

BETTER TIMES



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Contents

7th Annual 11th Step Picnic...1
Tips for staying sober in the summer1
 For the Sake of Discussion....2
Got a Fin? Put it in...2
 The Pyramid Method of Sobriety2
Archives Alley.....3
 Have You Heard?3
Intergroup Report.....4
 Exactly Where I Needed to Be...4
Joke of the Month.....4
 This Month's Cartoon.....4

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In case you missed it...
 Alcoholics Anonymous celebrated 72 years on June 10.

Tradition Seven

Every A.A. group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions.

The 7th Annual 11th Step Picnic

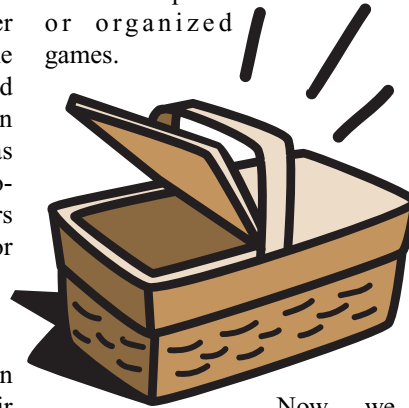
The Seventh Annual 11th Step Picnic is to be held on Saturday August 11, 2007 on beautiful Center Island in Toronto. It is a fun day for AA members and their families, with AA and Al-Anon Open speaker meetings at 1:00, and 4:00 in the afternoon. It starts at noon and runs until 6:00 p.m. but you can come as early and stay as late as you like. Barbecue pits are provided, or numerous snack bars are within walking distance for lunch or refreshments. And there is Centerville for the kids just around the corner.

This year the picnic is again FREE for all members and their families, with donation jars available.

It occurred to us that we should make this truly a fun day for all...adults and children alike. Perhaps it was great for the adults to have three speaker meetings but not so for the kids. It's true that Centerville is only

steps away but that is an added cost that many families just can't afford.

Our name has always been 11th Step Picnic but we haven't offered a picnic or organized games.



Now we are doing both. Before, in-between, and after the speakers, we are offering hot dogs, drinks and fun activities. Now where can you find a deal like that? If you have been before, welcome back. If you have never been, then it's about time to check our event out...The new and

improved 11th Step Picnic!

Another bit of good news is that Wakestock (the rock concert) is NOT the same weekend as us this year. Last year many people turned around when they saw the long line-ups for the ferry, which was so disappointing for them as well as us. Flyers have been distributed advertising this event, and there is a website at www.11thsteppicnic.com, but word of mouth promises an even greater turnout this year.

We want to thank every one of you for your interest, support and encouragement. We thank *Better Times* for their continued support over the past several years.

Anyone who wishes to volunteer to be on the Committee, or to help set up for this event, are encouraged to phone Barb at 905-264-6080 or Marvyn at 647-221-7338, or send an email to info@11thsteppicnic.com.

Barb Q. 11th Step Picnic Committee

Tips for staying sober in the summer!

Ahhh, nice sunny days, cool breeze, beautiful people on the patio at the local pub. Tables covered in drinks with little umbrellas. Glasses of beer with the sweat running down the side of the glass. Baseball games where they bring the beer to your seat. That's what it was like everywhere I went when I got sober in the summer of 1991. Or so it seemed. I went white-water rafting when I was three weeks sober; where they met you at the end of the day with a cooler of beer. If you weren't in a boat, everyone was in the bar. I went to three weddings that

summer, two of them with a free bar!

I was desperate not to take another drink and wasn't sure what to do, so I started going to more meetings. The more meetings I went to, the more often I saw people who were staying sober. We would go to a coffee shop or we would go bowling at 11:00 on a Friday night. My sponsor would pick me up to go to meetings. Often I would have dinner with his family. I was lucky to have some real friends who knew my battles with alcohol and made sure I did not take the first drink

I would even turn off the

radio or TV whenever I heard a beer commercial. I tried avoiding alcohol completely. I soon realized after that, that I could not totally avoid alcohol and I had to learn how to live in this society without drinking.

This is supposed to be an article on tips for staying sober in the 'summer' but spring, summer, fall or winter are the same when you seek sobriety. Paradoxically, the season doesn't matter because the tips are still the same. Go to meetings, join a group, get a sponsor (*and use her/him*), read the Big Book, pray if you can and get active!

Tim R. Chartwell Group

For the Sake of Discussion...

It is not unusual to hear a speaker or chairperson say that the new person "is the most important person here this evening". While it may be difficult to argue with such a statement, nevertheless there is a danger that we may be overlooking the ongoing needs of our established membership. We tend to forget that most of our literature and publications were prepared and edited by people who had, by today's standards, comparatively brief association with A.A.

The fellowship had its 'official' beginning in 1935 and the Big Book was first published in 1939, when none had more than four years. Now it is becoming somewhat commonplace to attend 40 year anniversaries and many have attained 50 plus years. What may be overlooked or at least little understood is the real 'need' that long term members have to stay in touch with the fellowship and to be continually reminded of the life skills that this program offers.

We are reminded often that perfection is only a goal and never truly attained. However, many of those who have been around these rooms for many years tend to forget that they are afflicted with a disease known as alcoholism. We tend to think of a relapse in terms of resuming drinking. In fact, for most of us, relapse normally involves simply a return to old habits of selfishness and a complete lack of

gratitude. Drinking may eventually follow. One can be quite active in sponsorship, service and speaking and yet neglect their own program. Rarely have we seen individuals who can manage their affairs comfortably without ongoing vigilance.

Older term members are often reluctant to mention their problems. They are concerned that any display of 'weakness' may undermine the hope we are trying to convey to newer members about the benefits of this program. On the other hand, it is somewhat axiomatic that long term members are usually older in age and many are facing serious illness and devastating loss as well as the day-to-day challenges of surviving on lesser income. Even those people who have managed to attain lengthy periods of sobriety while they are still relatively young may have to deal with a spouse or partner who doesn't understand why their partner still goes to meetings even though they seem to have 'recovered'.

So while it is true that it is the new members that should be noted and encouraged at any meeting, we must remember that established members are there for themselves as well as to 'pass it on'. Perhaps the most effective method to deal with both areas is to make certain that the older members are involved with the newer ones. There is nothing quite like going through the Steps with a newcomer to rejuvenate the program of an old timer.

John G. Unionville Group

Got a Fin? Put it in...!

We hear a lot of talk about money trouble in Toronto Intergroup and AA. Some people think that we should cut back on expenses and cut some services so we will not need so much money.

I started thinking about the past and how AA started in Toronto. We had no money but each member knew that it was up to each one of them to support AA. First at the Group level and then when we grew, we needed a central office. We started Toronto Intergroup which in twenty years had grown to about seventy-five groups needing two full time staff members and offices at Yonge and Gerrard. We had a respectable reserve fund at that time.

In the next forty-five years, we went from seventy-five groups to over 300 groups and over 12,000 members. There was a lot more to be done. We now have only three members on staff at Toronto Intergroup and our office is not much bigger than it was back then. And now we have to take money out

of the reserve fund just to get by...why?????

When I came into AA and they passed the seventh, I was told to put the price of a drink into the basket. So I threw in twenty-five cents. Over the years, I was putting in a little more till eventually I was putting in a buck or two and knowing that I was doing the right thing.

A short time ago, my wife and I entertained an out-of-town friend and showed her the town. We went to a pub and had a drink. I had a coke and my wife and her friend had a drink. The bill including the tip was \$20.00. What!! \$20.00!! How much is a drink today, I asked?

Around \$5.00 will get you a beer today. I could buy a case of beer for \$4.25 before I got sober.

So when they pass the basket for the 7th, I put in the price of a beer.

If you've got a 'fin', put it in. And AA will be self-supporting again.

Dan McK. Half Century Group

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Have your group subscribe to Toronto Intergroup's monthly newsletter. Fill out the subscription form and make copies available to your membership. Subscription packages available at 234 or contact Marv W. at bettertimes@aatoronto.org

The Pyramid Method of Sobriety

The Egyptians built pyramids layer by layer. A rectangular array of blocks, then a second layer, smaller in area, then a third smaller still, until, their job complete, they placed the last, single stone atop the lot.

My sobriety seems to be based on an inverted pyramid.

When I walked in the doors of AA, they told me "Don't pick up a drink today". It is my theme still: I have started a new life based on a single building block; "I haven't had a drink today".

Once that block is in place, I can add a second layer: I am able to function (wash, eat, sleep, do laundry) and on that second layer, a third: I read a book while doing laundry - I don't

pass time in the bar; I take pride in what I eat or cook.

More layers are added. Now that I am looking after my immediate needs and making myself presentable to the outside world, I can make a living in the workplace, an honest living.

More layers: I can learn.

Still more layers: I can learn to apologize when I have done wrong.

Another layer: Faith, Trust and

Compassion. These would be heady subjects if I didn't have decency in myself, which is based on my not drinking.

Unlike the Egyptians, I won't ever come to an end of my work. Heaven is the limit of my aspirations as a co-builder of a better self.

And unlike the Egyptians, I'm not building a testament to death. I'm building a testament to a way of life.

Chris G. - Bloordale Group

Harriet Severino

Lois W. loved southern fried chicken with mashed potatoes so when she and Al-Anon co-founder Anne B. arrived at the Golden Bridge café, north of Bedford Hills, they knew they were in for a treat.

Harriet Severino, the proprietor, took great pains to make sure her customers returned. Her other menu specialty was coffee Jell-O. A sweet olive-skinned woman, Harriet worked hard to provide for her four children, however, she was contemplating closing the local eatery and finding more gainful employment.

Lois and Anne were increasingly mindful that a large portion of their time was dedicated to Al-Anon. They spent full days with phone calls, travel, meetings and correspondence required for the families in recovery. Less time was spent in the upkeep of Stepping Stones with its large gardens and property. Lois loved that part of her life but she knew she needed help.

That day at the diner, Lois asked Harriet if she would come into her employ for two or three days a week. Harriet agreed. It didn't bother Lois to know that she would be eating southern fried chicken with mashed potatoes. Coffee Jell-O became a favourite of both Bill and Lois.

Harriet eventually lived full-time with Bill and Lois, closing her restaurant and becoming part of their lives. Their gratitude was shown when Bill bequeathed her 1% of the royalties from his writings and Lois left Harriet \$75,000 in her will after they both had passed on. Her last visit to Stepping Stones was in the spring of 2006 when she was 93.

Lois and Harriet's reciprocal loving and kind relationship lasted thirty-five years. Not only was Harriet a housekeeper and cook but a trusted friend and helpmate. She became Lois' travel companion and confidante. When Lois became ill, Harriet tenderly nursed her until she passed away in October of 1988.

Bernadette MacL. King City Group

Recent Medallions

| | | | |
|------------|----|----------------------|---------|
| Robbie R. | 25 | King City | May 28 |
| Erin H. | 15 | U of T | June 1 |
| Andy S. | 1 | Aurora | June 3 |
| Patti C. | 15 | Rox Glen Traditional | June 7 |
| Dorothy B. | 10 | Armour Heights | June 11 |
| Alan L. | 1 | Liverpool | June 11 |
| Sandy | 1 | Shepherd | June 12 |
| Chris H. | 5 | Friendly | June 18 |
| Bill W. | 30 | Royal York | June 19 |
| Andrew W. | 1 | King City | June 25 |
| Diana M. | 20 | Danforth | June 28 |
| Ray M. | 5 | Back to Basics | June 29 |

Upcoming Medallions:

| | | | |
|-----------------|----|----------------|---------|
| Donna P. | 1 | Westmoreland | July 1 |
| Evelyn W. | 1 | Mississauga | July 1 |
| Angela S. | 1 | Westmoreland | July 1 |
| Christie Ann B. | 1 | Aurora | July 2 |
| John P. | 1 | Westmoreland | July 5 |
| Debra H. | 15 | Back to Basics | July 6 |
| Linda McL. | 10 | Armour Heights | July 9 |
| Sean C. | 30 | Shepherd | July 17 |
| Richard S. | 1 | Wanstead | July 20 |
| Vivianne V. | 5 | King City | July 23 |
| Lloyd T. | 5 | Back to Basics | July 27 |
| Betty L. | 1 | Aurora | July 29 |
| Dolly H. | 15 | East York | July 31 |

Meeting Changes:

Saturday Night Crosstalk (C) 7:30 p.m. Saturdays (EAST): DISCONTINUED.

Young People's Mtg. (C) 8 p.m. Tuesdays (NORTH-WEST): DISCONTINUED.

Circle of Hope Grp. (O/C) 7:30 p.m. Fridays (SUB.NW): DISCONTINUED.

Milton Sunday Night Live (C) 8 p.m. (SUB.NW): has a NEW LOCATION - Allendale Retirement Complex, 500 Childs Dr, MILTON. At Main & Ontraio St, south of Plaza. Meeting held in Senior's Activity Centre.

Heron Park Drop-In Disc. (C) Fridays (EAST): Meeting time is 12:15 noon to 1:15 pm.

Stepping Stones Disc. (C) Saturday 8 p.m. (CENTRAL) has a NEW LOCATION - St Peter's Catholic Church, 840 Bathurst St (at Bloor). Across from Bathurst subway. Steps 1-2-3, 4-12, Open Topic, and Big Book. Speaker meeting 2nd Saturday of the month.

New Meeting:

Stepping Stones Disc. (C) Wednesdays (CENTRAL): Same time, location, and format as Saturday meeting (new info noted above).

Meetings needing support:

Friendship Room Mtg. (O/C) 6 p.m. Fridays (CENTRAL): Salvation Army, 107 Jarvis St & Richmond. Ring bell to enter. Last Friday of the month is a closed discussion

Things we cannot change

Julia M., Place to Share Group, died suddenly in a car accident May 17.

Event notices:

Plum 19th Annual Courage Round Up. Halifax, N.S., Aug. 10, 11, 12, 2007. "AA - Anchored in Sobriety". Sponsored by gay men and lesbians in AA. Open to all alcoholics and those affected by the alcoholism of others. For more information, phone: 902-463-7895 or 902-425-8383 e-mail: Courage449@yahoo.com

Big Book Workshop, July 27-28, Fri 7 pm to 10 pm thru Sat 9 am to 5 pm. Royal Canadian Legion 948, Sheppard Ave W Toronto. \$20.00. For tickets contact Patt at 416-512-6371

32nd Mid-Summer Roundup, July 27-29. AA and Al-Anon. Theme: "Are You Amazed Yet?" To be held at the Best Western Glengarry, Truro, N.S.

Info: Call Chair Dave MacN. (902) 893-2749 or e-mail: dmnchair@hotmail.com

10th Annual BIG BOOK STUDY - Duff's Presbyterian Church, RR#3 Guelph, ON (Hwy 6 & Hwy 410, exit 299). Sat. Aug. 18. Presented by James B (Jamestown, NY) and Wes B (Toronto). Doors open at 8 am. Registration 8 am - 9 am. Coffee, donuts, and refreshments. Lunch is included. For tickets, call Dennis D. (519) 763-1599.

Hamilton & Districts 39th Annual AUTUMN LEAF ROUNDUP 'There is a Solution' Sept. 14-16, at the Sheridan Hotel, Hamilton. For more info, call 1-800-514-7101 or Hamilton Central Office 905-522-8392.

Come Celebrate With Us! The Danforth Group celebrates their 60th anniversary Thurs. Sept. 27 at 8 pm A special invitation goes to those past members and attendees to join in the festivities. Open meeting with a special speaker, loads of food and fellowship ensures that a good time will be had by all. Come share in the tradition, Big Book Draw, sobriety countdown and much more.

Come to Believe...it Works! 11th Mississauga Fall Roundup 2007. Sat. Sept. 29, 9:00 am - 4:30 pm, St. Mary's Church, 3625 Cawthra Rd. Includes buffet lunch, refreshments, great speakers, great fellowship. Tickets \$20 - Contact Murray J. at 905-826-9409 or go to: www.mississaugafallroundup.org

JULY 2007 GREATER TORONTO AREA INTERGROUP MONTHLY BOARDROOM BOOKINGS FOR SUB-COMMITTEES

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

| | | |
|----------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------|
| Mon. July 2 | Corrections | 7:00 pm |
| Wed. July 4 | Self-Support | 7:00 pm |
| Mon. June 9 | CPC | 7:00 pm |
| Thurs. July 12 | Grapevine | 7:00 pm |
| Fri. July 13 | Archives | 7:00 pm |
| Sat. July 14 | Website | 1:00 pm |
| Sun. July 15 | Access Ability | 11:00 am |
| | Monthly Phone Training Session | 1:30 pm |
| Mon. July 16 | Public Information | 7:30 pm |
| Thurs. July 19 | Treatment Facilities | 7:30 pm |
| Tues. July 24 | Finance Subcommittee | 4:30 pm |
| | Operating Committee | 7:30 pm |
| Wed. July 25 | Better Times Newsletter | 7:00 pm |
| Fri. July 27 | Twelfth Step Committee | 6:30 pm |
| Mon. July 30 | Info AA Day | 7:30 pm |
| Tues. July 31 | Monthly General Meeting | 8:00 pm |
| | of GTA Intergroup -at Glebe Rd. United Church...20 Glebe Rd. East (N of Davisville subway) | |
| TBA: | Ad Hoc Recommendation Committee | |

Exactly where I needed to be...

I did something against my better judgment yesterday. Now isn't that just like an alcoholic? I have better judgment – as if. I had my whole day planned as “me” time. Put on the prison meeting; sit in my garden, listen to the birds and the chimes, relax and be still. Then a friend showed up and insisted that I needed to be at the Roundup in the east end. I don't do the east end – hookers, crack dealers – let someone else do the east end. I am not responsible

Grudgingly I paid my ten bucks, looked around, and sat down with a bottle of water and a sigh. There couldn't have been 20 people there – it was going to be a long day. This was definitely the wrong place, and it was only 1:00pm. I sat there, thinking about what I could have been doing, when someone said to me “I was just talking to Jay; he relapsed last night. He's a friend of yours; go and talk to him.”

I first met Jay in Detox when I was putting on a meeting there about 5 years ago. Two years ago at our Fall Conference, I was taking care of the help desk and he came up to me and said “You probably don't remember me, but you spoke at Detox when I was there. I wanted what you had and I've been sober 3 years.” I

know I'm not alone in experiencing the rush of gratitude at moments like that. He and I have been family ever since; he's always been one of the first to step forward when service is required, and I thought about that for a minute or two.

I walked over to the canteen counter where he was selling drinks and chips, reached for his hands. Still shaking and hung over, he held on as I said, “You're my brother, and I'm glad you're here. We are, each of us, exactly where we need to be, always. Whatever reasons you may think you had for drinking, you were where you needed to be then in order to be here now. Welcome back.”

Father Vaughan Q., who spoke after dinner, has been carrying that message for a whole lot longer than I've been aware of it. When he talked about relationality last night I smiled, because I know what he means.

There I was, at the wrong place, on the wrong day, at the wrong time...and yet I was exactly where I needed to be. I don't know where Jay is today, but I know where I am. I don't know whether I carried the message to him, but I know I heard it myself. I am an alcoholic, and my name is Heather. I am always exactly where I can be of maximum use to God, myself, and my fellows. And, if I had any lingering doubt about that, the presence of both Jay and Father Vaughan dispelled it for another day.

Heather J., Westboro Group

The *Better Times* Committee wishes to thank Romana K. (Rox Glen Traditional Group) for her expertise and knowledge as Assistant Editor over the last 20 plus months. Thank you for your dedication and contribution to the growth and readership of “*Better Times*”. On behalf of all of us in the GTA AA Fellowship, we wish Romana all the best in her continued service to AA and all future endeavors.

Marvyn W., Chair – 2007 *Better Times*



And for those of you who didn't get last month's *Better Times*, you can still catch our insert “A Beginner's Guide to GTA InterGroup” on the website, under “*Better Times*”



**How can you tell when two alcoholics are on their second date?
There's a U-Haul in the driveway!**

May '07 Intergroup Report

The May Intergroup meeting was a workshop and the 1st meeting for Stephanie L., Chair and the new Operating Committee. It was a great night starting off with the Committee actually introducing themselves. This is particularly good for the new Intergroup Representatives who are oft times lost at the meetings. Operating committee members are not always known so it gave everyone a chance to know who they were with the introductions.

The only business that took place was the Finance Sub Committee report and the report from the 2007 ORC Chair, Barb H. The great news from Barb was that the ORC committee presented Intergroup with a cheque for \$16,000! Thank you to the committee and to everyone who attended the ORC for making it a great success.

The workshop is intended for

the new Intergroup Representatives where the Chairs of the various subcommittees present a brief description of their area of service and how to get involved. The information presented was reinforced by a 1st time insert in the June *Better Times* newsletter. The insert included a brief description of all the subcommittees, areas needing help and a volunteer form. To add to the informal evening, members brought finger foods for everyone to enjoy.

A card of gratitude was also available for everyone to sign. Carole Keenan is one of the Special Workers that keeps Alcoholics Anonymous in the GTA and the Intergroup Office running smoothly. On June 23, Intergroup recognized her 25 years as secretary at 234. If you did not have an opportunity to sign this card, do call Carole to thank her and to wish her a happy anniversary!

Tim R. – Chartwell Group