



BETTER TIMES

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For a list of all Opening and Closures over the holidays and Candlelight & Gratitude Meetings, visit us online at:
www.aatoronto.org

Richmond Hill Group Celebrates 50 Years in York Region

The Richmond Hill Group is living proof of the importance of archives and of keeping accurate records for those of us who value history. Recently, an interview with someone who was at the first meeting stated our inception was January 18, 1959. The records of a 1980 business meeting state January 17 as a possible birth date. To avoid confusion, the group has decided to celebrate future group birthdays on the fourth Friday of January.

The Group's Co-Founders were Norm L. and Fred D. They were advised to contact Pastor Jim O'Neill at St. Mary's Anglican Church in Richmond Hill for a room to hold AA Meetings. Fred and Norm approached Pastor Jim, and here we are, 50 years later. We owe a great debt to our landlord, who has been generous in providing us with a space for almost 50 years at reasonable cost.

Originally, the meetings were held on Wednesdays at 8:30 p.m. Often, in the early days, only a half dozen were in attendance, including wives. The meetings started in the small room and, as the group matured, a closed discussion meeting was held on Wednesdays and an open speaker meeting was held on Fridays in Wrixon Hall. The rent was free until the group began to pay \$5 a month; since 1969 the group has been able to increase its monthly donation to the church. The

chairperson brought lunch, which was usually sandwiches.

We, the members of the Richmond Hill Group, feel privileged to be one of the oldest groups in York Region, which has blossomed to about a million residents. A debt of gratitude is owed to our Higher Power, for the blessings of longevity and the opportunity to pass on the AA message. Some of the fruits of passing it on came when Marlene and John M. found a location for a Sunday morning breakfast meeting. Even though it has been a meeting of the Richmond Hill Group since May 1977, its biggest strength is that many groups all over York Region contribute to its success. Although it is called the Skylight meeting, it has been referred to as the Sunday morning beacon of AA in York Region.

Members of the Richmond Hill Group have been instrumental in passing the message on and starting additional groups over the years. Groups such as the King City Slippers (March 1971), and Back to Basics (1992) were started by former members of the Richmond Hill Group. Come help us celebrate sobriety at St. Mary's Anglican Church in Richmond Hill on Friday January 23, 2008 at 8:00 p.m.

The Richmond Hill Group

AA Service & Gratitude

2008 was a year of new uncharted waters, challenges, changes and rotation for the Better Times and Website Committee. In January 2008, the GTA operating Committee decided to combine the two Website and Better Times committees into one.

The Website Better Times Committee would like to thank the GTA Toronto Intergroup Operating Committee for the opportunity to carry the message of AA to the GTA AA fellowship, their home groups and districts.

A special thanks to all members, home groups, 234 central office, subcommittees & committees who have made submissions, of articles, medallions, anniversaries, and to Things we Cannot Change and Upcoming Events.

Each Better Times submission has shown our committee members, BT's value, its voice, and its importance as a communication vehicle to enrich the life of each AA member in sobriety.

We, as a committee, feel that www.aatoronto.org has shown growth, enabling the still suffering alcoholic to:

- a) attend as many desired meetings as possible;
- b) understand both GTA Toronto Intergroup and General Service;
- c) introduce service opportunities within the GTA Toronto AA Fellowship.

The Website Better Times has already begun preparations to provide for an informative AA journey of sobriety, one day at a time in the upcoming 2009 new year .

Once again, members of the Website Better Times Committee would like to extend a sincere thank you, for your support and guidance.

Yours in Service,

Marvyn W.
Chair-2008 Website Better Times Committee

Principles before Personalities

Charles M. was my sponsor from shortly after he received his 25 year medallion in the year 2000, until he passed into the Spirit World on September 18, 2008. I asked him to be my sponsor because I knew that he had been a lawyer as well as having earned a Master's of Divinity degree. As an alcoholic, I was always interested in the underlying angles of how things operated.

Even though I had eight years of sobriety, Charles had me go through the Big Book and do the Steps, keeping his keen legal mind and eye focused on what the words said and not what one thought they said. That was helpful as I was able to focus on the exact nature of my wrongs. My searching and fearless moral inventory had shown me that my score card read zero. When drinking, I had not cared about anybody else except myself. Together, and with God's care, the layers of justification were dismantled and fear was removed. After that, we still continued to remain in daily contact by phone and enjoyed weekly face-to-face sit-downs.

Charles said that the only thing that a person could do on his own was drink. For everything else, you needed to be involved with others in recovery. He summed up the essence of the program with the first two words of Step One: "We admitted..." He said that it was a "we" program and that "admitting" meant to be honest.

With such clarity of perspective, Charles spoke of practising rigorous honesty. He believed that we could apply principle to the ideal, that we may not have an absolute monopoly on the "Truth", but by willing to keep an open mind as we learned more, we could be continually transformed and grow.

Though in his senior year his youthful bounce was somewhat modified, Charles still determinedly made his way to newcomers to offer his encouragement and phone number. He said that the only thing longer than a grave was a rut.

Charles was a power of example in the letting go of the concerns of this world. He had accepted their limitations fully and has moved into completeness and fulfillment in the embrace of The One who originally said that "you are needed, wanted and loved."

Tom S.

Ontario Regional Conference March 20, 21 & 22, 2009

"The Joy of Living is the theme of A.A.'s Twelfth Step, and action is its key word."

With committed volunteers, inspiring speakers and most importantly, the enthusiastic attendees, the 2009 ORC promises to be the best one yet!

Held annually at the Fairmont Royal York Hotel, the Ontario Regional Conference is the largest AA event in Canada. Approximately 2700 sober alcoholics gather for the weekend to celebrate sobriety. Aside from a program with a host of great speakers, the ORC is an opportunity to be of service. Working a shift at registration, greeting registrants as they enter the hotel or spending some time in the newcomers room are all ways to give back and ensure that the conference continues to be the success that it is.

When a break is needed from the excitement on the Mezzanine and Conference level floors, hospitality suites hosted by local AA groups scattered throughout the hotel provide an opportunity to have a coffee, a snack and a chance to meet to meet old and new friends.

My first ORC was in 1991. I was a few months sober and had no idea what an AA conference was all about. I was unemployed and pretty much unemployable. I couldn't afford the registration cost but someone generously donated a badge. I was put to work greeting and before I knew it, I felt "a part of". Later that evening, I heard the banquet speaker, Clancy I., for the first time. He explained the problem of alcoholism and provided the solution in a way that I understood. I laughed, I cried and I finally got it! I left that weekend with many things; a love for the ORC, a host of friends that I had danced with Saturday night, and most importantly, a new hope. I have been involved with the ORC ever since.

It is an enormous honour to be chairing the 2009 ORC. I am delighted to welcome back Clancy I. as the banquet speaker.

Register early and enter to win one of our early bird draws. For more information, please email us at orc@aatoronto.org, call us at (416) 487-2677 or check us out on the AA Toronto website at www.aatoronto.org under events. I look forward to seeing you all there.

Kathleen MacD.
RoxGlen Traditional Group

31st Spiritual New Year's Eve Dance & Buffet

Holy Rosary Parish Hall
356 St Clair Avenue West (St Clair West Subway Station)

Doors open at 8pm
AA and AI-Anon meetings start at 8:30 pm
Dance and pot-luck buffet start at 10 pm
Spiritual service at 11 pm

Tickets (includes buffet and dance): \$10 in advance, \$12 at the door.

Last year, attendees had a great time dancing the night away, and this year promises to be even better! Remember it's potluck, so please bring some food to share.

For Tickets or to Volunteer Contact: John P. (Welcome) or Craig (Stepping Stones)

*The Best way To
Bring in the New Year!*

Letter to Better Times

Re: October Issue Article on Gratitude

Thank you for the article on gratitude. It was again a reminder that gratitude is an action!

A.A. can also mean attitude and action.

It is by regular attendance at meetings, involvement with a home group, reaching out to both newcomer and long-timer, by getting active in service and by truly living the steps that we are able to maximize the benefits of this simple program.

Thanks again Better Times and keep up the good work.

Aaron K., Yorkville Group

haveyouheard

Recent Medallions:

Suzanne T.	1	Living Sober Group	November 4
Bill L.	20	Pine Hills Group	December 1
Doreen Y	10	Pine Hills Group	December 8
Cheryl F	20	King City Group	December 8

Upcoming Medallions:

Donna L.	1	Friendly Group	December 29
Jim S.	1	Unionville Group	January 7
Jarrett M.	1	5th Tradition Group	January 10
Andrew K	15	Golden Mile Group	January 14
Peter M.	1	New Anchor Group	January 29
John G.	40	Unionville Group	February 4
Lynda W.	40	Unionville Group	February 4
Elisha V	15	Islington Group	February 13
Elisha V	15	Islington Group	February 13

Meeting Changes:

Silverbirch Group (O) Friday (EAST): As of Jan. 2nd the meeting will be moving to St. John's Norway Church at 470 Woodbine Ave (corner of Kingston Road.)

End of the Line Disc. Group (C) Wed. (EAST): Meeting has moved to Corpus Christi Catholic Church, 16 Lockwood Rd, corner of Queen St E and Lockwood, between Woodbine and Kingston Road. Enter through second set of doors on east side of the building.

Royal York Group: The Tuesday Meeting at 8:30pm will be starting at 8:00pm as of January 6, 2009.

New Meetings:

Beginners Meeting (O) Friday (CENTRAL): Meeting will be held at 7:00pm at 252 Bloor St W (east of St George), 8th floor, room 8-280. Back to Basics Step Format.

High Park Group (C) Friday (WEST): Will be holding a Back to Basics Big Book Study (by Wally P.), in addition to the regular discussion rooms, for the next three months. It will be held in a room upstairs.

Unity Big Book Discussion Group (C) Thursday (EAST): Meeting will be held Thursday at 6:30pm at Konko Church, 398 Kennedy Road (at Danforth Rd).

Discontinued Meetings:

Monday Night Big Book Discussion Group (C) Monday (EAST): 8pm at Bellefair United Church has been cancelled.

Things We Cannot Change:

Anniversary Group: Sadly announces the passing of two of it's members; Agnes M passed away on Nov. 24 (her 21st anniversary) and Marilyn B. on Nov. 29.

Announcements:

U of T Group: Venue change on Thurs. Dec. 11th. Mtg will be held in the Woodsworth College Residence (basement classroom 25) at the SE corner of Bloor & St George.

Winter Season Open House: Are still looking for additional members to serve with the 2008 Winter Season Open House, so please contact us if you are interested.

archivesalley

The Twelve Traditions

In the pamphlet, "A.A. Tradition," published in 1947, Bill W. writes: "Nobody invented A.A. It grew. Trial and error has produced a rich experience. Little by little we have been adopting the lessons of that experience, first as policy and then as tradition.

"That process still goes on and we hope it never stops. Should we ever harden too much, the letter might crush the spirit. We could victimize ourselves by petty rules and prohibitions; we could imagine that we had said the last word.

We might even be asking alcoholics to accept our rigid ideas or stay away. May we never stifle progress like that!" In a letter to an A.A. member named Dewey, dated April 14, 1958, Bill explained the process: "Like Topsy, the tradition idea sort of grew. In the early days, the office was beset by group problems, jillions of them. So many letters had to be answered by a limited staff that we were forced to codify the answers. A form letter, to be accompanied by a note, was the original idea. So in 1945, I drew the draft which boiled down into the old 'long form' Twelve Traditions. As I worked at these, I could see that they might have implications, great implications in effect, for the whole of our society. So, on the spot, I named them traditions to accelerate this effect.

"At first, practically nobody approved the Traditions. As time went on, they became valuable in solving group problems. By the time of the Cleveland International Convention in 1950, the common consent was so large that we asked the Convention — a good cross-section of A.A. — to approve them, which it did."

Reprinted from Markings – Spring 2006

John G.. Unionville Group

GREATER TORONTO AREA INTERGROUP MONTHLY BOARDROOM BOOKINGS FOR SUB-COMMITTEES

Correctional Facilities:

1st Mon. of the month at 7 pm at 234

Self-Support:

1st Wed. of the month at 7 pm at 234

Archives:

2nd Fri. of the month at 7 pm at 234

Website &

Better Times Newsletter:

2nd Sat. of the month at 1 pm at 234

Cooperation with the

Professional Community (CPC):

2nd Mon. of the month at 7 pm at 234

Access Ability:

3rd Sun. of the month at 11 am at 234

Phone Training Session:

3rd Sun. of the month at 1:30 pm at 234

Public Information:

3rd Mon. of the month at 7:30 pm at 234

Treatment Facilities:

3rd Thurs. of the month at 7:30 pm at 234

Information AA Day:

Last Mon. at 7:30 pm at 234

Twelfth Step:

Last Fri. of the month at 6:30 pm at 234

Finance Subcommittee*:

Second-last Tuesday of the month at 4:30 pm at 234

Operating Committee*:

Second-last Tuesday of the month at 7:30 pm at 234

Monthly General Meeting of GTA

Intergroup is held on the last Tues. of the month at 8pm at the Glebe Road United Church – 20 Glebe Rd E, off Yonge St. (near Davisville subway).

To ensure that the meeting you want isn't cancelled in a particular month, please phone the office at 234.

(*non-committee members: attendance by appointment only)

All Subcommittees meet at the Intergroup Office
234 Eglinton Avenue East, Suite 202

Diversions from Our Primary Purpose

I received an email recently regarding cell phones at meetings. A great eye opener, especially when related to our traditions regarding “primary purpose” (Trad 5) and “money, property and prestige” (Trad 6). It was pointed out too, that not only is it a major distraction if it goes off, but it also brings “dishonour” to AA — a place that is helping us to live a better life.

Equally distracting and disruptive are dogs at meetings. It is clearly an attention seeking and ego inflation behaviour that takes no account or consideration for others in the same room. Some folks love dogs, others hate them, some are allergic to them and others fear dogs. Whatever our individual feelings are, each of us has the right to choose our level of contact with dogs and not have them thrust upon us at AA meetings.

As we mature in AA, our ability to laugh at ourselves and humorous situations becomes progressively more acute. Oftentimes, a well-delivered message includes funny anecdotes and incidents “appropriate” to and “related” to the speaker’s experience, strength and hope. Some folks seem compelled to start their talk with a joke or one is delivered from the floor during announcements. A lot of these jokes are off-colour, sexist, put-downs or sarcastic. I suppose they might be alright at a Toastmasters meeting or in a bar, but in AA where we deal with serious life or death issues, I suggest, they are misplaced.

I am not immune to the trappings of “money, property and prestige” but through the teachings of AA they are taking on a less prominent

role in my life. As a steward of the AA program, these issues (cell phones, dogs and jokes) jeopardize and put at risk the message being delivered to the newcomer — “our primary purpose” and dilute “the joy of good living” to which we all aspire.

Norm P.



November '08: Intergroup Report

Finance Report: Gregg W. (Rox Glen Traditional), Finance Chairperson – Year-to-date group donations and Gratitude are well above budget estimates. Revenues from the ORC, Winters Open House, Annual Archives Breakfast and 7th Tradition from monthly General Meetings account for large 2007 revenue reported as ‘Other Income’. Now have four part-time staff: Office Mgr. – Judy Jackett (non-member); Literature Dept. – Helen Gillen (non-member); medallion eng. – John P. (member); membership secretary – Alexx V. (member). Fran H. and Roy H. joined the Finance committee for the next two years. The budget will be presented on Dec 16th.

SUBCOMMITTEE REPORTS

Access Ability: Donna M. (Sunnyside), Chairperson – Due to an aging population; there is an increased need for wheelchair accessible mtgs as well as for both hearing and visually impaired materials and services. For more info please access our page on the Website. There is also a Buddies List available at 234 to escort blind or disable members to meetings. Next mtg: Sun. Dec. 21 at 11 am at 234.

Archives: Roy R. (Trial & Error), Chairperson – Nov. Archives Breakfast attendance was lower than expected. Anyone with outstanding ticket revenues and/or leftover tickets, please return them to the General Meeting. Committee requests donation of laptop for archival purposes. Next mtg: Fri. Dec. 12 at 7 pm at 234.

Corrections: no report. Next mtg: Sat. Jan 3 at 3 pm at 234.

CPC: Courtney R. (Living Sober), Committee member – The committee recently participated in the Chaplains in Pastoral Care Conference (Oct. 29), and attended the District 14 Service Day (Nov. 15). CPC’s next event is the Family Medicine Conference hosted by the Canadian College of Family Physicians of Canada Nov 26-29. Next mtg: Mon. Dec. 8 at 7 pm at 234.

Information AA Day 2009: Jim A. (Leslie), Committee member – The 30th Annual Info AA Day will take place on Sat., May 30 2009 at the Lansing United Church. This year’s Theme is ‘Service with Gratitude’. GSO Speaker will be Mary D. and day includes an address from our Area 83 Delegate. Tickets: \$5 includes potluck lunch. Next mtg: Mon. Jan. 26 at 7:30 pm at 234.

Ontario Regional Conference 2009: Kathleen McD. (Rox Glen), Chairperson: The event theme is ‘The Joy of Living’ and will be held at the Fairmont-Royal York Hotel Mar. 20-22. Register early to qualify for our early-bird draw. \$30 entry fee. Inform the hotel you are attending ORC, to get special \$169.00/night rate. Reg. Deadline: Mar. 6, 2009. Forms are available online at www.aatoronto.org. Volunteers needed.

Public Information: Courtney R. (Living Sober), Committee member – Volunteers are needed to complete the Media in Schools Database. Letters to GTA Schools Outreach project to be organized into smaller mailings across Intergroup Districts. Police Stations literature for Districts with contacts through the P.I. Committee and Corrections is in process. Next mtg: Mon. Dec. 15 at 7:30 pm at 234.

Reception: Rick M. (Six Points), Operating Committee member – 56 reps and 7 guests present, collection of the 7th Tradition totaled \$156.66.

Treatment Facilities: Carol (Tuesday Night Disc.), Comm. member – New Chair for the upcoming term is Elaine H. (Welcome). Next mtg: Thurs. Dec. 18 at 7:30 pm at 234.

Twelfth Step: Jim O. (Markland Wood), Chairperson – Phone scheduling for Nov. has gone very well, thanks to Greeter Captain Tom S. (Saturday Morning Disc.). Phone volunteers are needed. Next Phone Training Session: Sun. Dec. 21 at 1:30 pm at 234. A new computer system/phone system will hopefully be in place for the New Year. Next Twelfth Step Committee mtg: Wed. Dec. 10 at 6:30 pm at 234.

Better Times/Website: Marv W. (Mississauga), Chairperson – Holiday issue is out. Candlelight/Gratitude mtgs are listed along with cancellations and confirmations for the Holidays. Next mtg: Sat. Dec 13 at 1pm at 234.

Winter Season Open House 2008: Marv W. (Mississauga), Comm. member – WSOH will be held Christmas Day at the Emmanuel-Howard Park United Church (Roncesvalles & Wright Ave) from 10:30 am to 4:30 pm See flyer on website for details and directions. Volunteers needed for day of event. ‘Into Action’ Committee Mtg: Sat. Dec 13 at 2 pm

Next General Meeting: Tuesday, Dec 16 at 8 pm at Glebe Rd United Church (meeting earlier due to Holidays).