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BETTER TIMES Published monthly for AA members in the Greater Toronto Area. 234 Eglinton Avenue East, Suite 202, Toronto, ON M4P 1K5 Telephone: 416-487-5591 Fax: 416-487-5855 TTY: 416-487-5062 Email: bettertimes@aatoronto.org Web: aatoronto.org/btimes.html
Editorial Ctte: Aaron K. (Chair), Marrey P. (Co-editor.), Sonja T. (Co-editor), JoAnne L. (Co-editor), David N. (Cartoonist), Jim H. (Circ.), Ciara C. (Desktop). Opinions expressed in *BETTER TIMES* are those of the authors and 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 month prior to the month of issue), by mail, fax or email. Only signed submissions with a means of contact will be accepted. For subscriptions call Alexx 416-487-8110.

Submissions Wanted!

BT is always happy to receive your articles, event listings and medallion notices. To submit an event or medallion to *Better Times*, please visit www.aatoronto.org and go to Submit Events.

Ontario Regional Conference Survival Guide

The 2010 ORC is just around the corner and for many, especially those attending the conference for the first time, it can be overwhelming. I know it was for me. My first ORC was in 1992 and I only attended one meeting. It was the Family Panel and quite frankly the Al-Anon message scared me! I sat in the meeting looking at all the people and trying to figure out how long it would take to collect the 7th Tradition, not realizing that my registration fee covered my 7th Tradition for the whole weekend. After speaking with a friend, I planned to go back for the dance but ended up going home. My friend went for a drink and I don't think he is sober today. Over the years I have attended many meetings at many Ontario Regional Conferences and my experiences have taught me some survival tips that will help to make it a great weekend:

1. Have fun — remember the theme is “Celebrating Sobriety”. There will be thousands of alcoholics at the Royal York Hotel and many opportunities to have fun such as volunteering to be a greeter or helping out at Registration or in the Early in Sobriety Room. To volunteer, send a note to 2010orcvolunteer@gmail.com or call me, Tim R., at 416-724-8395. I have met many wonderful friends just by greeting for a two hour shift, and there are some people I only ever see at the conference, especially the regular attendees from out of town or out of province.
2. Overwhelmed by the crowds? Here are a few suggestions: check the program to see which meetings are simulcast in the Concert Hall where the crowds are often smaller; go to the Ontario Room and sit and have a conversation with a fellow alcoholic; check out the hospitality suite notices on the bulletin board outside Pre-registration on the MM level. In the hospitality suites you will find fellowship and light refreshments. If you can, book a room at the hotel for a night or two so that you have a quiet place to go. Can't afford a room? Try getting together with your sponsor or sponsee to share a room. If you do book a room make sure to let the hotel know that you are with the conference in order to get the special conference rate.



3. Register early to avoid the line-ups at Registration and your name badge will be waiting for you when you arrive at Pre Registration!
4. The GTA Intergroup sub-committees will have displays set up in the Ontario Room. There are also opportunities to purchase 12 Step related materials. Again, check the bulletin board outside of Pre-Registration for locations.
5. Attend the Sobriety Countdown before the final meeting on Sunday afternoon and feel the excitement of seeing a thousand alcoholics celebrating lengths of sobriety ranging from 1 day to over fifty years.
6. If you are not attending the banquet on Saturday night but plan to attend the simulcast of the banquet speaker or the dance, you may want to consider making dinner reservations as the local restaurants do fill up quickly on Saturday night.
7. If you really enjoy a particular speaker, make sure you thank them or purchase their message on CD. Meetings that are taped and available for purchase will be indicated in the program.
8. Pace yourself; you do not have to attend all the meetings!
9. Feeling restless, irritable and discontent? Go to the Early in Sobriety room to speak with a newcomer!
10. Go to the dance on Saturday night and dance like no one is watching to music from the 1950's to current top 40 hits.
11. Wear comfortable shoes and use the coat check so you are not carrying your coat around all day.

If you are unable to attend the conference there will still be meetings that you can attend in Toronto as no meetings are cancelled because of the ORC.

As with any meeting I attend, I always leave an ORC meeting feeling better than when I got there. For me, the excitement starts to build a few weeks in advance and then I leave the hotel on the Sunday afternoon physically exhausted but on a spiritual and emotional high from the great speakers and great fellowship. If you are attending, look for me — I will be there with a big smile on my face as I will be Celebrating Sobriety.

**Tim R., Chartwell Group
 PI & Hospitality Chair 2010 ORC**

Why I like answering the phones at Intergroup

Answer the phones at Intergroup once every four weeks for four and a half hours. It can also be done on a certain day of the month, or every two weeks for two hours. To do this a member of AA must have one year of continuous sobriety.

I like that the calls are always different. You never know what the next call will be about. It could be someone in the lobby of the building wanting to get in so they can attend a meeting, pick up a medallion or something like that.

Or it could be a call from somebody who just needs to talk to another alcoholic. I've called Intergroup on that basis several times, and that was with several years of sobriety under my belt. Perhaps I just wanted to talk with someone who was an alcoholic but not necessarily one of the ones I already knew.

Most of the time though it's someone wanting information about a meeting — where, when, is the meeting open for the holidays? That can be tricky though — they might be asking for a meeting in Orangeville, or in Vancouver, or somewhere in the States. We've got plenty of useful tools to help at the Intergroup office.

Bobby Y. Passes

Alcoholics Anonymous everywhere lost a devoted and outstanding member recently with the passing of Bobby Y. Valiantly battling a stroke that left her immobilized last spring, she had recently been able to walk on her own. When the Rox Glen Traditional Group celebrated her 35th AA anniversary this fall, she spoke loudly and clearly to the full room of AA members who attended. She was loved by all.

I had the privilege in June of 2009 of submitting a write-up for Better Times of the upcoming 35th anniversary of both Bobby Y. and her husband, Ed. Although their dry date was in January 1st, 1974, they were considerate of the fact that for the large number who would love to celebrate with them, January is often a month of travelling/parking hardship.

Bobby, however, would not be present despite their thoughtful plan. She was admitted to St. Mike's Hospital and after several months of gruelling rehabilitation, she did celebrate her milestone anniversary on September 17th with her group at Rox Glen. After spending Christmas with her daughter, Linda, husband, Ed and friends, she passed away on December 29th. Her passing was unexpected and painful for us all.

With an unwavering goodness, Bobby was a devout, passionate and loving member of Alcoholics Anonymous. Her many sponsees were a testament not only to her AA dedication but to the recovery vehicle available to them through the Twelve Steps. She was a special woman and her compassionate, great heart will be missed by all. Her voice will continue to be heard. Her light has simply moved to another room.

Bernadette M., King City Group



Sometimes it's someone really in distress — that's when I often feel the most helpful. Perhaps the person needs a 12th Step call. The best thing they can do is get to a meeting and perhaps they need help getting there. Without getting to a meeting they might just go drink some more and have yet another day (or several!) of oblivion. Organizing a 12th Step call can take a while — I just keep calling until I get someone who can talk to the person at least and perhaps take them to a meeting.

People call up in tears and feel desperate. They don't see anything good lying ahead for them: they know they want to stop drinking, but they...

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I Thank You For My Life Today

I sat at home watching TV, playing solitaire on my computer and idling the day away, thinking it was too cold to go to my home group meeting of Alcoholics Anonymous. Then on CP24, they began showing as the bodies of our fallen soldiers were being brought home, I was reminded of my duty as a recovering alcoholic. These soldiers were fighting for freedom. When I came to AA, I did not know what I was looking for, but as the years have gone by, I realize I was looking for freedom from alcoholism.

When I walked through the doors of AA for the first time on July 12, 1989, there were people there to greet me and welcome me. These people had come to these meetings no matter what the weather conditions were. It may have been a blistery cold night, like the one we have today, Jan. 3rd, or it may have been steaming hot and humid; regardless, they were there at the AA meeting, week after week, month after month, year after year. These are the soldiers of AA, welcoming the alcoholic home and offering them guidance and hope for a better life, a life of hope, faith and courage. These members of AA were also there as their families and friends celebrated birthdays, Christmas, anniversaries and other family milestones and celebrations. As an alcoholic brought to AA by the grace of their Higher Power, they are brought home.

If I chose to stay home and not go to my AA meetings and not be present when the regular member, the newcomer or the one who has relapsed walks in, I am turning my back on my higher power. As the members of AA were there when I walked in, I would like to carry on this responsibility for the future generations. I also hope that AA will be there when my son is ready to join us, that the rooms of Alcoholics Anonymous will be open. I was able to talk to daughter and son during this weekend again, yet there are many parents, sister, brothers, friends and other family members who are not able to talk to their loved ones. Their loved ones have lost their lives in the battle with alcoholism.

I thank you all for my life today.

Kris O., Keep It Simple Group

Stay a little longer, try a little harder. Don't leave before the miracle happens.

How many times were these words heard in meeting after meeting where Bob D. was? Known and loved by many for his eloquence, Bob spent 30 years at the Fellowship Group in Toronto, after which he spent the remaining years of life in Barrie. He was known to have kept a record of every meeting he ever attended in his over 40 years of sobriety. One of his closest companions was Butch M. who traveled just about everywhere Bob did — and Bob was everywhere. When Bob passed away a few years back on June 10, 2004, his family entrusted Butch with what turned out to be an extensive collection of AA keepsakes. Butch held onto these for awhile before he felt it was time to finally let go of these treasures. Bob was a very active member for many years of the Archives Committee in Toronto so it was a natural choice for these to be placed into the care of that AA Archives repository. No one had any idea about the extent to which Bob went to record his life in AA.

The collection of over 30 binders required special attention so a new volunteer was recruited to go through the binders and begin the painstaking process of conserving, preserving, filing and cataloguing these. All meticulously filed the many binders that stretch from 1956 to 2004 make it very evident that 'Bobby D.' was someone who loved to participate in all aspects of the Fellowship and we are greatly indebted to him for his diligent work in collecting and recording his history in A.A. The thousands of pieces of correspondence, records, photographs, cards, newspaper and magazine articles he collected

demonstrate his great love and passion for the Fellowship. And the hundreds of thank you cards he received show the feeling was mutual. In the first binder, there were cards from his one year anniversary with signatures from Marg M., Pete W., and many more whose names we hear almost reverently mentioned by our long timers.

Even our wise 'oldtimers' were young once and Bob was very involved in the initial conferences and meetings of Young People in AA. There is an extensive collection of flyers, agendas and badges from these early conventions along with many letters and cards from fellow attendees.

Bob's commitment to service was legendary and, as such, his collection is also filled with thousands of articles, minutes and announcements from the innumerable committees he served on. This desire to preserve a historical record for future generations is a tremendous gift and one that has provided us with another window into our past. The process of logging and recording the many thousands of documents will take a fair amount of time but it is a job that we feel honoured to have and eager to do.

A half-century of AA through the eyes of one of Toronto AA's trusted servants will be accessible to the Fellowship on Saturday, June 19, 2010. The location is yet to be confirmed so please check back here or on the GTA Intergroup website.

Máire O'B, GTA Intergroup Archivist

— haveyouheard —

Recent Medallions:

Jim	25	Saturday Morning Disc	January 2
Rob C.	15	Richmond Hill	January 8
Jim B.	20	Saturday Morning Disc.	January 9
Ann H.	1	Stepping Stones	January 9
Wade B.	1	Kennedy Park	January 11
Matt B.	1	King City	January 11
Stephane H.		Westmoreland	January 12
Hélène Nicole	10	Saturday Morning Disc	Jan. 16
Gary S.	1	Lansing	Jan. 16
Bryant Mac L.	35	East York	Jan. 19
David B.	50	Newmarket	Jan. 21
Jim I.	20	Back to Basics	January 22
Michael B.	15	Aurora	January 24
Scott H.	20	Lansing	Jan. 23
Christine S.	10	As Bill Sees It	Jan. 24
Albion M.	1	Prince Edward	Jan. 25
Anastasia W.	1	Fellowship	Jan. 25
Erika	10	Fellowship	Jan. 25
Randal B.	1	Westmorland	Jan. 26
Jim A.	1	Port Credit	Jan. 27
John McM.	15	Lansing	Jan. 30

Upcoming Medallions:

Jack P.	1	Prince Edward	Feb. 1
Candace	5	Golden Mile	Feb. 3
Marc D.	10	Welcome	Feb. 7
Barb H.	10	Prince Edward	Feb. 8
Lori C.	1	Keep it Simple	Feb. 14
Kelly G.	5	Fellowship	Feb. 22
Paul	15	Fellowship	Feb. 22

Meeting Changes:

S.O.S. Discussion (C) Monday 8:30pm (NORTH): Our meeting has moved locations to St. Matthew the Apostle Church, 80 George Henry Blvd. (Sheppard Ave E., west of Don Mills Rd)

Midtown (O) Sunday 8pm (CENTRAL): Meeting time will be changed to 8pm.

James Bond (C) Sunday 8pm (CENTRAL): Meeting moved to Holy Rosary Parish Hall, 354 St. Clair Ave West.

Eglinton Park (C) Thursday 8pm (CENTRAL): Meeting has changed day and location to Thursday at 8pm at The Church of the Transfiguration, 111 Manor Rd E (between Yonge & Mt Pleasant, south of Eglinton).

Amazing Grace (C) Tuesday 8pm (CENTRAL): Meeting moved to Blessed Sacrament Church, 24 Cheritan Ave (Yonge St., 1 block south of Lawrence.)

New Meetings:

Hope Faith and Courage (C) Wednesday 8pm (SUBURBAN NORTHWEST): Meeting located at 24 Alexander Street in Brampton.

Announcements:

23rd Annual Lakeshore Roundup will be held Sat. March 6th at Sikorski Polish Veterans Hall, 1551 Stevenson Road North in Oshawa. Tickets are \$10 and include a potluck lunch.

Ontario Regional Conference 2010: Celebrating Sobriety will be held Mar. 19–21, 2010 at the Fairmont Royal York, Toronto. For more information see the ORC page at www.aatoronto.org.

SoberStock will be held Mar. 19–21 in Tampa, FL. This is an annual event of recovery including Live Bands, AA Speakers, Free Food, Camping, Fellowship & Fun! For information visit www.soberstock.com.



December '09: Intergroup Report

Chair's Opening Remarks: Florence B. (Noon Rap), Operating Committee Chairperson – Service resumes for the ORC 2012 Chair position should be in to the office by Dec.31.

Finance Report: Bruce L. (Back to Basics), Finance Chair – Finance Report Summary for November 2009:

	Income	Expenses	Net Income
November	\$30,372	\$14,185	\$16,187
Comp. to Budget	11,788	-3,101	14,889
Year-to-Date	\$244,429	\$156,015	\$88,414
Comp. to Budget	54,470	- 39,390	93,860

Finance Report for November and year-to-date income are over budget. Donations, sales and the success of ORC and Archives breakfast have exceeded expectations and expenses were under budget in most categories. Year-to-date expenses are lower than expected due salary costs, delayed audit billing, 2007 property tax rebate and 2008 refund and expenses.

2010 Operating Budget (right): Income donations based on a 3-year average, which is lower than 2009 donations. Literature prices will decrease, because of lower US dollar exchange rates. The contingency fund for committee expenses increased to \$5,000. This brings our budget to over \$200,000 for the year. This budget anticipates a surplus of under \$24,000.

Questions: *Jim O. (Markland Wood) inquired about the markup on books from GSO. We apply a rate of exchange to GSO prices and then apply a markup to compensate for literature department expenses. Diane (District 14 Liaison) inquired as to whether we could donate excess funds to GSO; this could be an option in the future, depending on the level of our Prudent Reserve. Margaret T. (Bayview) commented that, if we didn't have a one-year Prudent Reserve, why would we donate? This is a good policy for the future.*

Motion to accept 2010 Budget as presented moved by Brian T. (Twelve Traditions) and seconded by Amanda (Fellowship). **Motion Carried**

Committee has acquired one more former member (Harold Y., Port Credit) and two new members (Don and Tim). Roy H. (Bloordale) will stay on the committee for another term. 2010 Finance Chairperson has not been announced. There is still one vacancy on the Finance Committee. 5 years of continuous sobriety and some business/accounting experience helpful. The term for serving on the Finance Committee is two years. Please send service resumes to the Operating Committee c/o 234.

SUBCOMMITTEE REPORTS

Access Ability: Phil M. (Bloordale), OC Liaison – Slight increase in groups listing the 'ASL Interpreters welcome' indicator on their closed meeting listings. American Sign Language Interpreters follow a very strict code of ethics; therefore no need for groups to be concerned that anonymity would be broken.

Archives: Glenn G. (East York), Operating Liaison – No meeting in December.

Correctional Facilities: No report.

CPC: Ed R. (Rouge Valley Centenary), Operating Liaison – Items discussed at last meeting included review of recent APA Convention, review of committee budget, ordering of DVDs from GSO, purchase of 420 Beginner Pamphlets for distribution, and distribution of letters to professionals.

Info AA Day 2010: No report.

ORC 2010: Jim A. (Leslie), Committee member – 'Celebrating Sobriety' will be held March 19–21 at the Fairmont Royal York Hotel. Want to get a Hospitality Suite? Please call 1-800-441-1414 for availability. Pre-registration is available and encouraged. There are early bird draws for those who register early Tim R. (Chartwell), mentioned that the ORC needs about 200 greeter volunteers for the event. Please use Greeter sign-up sheets and submit by Jan.26.

Public Information: No meeting in December.

Treatment Facilities: Elaine H. (Streetsville), Chairperson – Active in supporting meetings in hospitals, detox, treatment centres and shelters, and providing literature as with support from all districts. New meetings being established at Peel Region Shelter, CAMH in the withdrawal management unit, re-established at Branson Hospital and at Scarborough Hospital psychiatric division. Bridging the Gap requests for temporary contacts is currently quiet, will focus on re-establishing contacts with and providing info to treatment centres on this program.

Twelfth Step: Jim O. (Markland Wood), Chair – Committee holding a Training Session for conducting 12th Step Calls on Wed. Jan.13. Need volunteers for the committee and Greeter Captains.

Website/Newsletter: Aaron K. (Yorkville), Chairperson – Please have submissions in by the 10th of every month. If you would like to visit our committee and get active, we meet on the second Saturday of the month.

Winter Season Open House 2009: – Marv W. (Mississauga), Treasurer: Busy getting ready for the event, to be held starting at 9:30 a.m. on Dec.25 at Emmanuel-Howard Park Church on Roncesvalles and Wright Ave. The day will feature meetings, music, fellowship, and a turkey dinner with all the trimmings. There will be limited parking as there is construction on Roncesvalles. More volunteers needed.

Continued from "Why I like Answering the phones at Intergroup"

...just don't see how they can. Sometimes I just listen for as long as they want to talk but eventually I get around to asking them if they've ever been to an AA meeting. I let them know they can take a friend or family member with them to an open meeting. That seems to offer a glimmer of hope to the caller. I encourage them to get to a meeting, get a meeting book and attend as many meetings as they can.

Sometimes it's a family member calling on behalf of another still-suffering family member. So often the person wants to help, but we all know that you have to get to AA on your own steam basically. It's also a great chance to help the family member see that they too need to be fit and strong and not base their own contentment on the attendance of others at AA meetings; that's where Al-Anon comes in. We have meetings listings for that too.

So, what skills does one need to do this wonderful AA service job? You need to be a good listener, not mind talking on the phone, be able to find information about meetings and so on — both on the Internet and in books, and be willing to go to any lengths to get someone the help we

would hope to get if we were in their shoes. BUT, you also need to be at least a little bit tough. You need to be able to put a stop to endless self-pity and drive through the message of GET TO A MEETING.

What do I get out of it? When a person is rambling on about their woes and how they spoiled yet another Christmas, I get a real "remember when". It's good to hear where others have been — I've been there, too. I have gone on and on about how tough everything was. I have felt desperate about everything, too. This helps me not take my sobriety for granted, when I hear how others are suffering.

The four and a half hours goes fairly quickly. It's just nice to talk to other alcoholics. It helps me reinforce my belief in the program. When I have to put into words what AA means to me and why others should attend, it helps me to remember the important parts of the program and prompts me to work my program. It's just plain rewarding because I'm helping people and that gives me a great feeling.

Remember: we have to give it away to keep it!

Sonja T., East York Group