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Happy Holidays

From the
Better Times/Website
Committee

Alcoholism Does Not Take Holidays

The thought of entering the holiday season without a stock of alcoholic beverages used to be unthinkable. The idea of a sober gathering was unheard of in my family and circle of friends. Many of my loved ones still imbibe, yet I am approaching my eleventh sober holiday season. For me celebrating with alcohol is but a memory and it seems that my family and friends are indifferent about whether I take a drink or not. My relationships are more relaxed and harmonious as a direct result of my recovery. Yet the thought of imbibing causes my muscles to contract, just like the escalating alcoholic conflicts of days past.

Today, to drink or not to drink is not the question. The question has become how do I use my spiritual tool kit to celebrate the holidays with contented sobriety? How do I share the joy of life while maintaining emotional balance during a season that often triggers vulnerability and intense emotional memories?

I use the slogan “first things first” to remember I have the disease of alcoholism and can not safely take a drink. However, beyond abstinence, there are actions I take to ensure my spiritual fitness is a priority. The actions are captured by these words: “Trust God, Clean House and Help Others”.

1. I make conscious contact with God, my Higher Power. I do this by engaging in honest prayer daily. I listen for guidance from God through meditation (almost daily). I receive the right directions and answers when I take the time to be silent.
2. I study the book Alcoholics Anonymous and take the steps to keep ‘my house clean’ and wake up spiritually.
3. I attend meetings and work with other alcoholics.
4. I make consistent contact with my sponsor to the best of my ability. My sponsor’s voice has become the primary external voice speaking to me about the principles of the program. I have discovered the wisdom in allowing her voice to rise above the voices in my head, especially during questionable periods along the path of recovery.

The holiday season can be one of the many questionable periods along the path. I treat the holidays like the other days of the year. Staying alive and well depends on constant vigilance in a solid recovery program. Alcoholism does not take holidays! I wish you all a sober and joyful holiday celebration using your spiritual tool kits.

Anonymous
Rox Glen Traditional Group

2009 Archives Breakfast Report

On Sunday November 8, the Toronto Archives Committee hosted its 25th annual breakfast at the Oasis Convention Centre in Mississauga. 270 alcoholics and their guests gathered for a morning of conviviality, good food and even better, AA.

Two longtime AA members shared with us what it was like when they got sober. Joy P. from St. Catharines, whose dry date is in February 1954, recalled for us her first drink – when she was nine – and getting sober in Toronto. After calling Toronto Intergroup for help, she went to the office at 333 Bay Street and was 12-stepped by Marg M., our first Intergroup office manager. Joy’s gratitude for being sober in the Fellowship rang loud and clear throughout her talk.

The second speaker, Fr. Peter W. from Oakville, shared with us some of his drinking escapades as well as how he finally got sober in January 1961. Peter

became active in service to AA – as Intergroup Chair in 1965, Delegate to the General Service Conference in 1967-68 and then as a Trustee of the General Service Board for four years in the early seventies. During this time he had the privilege of meeting and working with Bill W. Peter ended his talk with a stirring rendition of The Touch of the Master’s Hand. Both speakers received well-deserved standing ovations.

There was a sobriety countdown, draws for door- and raffle- prizes and the Lord’s Prayer later, and then the assemblage dispersed, each of us to our own lives and responsibilities, well fed and perhaps a bit more resolved to continue carrying the message of AA.

As Peter reminded us, our job is to ensure that the Fellowship is here and available when the child, born today, grows up and needs to find that sobriety is possible, just as those who went before us ensured it was here for us in our time of need.

In love and AA service

Roy R., Chair
Toronto Intergroup Archives Committee

Greetings from Intergroup!



12th Step Committee ANNUAL HOLIDAY PARTY

Sunday, December 13th
1:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.
234 Eglinton Avenue East

Thank you to everyone who helps with the phones @ 234!

*If you are on the phones or a spare,
If you are on the 12 Step or Buddies List,
If you have an interest in getting involved...*

**We would love you to join us
for this Celebration!**

Florence B., Intergroup Chair

The Greatest Gift

I had been on a nine-day binge and on Christmas morning, very early, I woke up in withdrawal with severe chest pains that suggested to me I was having a heart attack. I drove myself, with my heart attack, to a small local Mennonite hospital. I assured myself that I knew no Mennonites personally so I felt my anonymity, before I knew how important the word was, would be protected.

I explained to the nurse on duty about my chest pains and she immediately took me into an examining room and informed me the doctors, it being Christmas morning, were all on-call and she would call a doctor at home and have him come in to see me. I thought nothing of the fact that this would take a husband and father away from his wife and children on Christmas morning.

When the doctor walked into the room, he was frowning and he immediately knew that I did not "smell" like a heart attack. His first comment to me was "Mr. M., you are an alcoholic and you are going to die from this disease if you do not seek help". He gave me three pills and asked to see me in his office on the third day and told me to take one pill

a day until I saw him. He then did check my heart as best he could and reminded me again of my imminent demise unless I contacted Alcoholics Anonymous.

On leaving the hospital I took all three pills and left for my sister's home where my family was having a get-together for Christmas Day. Sitting there listening to all my nieces and nephews open presents felt like I was listening to them waving sheet metal in the wind. After uncounted trips to the bathroom, I finally knelt at the bathtub, not really believing that prayer would help. I attempted anyway and said, "I don't know if I believe or not but I can't live like this anymore and I don't want to die". I phoned an acquaintance from work who I knew went to Alcoholics Anonymous and told him, "I need help". We made immediate arrangements for me to move in to his home for awhile (7 weeks) and thus I began my journey to recovery in Alcoholics Anonymous.

When I was a boy, Christmas was a wonderful experience with lots of gifts but I can assure you that Christmas, December 25, 1972, I received the greatest gift of my experience, I got my life back.

Bob M., Unionville Group

Tradition 12 How is it done?

When I hear Tradition 12 read at a meeting, the one phrase that always stands out is: "place principles before personalities". That sounds so easy, but I find it is sometimes difficult to put into practice. And I wonder, just how do I do that? How do I place principles before personalities?

I found the answer within the Tradition itself: by practising humility. Humility is not one of the words I normally associate with Tradition 12 but it is written in the long form of the Tradition, "And finally, we of Alcoholics Anonymous believe that the principle of anonymity has an immense spiritual significance. It reminds us that we are to place principles before personalities; that we are actually to practise a genuine humility. This to the end that our great blessings may never spoil us; that we shall forever live in thankful contemplation of Him who presides over us all."

When I was researching for this article I looked for something that our founders had written on the subject of humility, so that I could understand what they meant by it. One story in the book, "A.A. Comes of Age" gave me what I was looking for. Bill W. writes, "Dr. Bob was essentially a far more humble person than I, and anonymity came rather easily to him. When it was sure that he was mortally afflicted, some of his friends suggested that there should be a monument erected in honor of him and his wife, Anne – befitting a founder and his lady. Telling me about this, Dr. Bob grinned broadly and said, "God bless 'em. They mean well. But let's you and me get buried just like other folks." In the Akron cemetery where Dr. Bob and Anne lie, the simple stone says not a word about A.A. This final example of self-effacement is of more permanent worth to A.A. than any amount of public attention or any great monument."

Again, our founders show me how it is done. Now it is up to me to do it!

JoAnne L., Unionville Group

archivesalley: The History Behind A.A.'s Responsibility Statement?

The Responsibility Statement reads:

I am Responsible. When anyone, anywhere, reaches out for help, I want the hand of A.A. always to be there. And for that: I am responsible.

It was written by former A.A. trustee Al S. for the 1965 A.A. International Convention in Toronto. In the souvenir book for the 1965 Convention, Dr. Jack Norris writes:

"... We must remember that A.A. will continue strong only so long as each of us freely and happily gives it away to another person, only as each of us takes our fair share of responsibility for sponsorship of those who still suffer, for the growth and integrity of our Group, for our Intergroup activities, and for A.A. as a whole. It is in taking responsibility that real freedom and the enduring satisfactions of life are found. A.A. has given us the power to choose – to drink or not to drink – and in doing so has given us the freedom to be responsible for ourselves. As we become responsible for ourselves, we are free to be responsible for our share in A.A., and

unless we happily accept this responsibility we lose A.A. Strange, isn't it?"

In a Grapevine article in October 1965, the Responsibility Statement is discussed, and Bill W. expresses his views:

Two major thoughts stood out in the remarks of the many speakers, alcoholic and nonalcoholic, at A.A.'s July Toronto Convention. The first was admiration and gratitude for A.A.'s startling success in sobering up hundreds of thousands of lost-cause drunks. The other was concern that the success, which has come to A.A. over the thirty years since its start..., would not lead us to any complacency about the size of the job still to be done. A.A.'s co-founder, Bill, in his talk to over 10,000 attending the major sessions of the Convention, stressed the need for cooperation with all who work on the problem of alcoholism.

"Too often, we have deprecated and even derided these projects of our friends just because we do not always see eye to eye with them," Bill said. *"We should very seriously*

ask ourselves how many alcoholics have gone on drinking simply because we have failed to cooperate in good spirit with these many agencies. No alcoholic should go mad or die merely because he did not come straight to A.A. in the beginning."

There have been two Advisory Actions from the General Service Conference regarding the Declaration of Responsibility since it was introduced. In 1971, the Conference recommended that:

The Literature Committee, following the general feeling of the Conference, reaffirm both the spirit and the wording of the "I am Responsible" Declaration from the International Convention held in Toronto in 1965.

And in 1977, the Conference recommended that:

The Responsibility Declaration not be changed, as it was made at the 1965 International Convention in Toronto.

Reprinted from *Markings Vol 28. No.2 – Summer 2008*

Maire O'B, GTA Intergroup Archivist

haveyouheard

Recent Medallions:

James H.	5	Shepherd	November 3
Kim C.	20	Fifth Tradition	November 4
Peter T.	1	The Hill	November 5
Sheheen S.	5	Markland Wood	November 5
Mark P.	1	The Hill	November 5
Breanne W.	1	Living Sober	November 10
Doug P.	1	Responsibility	November 10
Linda S.	1	Amazing Grace	November 10
Marty R.	25	Unionville	November 11
Andrew C.	1	Meadowvale South	November 12
Donna R.	5	Stepping Stones	November 14
Ken F.	1	Bayview	November 15
Wayne S.	1	Westmoreland	November 15
Paul S.	1	Unionville	November 18
Rob M.	1	New Anchor	November 19
Dan M.	45	Lawrence Plaza	November 22
Gloria C.	1	King City	November 23
Ron S.	1	Reaching Out	November 24
Steve G.	20	Westmoreland Group	November 24
Roman R.	20	Stepping Stones	November 28
Kim S.	20	Prince Edward	November 30

Upcoming Medallions:

Savrand C.	1	Rexdale United	December 3
Francis A.	20	Crossroads	December 6
Tom L.	5	Glenholme	December 7
Roger K.	5	Westmoreland	December 8
Marcella S.	15	Rexdale United	December 10
Alf S.	1	East York	December 15
Ross O.	10	Fifth Tradition	December 23
Mary C.	1	Westmoreland	December 27
Charles C.	1	Pine Hills	December 28
Shane D.	1	Golden Mile	January 2
Dennis M.	10	Rexdale United	January 7

Meeting Changes:

Scarborough (O) Friday 8pm (EAST): As of October 30th, meeting time will be changed from 8pm to 7pm.

S.O.S. (C) Monday 8:30pm (NORTH): Until the end of the year, meeting will temporarily relocate to St. Matthew, the Apostle Church, 80 George Henry Blvd (Sheppard Ave E & Don Mills Rd).

St. James Big Book Discussion (C) Monday 1pm (CENTRAL): Meetings are suspended due to construction.

Amazing Grace (C) Tuesday 8pm (CENTRAL): As of January 5, meeting will be moving to Blessed Sacrament Church, 24 Cheritan Avenue (Yonge & Lawrence)

New Meetings:

Beaches Group (C) Tuesday 6:15 pm (EAST): Meeting located at Bellefair United Church, 2 Bellefair Avenue.

Eventide Thursday Night (C) Thursday 7:30pm (CENTRAL): Meeting GLBT friendly. Format is: speaker, meditation & discussion.

Courage to Change (C) Sunday 6:30pm (EAST): Meeting located at Rouge Valley Centenary Hospital, 2867 Ellesmere Rd, Scarborough. Meeting located in 3rd floor Canteen room, near cafeteria.

Discontinued Meetings:

Courage to Change (O) Wednesday 8pm (NORTHWEST): Meeting discontinued.

Top Of The Stairs (C) Friday 12pm (EAST): Meeting has been suspended indefinitely.

Announcements:

Unity Dinner will be held Saturday, November 21 at 1883 King St East in Hamilton Ontario. There will be live Entertainment, Door Prizes, 50/50 draw All Proceeds to Hamilton Central Office. Tickets are only \$10. For more information go to <http://www.aahamilton.org>

Winter Season Open House will be held Christmas Day at Emmanuel Howard Park United Church. More information to follow. The committee is currently looking for volunteers, contact Vlad G. at winter@aatontario.org.

New Years Eve Diamonds & Ice Celebration will be held December 31 from 7:30pm to 1am, at the All Saints Anglican Church, 12935 Keele St in King City. Special Prime Rib & Ham hot buffet dinner will be served, followed by dance. Tickets are \$30 (must purchase **BEFORE Dec. 18**) plus non-perishable food item at door. For tickets call Sidona C. at 905.727.6011

32nd Annual Spiritual New Year's Eve Dance & Pot-Luck Buffet will be held December 31 at 8pm at Holy Rosary Parish Hall, 356 St. Clair West. For more, see the 2009 Holiday insert or www.aatontario.org

18th Annual Toronto Winter Round Up will be held Saturday January 23rd at 9am, at the York Reception Centre, 1100 Millwood Road. This year's theme is "Willingness... Our foundation for life" For more information visit www.torontowinterroundup.com

For information on Candlelight/Gratitude Meetings and open and closed meetings over the holidays, please see the 2009 Holiday insert or visit www.aatontario.org.

October '09: Intergroup Report

Chairperson's Opening Remarks: Florence B. (Noon Rap), Operating Committee Chair – Florence welcomed all new reps. Housekeeping Item: please put all coffee cups in the recycling provided.

Finance Report: Bruce L. (Back to Basics), Finance Chairperson – Finance Report for the month of September 2009 Summary:

	Income	Expenses	Net Income
September	\$40,924	\$12,789	\$28,135
Comparison to Budget	\$22,952	\$- 3,252	\$26,204
Sept. Year-to-Date	\$179,088	\$125,629	\$53,459
Comparison to Budget	\$45,338	\$- 36,602	\$81,940

Sept. income is over budget from increased group donations, gratitude and higher literature sales. Expenses under budget from 2008 property tax rebate, a partial rebate for 2007 and the landlord refunded 2008 property tax overpayment. Year-to-date surplus in income is explained by the ORC contribution, increased donations and gratitude and literature sales. Year-to-date expenses lower due to salary costs, delayed audit billing and 2007 property tax rebate and 2008 refund. Two new committee members have come forward. 2010 Budget is in process. Members interested in the pre-authorized Gratitude payment options for donations can fill out the chequing sheet available in the Gratitude forms.

SUBCOMMITTEE REPORTS

Access Ability: Donna MacQ. (Sunnyside), Chairperson – Received invitation for People in Motion 2010, will take place on June 4 & 5, 2010. Have contacted GSO regarding funding, and it is being discussed by the Trustees. Next mtg: Nov. 15 at 11am at 234.

Archives: Roy R. (Trial & Error), Chairperson – Committee's 2010 budget requirements have been submitted. 2 members have been diligently sorting materials submitted by the late Bobby D. and Tommy H. Archives Breakfast will be held Nov 8 at the Oasis Convention Centre. Tickets are \$25. Next mtg: Nov. 13 at 7pm at 234.

Correctional Facilities: Phil M. (Bloomdale) – Area 83 has need for Spanish pen-pals for inmates. Dist. 22 need volunteers for Sundays at the EDC. Dist. 2 needs soft cover BB's, 12&12's and pamphlets. Motion put forth by chair to supply a dozen BB's and 12&12's to Dist. 2, the cost borne by the yearly budget. Motion seconded by D2 and carried. Decided that any soft cover books or magazines flowing through GTACC would be stamped with a local phone number and websites. Next mtg: Nov. 2 at 7:30pm at 234.

CPC: No report. Next mtg: Nov. 9 at 7pm at 234.

Information AA Day: Phil M. (Bloomdale), Chairperson – GSO Speaker has been booked. Chair will be in contact with the literature department concerning the supply of literature for the event. Next mtg: Nov. 23 at 7:30pm at 234.

Ontario Regional Conference 2010: Jim B. (Saturday Morning Disc.), Chair – ORC Flyers/placards made available at this meeting; more next month. Pre-registration is now available. Register early to qualify for monthly draw and hotel room bonus. Registration fee is \$30; banquet cost is \$60; room cost per night is \$170. Please indicate 'ORC' when registering rooms. E-mail address: orc@aatontario.org. Phone number: 416-487-2677. ORC Volunteer Greeter sign-up sheets were also made available to reps.

Public Information: Bryan W. (Rox Glen Traditional), Chair – Dist. 6 hoping to have Big Books/12 & 12's available in libraries in Peel Region. Also an initiative to have same in retirement homes across the GTA. A P.I. workshop on speaking at non-AA meetings to be held in Dec. Next mtg: Nov. 16 at 7:30 pm at 234.

Reception Centre: Rick McC. (Six Points), 1st Vice Chair – 68 reps were present at this meeting.

Treatment Facilities: No report. Next mtg: Nov. 19 at 7:30pm at 234.

Twelfth Step: Florence B. (Noon Rap) – New phone system has been installed. 12 Step Workshop earlier this month went well, as did the 12 Step contact telethon. Greeter Appreciation Day to be held in December. Next mtg: Wed. Nov. 11 at 7pm and Nov. 27 at 7pm at 234. Next Greeter Training: Nov. 15 at 1:30pm at 234.

Website/Better Times: Aaron K. (Yorkville), Chair – Thanks to new co-editors, Sonja T. and Joanne L. for their efforts; as well as Ed R. (Rouge Valley), Dave N. (Cartoonist), Bryan W. (Rox Glen Traditional), and Maire O'B. (Leslie) for their contributions. Let us know your group Candlelight Meeting and/or any scheduling changes to your meetings over the Holiday Season. Deadline for submissions: 10th of every month. Next mtg: Sat. Nov. 14 at 1pm at 234.

Winter Season Open House: Vlad G. (Mississauga), Chair – Event will be held December 25 at the Emmanuel-Howard Park Church at Wright Avenue and Roncesvalles. Event starts at 9:30am and will feature AA/Al-Anon meetings, music, fellowship, and a turkey dinner with all the trimmings. Committee has secured a Treasurer for the event, but needs cooks, drivers, set-up/tear-down help, committee members, and a literature coordinator. Vlad thanked webmaster Brian T. and the office staff for their efforts. Next mtg: Nov. 7 at 1pm at 234.

NEW BUSINESS

Have been 2 resignations from the Operating Committee; 2 new Operating Committee members need to be elected. Floor opened for nominations & Harvey (Principles Before Personalities) and Craig (Prince Edward) are the new Operating Committee members (by acclamation).

A member (Johanne) announced the upcoming 18th annual Toronto Winter Roundup 'Willingness: Our Foundation for Life' to be held Saturday, Jan.23, 2010 at the York Reception Centre. For more information see www.torontowinterroundup.com Nat S. (Bloomdale) brought the following MOTION to the Floor: Any changes to the current Operating Procedures should be presented to all the GTA Groups and members, in the form of a referendum, according to the current Intergroup Operating Procedures; Section 11.2, and a 60% majority of all members voting would be required in order for the new procedures to be implemented.' Vince M. (Leslie) seconded this Motion.

Florence: "I believe this refers to what happened last month. What happened last month was the Floor voted to table [Operating Committee] elections – which normally happens in October – to January, so that the Operating Committee could complete the fine-tuning of the new Procedures and Guidelines, based on the Motion that was sent out to the membership with a 60% approval...certainly hasn't changed the Procedures and Guidelines; that was not the intent of the Motion [last month]; the intent of the Motion was simply to have a little more time so that we could complete the work that we started."

A discussion took place on the floor and a vote was taken. MOTION DEFEATED (3 votes against the Motion were noted). For a full transcript of the discussion, please see the complete minutes on www.aatoronto.org.

Deadline for resumes for the ORC 2012 Chair is the end of December.

NEXT GENERAL MEETING: Tues. Nov. 24 at 8 pm at Lansing United Church (49 Bogert Ave, near Yonge and Sheppard subway).

