dismay, she found that it was off key so badly it would not carry a tune.

She called the local music store, and they promptly dis-

patched someone to fix the piano. After the visit, she was delighted that she was able to play songs in tune once again, however, that didn't last long. By the next day her piano was out of tune. Fortunately the service man had said he would be back in a couple of days to look at the piano. He showed up the following day and tuned the piano again. The piano played perfectly once more. He told the woman that he would have to service the piano regularly - first weekly - then monthly - and gradually dimin-

ishing the visits to once a year. The lady exclaimed "can't you just fix it once"? The service man explained, "The reason I need to come back so often is because your piano's wires were left at a certain tension for twenty years, and as much as I am able to change this, it is only temporary, they will always try to return to the state that they were most accustomed to".

Any new habit needs to be reinforced regularly or it won't stick. On that note, why not plan to put a 'fin' in your group's seventh, perhaps just once a week? We won't mind if you keep your change!

Ron W.

The Editors Say...

\$\$CHANGE\$\$ Is Not Good

By the Book

It's Still About the Booze

"The idea that somehow, someday he will control and enjoy his drinking is the great obsession of every abnormal drinker. The persistence of this illusion is astonishing".

I believe many tend to forget why we're really here. I'm not sure how much the avoidance of The Book plays a part, or if the social aspect of meetings, events and coffee shops is dominating our Primary Purpose. Maybe it's a little of both.

Some meetings I have attended have focused on several different aspects of alcoholism, such as "Fear, Self Delusion, Self-Seeking and Self Pity", "Anger and Resentments", and a collection of other emotional problems. These common behaviours are important, and much has been written about them in Our Book. Unfortunately, too many believe that they ARE the problem, and dismiss the matter of alcohol dependence as a problem they no longer have.

The Book is very clear on this. "This is the baffling feature of alcoholism as we know it - this utter inability to leave it alone."

Am I overreacting to this trend? Am I belittling the various feelings and emotions that

accompany the disease, and often manifest themselves as "the mental states that precede a relapse"?

I don't think so. We all must know that Our Primary Purpose represents the glue that binds, and that no recovery is possible until we put the "plug in the jug". End of story.

If you want to see if you or your group is on the right track, look at the way the newcomer is treated. Is abstinence mentioned to them? Has the "allergy" been explained? DO they know the difference between the unmanageability of others and themselves?

More important, how is the newcomer who is struggling being considered? When they show up intoxicated, with a hopeless sense of fear and despair, do we remember that "The alcoholic at certain times has no effective mental defense against the first drink.", or is the general consensus "Not Again!"?

If a practicing alcoholic ever feels unwelcome in a meeting, they need not worry, for they obviously are not in a meeting of Alcoholics Anonymous. They are merely sitting with a group of people who have forgotten where they came from.

Bible Gord

The World Is Coming To Toronto!

AA members from around the world will be arriving by plane, train, bus, car, boat, and motorcycle from June 30 to July 3 to celebrate AA's 70th birthday during the 12th AA International Convention. The theme of the convention is "I Am Responsible"

With this theme in mind, the Kickoff Meeting for Volunteers was held at the Convention Centre on January 23, where between 700 and 1400 volunteers showed up in spite of the bad snowstorm that morning.

Barry W. addressed the 'Volunteers to Be' with a short history of International Conventions. Doug R., the Convention Coordinator from the General Service Office,

shared his experiences in organizing this Convention. We also heard from Gregg T., a professional convention consultant, who is assisting the GSO. We were then entertained by the One Day At A Time Players, who presented the play 'Stump That Volunteer'.

The day ended with a recording of Co-Founder Bill W. leading 10,000 alcoholics in the reciting of the 'Responsibility Declaration' in Maple Leaf Gardens in 1965.

For those who could not make the Kickoff meeting, there will be many opportunities to sign up by completing a form at your group and sending them by mail or fax. You can find further information online at www.toronto2005.ca.

Joe C.



"I'm worried about my blackouts. Last night I was seen coming out of an AA meeting."

Archives Alley

In November of 1937, Bill W. returned to Akron, Ohio. This time, he went back to make another attempt to take over the company that brought him to Akron in 1935. Failing that endeavour, he and Dr. Bob realized that there were now about forty alcoholics who were keeping sober.

Bill W. attended the meeting with Dr. Bob that evening and the group decided to have a meeting afterwards to decide how to get the message of alcoholic recovery out to others. They decided on three proposals. The first would be to build a chain of hospitals across the country to treat alcoholics, similar to the facility in St. Thomas Hospital that Dr. Bob administered. The second decision was to hire, train and pay a group of missionaries to carry their message. The last decision was to write a book.

Eighteen alcoholics attended this historic meeting in 1937. It has often been said that only alcoholics, in the middle of the Dirty Thirty's, with not a cent to their names, or prospect of having a financial windfall in the near or distant future, could have had such flamboyant dreams.

The group decided that Bill W. should write the book. He was sober longer than any of them and knew more about recovery. But they felt strongly that it should be 'their book'. They wanted to read each chapter and change things around if they felt it should be so. In that way, they felt it would be the collective experience of many rather than the single contribution of one.

As it turned out, by the time the Big Book was published in April of 1939, it was the collective experience of nearly a hundred sober alcoholics. Not a word of the first 164 pages has been changed since that time.

Bernadette MacL.

Have You Heard?

Recent Medallions

Jean B., 15 years, *Anniversary*, December 2, 2004.

Colin N., 30 years, *Scarborough Centenary*, January 27.

Alex S., 1 year, *Scarborough Centenary*, February 3.

Albert M., 10 years, *Scarborough Centenary*, February 24.

Natalie K., 15 years, *Friendly Group*, February 28.

Upcoming Medallions

Ted T., 15 years, *Rexdale United*, Mar 3.

Terri M., 1 year, *Rexdale United*, Mar 10.

Ruth F., 10 years, *New Anchor*, Mar 10.

Ann B., 10 years, *Melrose*, Mar 12.

Ed S., 1 year, *Westmoreland*, Mar 15.

Janice F. (formerly of the *Sunnyside Group*), 10 years, Mar 17 at the *Liberty Group* in Guelph.

Phil B., 25 years, *Agincourt Acorn* Mar. 29

Group Anniversaries

The **Golden Mile Group** (EAST) celebrates **35 years** as a group on **Wednesday, March 23** at 8 p.m. *All welcome. Group members want to especially invite former Golden Mile members to come celebrate and share some memories with us!*

Things We Cannot Change....

Helen O'M., *Rexdale United*, passed away recently. She had 31 years of sobriety on January 20.

Karl W., *Traditional Group*, passed away on January 21. He had over 18 years of sobriety.

Dean F., *Royal York Group*, passed away on February 3. He had over 2 years of sobriety.

Meeting Changes

Joy in Sobriety (EAST) Wednesdays: incorrectly listed as 'WEST' in the December 2004 Meeting Directory.

Scarborough General Hospital Mtg. (NORTH-EAST) Tuesdays: **Added directions:** please take **elevator** to bottom floor.

Don Mills Discussion (NORTHEAST) Fridays: **Added directions:** please take North entrance on immediate left, proceed as far as possible.

As Bill Sees It Discussion (EAST) Sundays: **Time change:** now starts at 7:30 p.m.

Meetings Needing Support

PARKDALE SUNDAY MORNING MEETING Sundays 11 a.m. WEST. Needs support in the form of Chairpersons, Speakers, Steering Committee volunteers, and general attendance. Contact Sean (416)516-9769 if you can be of

help. *See flyers.*

MOUNT DENNIS GROUP Thursdays 8 p.m. WEST. 71 Guestville Ave, S of Eglinton, W of Weston Rd. *See flyers.*

Special Events, Conventions, and Conferences

24th Annual **FLOWER CITY FELLOWSHIP CONVENTION** March 4, 5, and 6, 2005 at the Hyatt Regency Hotel, Rochester, NEW YORK. Call 1-800-233-1234 for Hotel bookings, or contact Rochester Area Intergroup, 10 Manhattan Square Drive, Suite D, Rochester NY 14607.

47th Annual **LOUISIANA STATE CONVENTION** of AA March 25 to 27, 2005 at the Landmark Hotel, Metairie, LOUISIANA. Reservations 1-800-277-7575. For more info, contact Sandi (985)646-1027 or Jimmy (504)382-9286.

18th Annual Brampton **'Living in Sobriety Together' SPRINGATHON 2005** Saturday, April 2 at Loafers Lake Recreation Centre, 30 Loafers Lake Lane, Brampton. 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Registration \$15 (hot and cold buffet provided at Noon). Great Speakers: AA, Al-Anon, and young Al-Anon. Contact: springathon2005@rogers.com or www.springathon.com. *See flyers.*

54th Annual **MIRACLES RALLY** "Never Alone Again" in VICTORIA, BC at the Da Vinci Centre April 8, 9, & 10. Contact Eric (250)385-8329, Nick (250)595-7812 or contact corrine4@shaw.ca.

6th Annual Sober Sailors **EUROPEAN BIG BOOK STUDY** September 24 to October 1, 2005 with Joe McC., Tulsa OK and Charlie P., Maysville AR. For more info: Meetings_en_Route@mail.vresp.com.

CALL FOR VOLUNTEERS FOR BALTIC HOSPITALITY ROOM (Lithuanian, Latvian, Estonian)

The High Park Suite at the Intercontinental Hotel has been assigned as the BALTIC HOSPITALITY ROOM by the 2005 AA International Convention. We will need volunteers from the Toronto area to assist as hosts in the room and it will be very helpful if we have volunteers who speak some Lithuanian, Latvian or Estonian to help our non English speaking guests from the Baltic countries with any of their typical tourist or AA needs or questions. Please contact Baltic Room coordinator, Ernie Raskauskas at raskauskas@verizon.net by cell at (240) 994-8575 and after March 9, 2005 at (301) 299-7020. If not in, please leave a message.

The January Meeting of the Greater Toronto Area Intergroup opened with a reading from the Service Manual, and mention of the clarity that Bill W. provided on the subject.

There did not seem to be as much Clarity when looking at Intergroup's finances. The picture is quite clear, but where we go from here seems somewhat foggy.

Basically, if things continue as they are Intergroup will be dead broke in Mid-2006. We lost over \$15,000 last year, and the 'cost cutting' has reached its limit. This year's shortfall will reach \$30,000 unless we find some other sources of income. My experience shows that begging people for the money hasn't worked. The Finance Committee is open to ideas, and is revitalizing a Committee to look at options.

The Archives Committee had a good lead on getting a Chair, so let's wish David W. the best of luck. They are currently busy cutting CD's of Gail the Akron Archivist from the last Breakfast, for people at \$15 a pop.

We estimate that more than 50% of newcomers coming in to our Fellowship are coming in via Treatment facilities. The Committee responsible for liaising with Treatment Facilities relies on Groups to do their part too. Just a reminder, people.

Intergroup Report

The Well is Running Dry



Those groups with a certain sense of pride can now submit a picture of their set up to the Grapevine for the 2006 Wall Calendar. Submit them to arteditor@grapevine.org, and remember to leave the faces out. By the way, Scott still hasn't found a replacement for his Chair position, and in April, he's outta here.

Information AA Day will have the theme "Service: A Path to Serenity" this year. Funny, I never related the two before. "Rewarding", yes. "Sobering", definitely. But "Serenity"? Should be quite informative.

The **Operating Committee** is accepting

resumes for the 2007 ORC Chair position. You must have 10 years sobriety and a great deal of time on your hands.

Public Information, in conjunction with the CPC, is working to feed our Public Service Announcements into doctors' offices via Intranet Cable. Good show.

The **Web Site Committee** is considering revamping the meeting database to resemble the Montreal format. As long as they keep it in English, it sounds like a great idea. They are also working on having "Hot Links" to other Intergroup sites.

The **Winter Season Open**

House Committee needs a new Chair and new location.

Some of the Committees made a Call for Volunteers, and quite frankly, the other ones could probably use your help too. Remember, Service is the Path to Serenity.

The **Operating Committee** is confused about raffles, and issued an even more confusing question to Toronto Area Groups. A few months ago, an idea to raffle off a Big Book First Edition to raise money was nixed. They want to know if we were against that particular fund raising initiative, or raffles in general.

Maybe the **Grapevine Committee** is finally trying to get rid of their old tapes.

This is certainly not the first time I have seen the **Finance Committee** profess our desperate situation, but they've started in January. This must be serious, folks. Over the years, I have submitted some ideas, like charging groups for meeting book "highlighted" entries, selling Hazelden (I know, I know) and moving into the 21st Century and doing business online. Each time, I've been bashed with the Traditions of non-affiliation, primary purpose and attraction rather than promotion.

I think it's time to decide whether we want an imperfect (and autonomous) Intergroup, or no Intergroup.

Gord MacK.

GREATER TORONTO AREA INTERGROUP

MONTHLY BOARDROOM BOOKINGS FOR SUBCOMMITTEES

MARCH 2005

*Subcommittees meet at the Intergroup Office (234 Eglinton Ave E, Suite 202) unless indicated otherwise.

Thur	Mar 3	Ontario Regional Conference	7:30 pm	Sun	Mar 20	Access Ability Committee	11:00 am
Mon	Mar 7	GTAI 2005 Conference Liaison Cte	5:30 pm			Monthly Phone Training Session	1:30 pm
		Self-Support Committee	7:30 pm	Mon	Mar 21	Public Information Committee	7:30 pm
Tues	Mar 8	Joint Sharing Session (at Glebe Rd. United) Of Intergroup Subcommittees & Districts	7:30 pm	Tues	Mar 22	Finance Committee	4:30 pm
Wed	Mar 9	Corrections Committee	7:30 pm			Operating Committee	7:30 pm
Thur	Mar 10	Grapevine Committee	7:00 pm	Wed	Mar 23	Better Times Newsletter Committee	7:30 pm
Fri	Mar 11	Archives Committee	7:30 pm	Fri	Mar 25	Twelfth Step Committee	6:30 pm
Sat	Mar 12	Website Committee	1:00 pm	Mon	Mar 28	Information AA Day Committee	7:30 pm
Mon	Mar 14	CPC Committee	7:00 pm			Meeting will be held at 234 from now on	
Thur	Mar 17	Treatment Facilities Committee	7:30 pm	Tues	Mar 29	Monthly General Meeting of GTA Intergroup at Glebe Rd. United Church 20 Glebe Rd. East (N of Davisville subway station)	8:00 pm