

BETTER TIMES

April 2010

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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@atoronto.org Web: atoronto.org/btimes.html
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Share your ORC experience, strength and hope.

Did you go to the **Ontario Regional Conference?** Wasn't it **amazing?** We'd love to hear about your ORC experience
 Send your story to: bettertimes@atoronto.org

5th Annual

East Toronto Archives Breakfast

At 9:00 a.m. on Sunday, May 16th, 150 members of Alcoholics Anonymous will gather at Embers restaurant for the 5th annual East Toronto Archives Breakfast, co-sponsored by Districts 18 and 22. We who have the honour and privilege of organizing this event call ourselves the ETAB committee. One of our wittier members — or perhaps one who has a lot of time to think — has dubbed us the Eggs, Toast, And Bacon committee! He may not be far wrong for certainly the agenda will feature a delicious breakfast of eggs, toast, bacon, sausages, home fries, fresh fruit, muffins, honey/jam, peanut butter, and juice (orange and apple). I am hungry just thinking about it!

However, the Archives Breakfast is about more than just the food. It is a reminder of who we are and where we have come from, as well as a celebration of recovery in Alcoholics Anonymous. The event will feature two long-timer speakers who will share their experience, strength, and hope as well as some interesting history of Alcoholics Anonymous. As always, one of the highlights will be the year-by-year sobriety countdown. I cannot express in words the feeling of joy and accomplishment I feel as I wait for my year to be called!

Archival and Grapevine material will be on display for those who wish to browse through our history.

As much as anything, the Breakfast is a time to reflect upon the feelings of gratitude we share for being a part of this wonderful fellowship. It is also a time to remember — a time to remember the heartbreak and loneliness of Sundays past when we dragged ourselves from our beds — or perhaps picked ourselves up from the floor — not sure what had happened the night before, and groped for more of the drink that had made us sick because we were sure only a drink could make us better. Our memories today are so much more comforting as we experience the joy of living promised in Step Twelve.

Finally, while the East Toronto Archives Breakfast is a celebration of fellowship, fun, and friendship in Alcoholics Anonymous, it is also, as our literature tells us, a reminder “of how far we have come. Knowledge of our past helps ensure that our original message of recovery, unity and service will continue undiluted and true.” (A.A. Archives Pamphlet ©2002 A.A. World Services, Inc.)

**Ed H., Twelve Steps Group
 East Toronto Archives Breakfast Committee**

INFO AA DAY

Saturday May 29th, 2010

8:00 am – 4:00 pm

**Lansing United Church,
 49 Bogert Ave.**

*2 blocks south of Sheppard,
 one block west of Yonge.*

Early bird meeting 8:15

Opening at 9:00

Delegate report and GSO staff member talk in afternoon

Pot luck lunch

\$5.00 at the door or from Intergroup Reps or GSRs

45th Niagara Blossom Time Convention

This spring we Niagara Region members of AA will again hold our annual Niagara Blossom Time Convention for the 45th year! Our Convention has held a special place in the hearts of our fellowship members over the years. The theme this year is “Sharing the Journey.” During the weekend we will feature A.A. speakers, panels, a hospitality room, fellowship, and dinner with a dance. Al-Anon and Alataeen participants will again be a large part of our festivities.

Alcoholics Anonymous has changed the lives of so many of us, and our newfound ability to give back is one of our most precious gifts. This is just another one of the many ways we continue in our sobriety.

Our 45th Niagara Blossom Time Convention will again be held at the Crowne Plaza Hotel, Niagara Falls, Ontario, on May 7, 8, and 9. Past Conventions have always been a time for renewing old and dear friendships and creating new friendships that will last a lifetime. Come and join us in Niagara and be part of “Sharing the Journey.”

Registration and further information, including a list of speakers, is available online at www.blossomtimeconvention.com, or at P.O. Box 831, Niagara Falls, ON L2E 6V6.

**Brian B., Keith W. and Ron L
 Blossom Time Convention Committee**

East York Round-up

The East York Group is holding its annual round-up Saturday April 24th. What started as an opportunity to provide newer members with a chance to be of service at the group level has grown into an East York tradition. The round-up offers a day of fellowship and brings the message of all Three Legacies of AA: Recovery from Alcoholism through the 12 Steps, Unity through the 12 Traditions, and Service through the 12 Concepts.

Held at the East York Group's regular meeting hall, St. Columba and All Hallows Church at St. Clair and O'Connor, the event is easily reachable by TTC, has ample parking and is fully handicap accessible.

The day is one large open meeting and offers topic-based panels, AA, Alanon, Alateen panels, ask-it-basket, pot luck supper, sobriety countdown and closing speaker. The doors open at 11 am for the "meeting before the meeting" with coffee, tea and snacks on hand. The first panel starts at 12 pm and the evening speaker meeting ends around 9 pm. It is a full day and people are free to drop in and leave at any time throughout.

The pot luck is fantastic and always has the feel of a big family picnic. Favourites such as home made meatballs, chilli, macaroni and cheese as well as salads have blessed our tables year after year.

As it is an open meeting all are welcome including friends, family, and children, (we request no pets please, out of respect for other members and our host Church). At the door we will be taking a 7th from those who can and giving a handshake and smile to everyone. The East York Group looks forward to seeing you there!

Pat D. and Murray O., East York Group

Miracles Happen in Sobriety

Who would have believed change is possible after one comes into a room of AA members broken and spent? I came in devoid of genuine feeling or caring. I was a person broken, functioning at work and at home but feeling nothing. The person I was meant to be was gone. Laughter was superficial, enthusiasm was gone, and disappointments didn't hurt because they were immediately medicated away with alcohol. It amazes me now how much money and energy went into planning my next drink.

There was no ultimatum presented to me, but somehow I knew my life could not continue as it was, meaningless and empty. I tried repeatedly to return to being a social drinker but to no avail. Each time I picked up, I got drunk and no good resulted. My life was unmanageable and I was powerless.

One Friday night I was out in my car. I don't really remember doing this (for I was three sheets to the wind) but I found myself driving into the back of a church parking lot. I walked up to the door and was welcomed with warm smiles and open arms. It was my first AA meeting. People provided words of encouragement, names and phone numbers, and suggested I come back the following week.

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Carrying the Message in Jails

What would it be like to be an alcoholic and to be incarcerated? How hopeless one must feel! These are the people serviced by the Greater Toronto Area Corrections Committee, or GTACC (previously known as the Intergroup Corrections Committee).

GTACC is made up of the Corrections Committee Chairpersons from Districts 2,4,6,10,12,14,16,18 and 22. The committee members elect a chairperson for GTACC from amongst their ranks. Currently, the chairperson is Phil G. from District 6. The Committee meets once a month at 234 Eglinton Avenue at 7:30 p.m. to discuss and coordinate how to recruit volunteers and to get the volunteers vetted so they can go into the jails. Literature collection and distribution is also ongoing as are other tasks.

Every jail has different requirements that must be met in order that AA volunteers be allowed into the facility. The basic requirement is a minimum of 1 year sobriety and a police clearance letter called a Canadian Police Information Computer (CPIC). Youth detention facilities will require a Vulnerable Persons' CPIC. Volunteers are asked to make a 1 year commitment and usually make 2 to 4 visits a month. They can choose the jails that they want to serve. Women can go to men's jails. Currently all adult women from the GTA are held in Milton which is in District 25 of Area 86.

The district chairpersons are responsible for the facilities within their districts. For example, District 2 has 2 jails in Brampton plus the West Detention Center, for a total of 3 facilities. In all jails, a volunteer coordinator determines the nature of work AA can do within the facility and works closely with the AA volunteers. Generally meetings are held in all jails. Other districts, for example District 14, have no jails, but they stay very active as they keep police stations and probation and parole offices stocked with pamphlets and participate in an initiative to put meetings on in probation and parole offices. There is also a Federal "Halfway House" within the GTA.

Phil also is happy about the fact that GTACC collects and distributes soft-covered Big Books, mini Big Books, and 12 & 12s (hard covers are not allowed) and Grapevines. The committee must remove the staples from the Grapevines to make them suitable for jails. All literature is also stamped with the GTA phone number and website.

Thanks to the hard work of the GTACC, there is a team of volunteers who visit correctional facilities and provide literature to inmates. Volunteers can also be penpals OR contacts to get newly released alcoholics to meetings. Their work is a fine example of AA's primary purpose in action - they carry the message to the suffering alcoholic inmate!

**Interview with Phil G., Mississauga Group
by Marrey P., Restoration and Recovery Group**

Webmaster Wanted!

Are you a computer whiz? Want to apply your talents to a wonderful form of service?

Better Times is seeking a new Webmaster.

Please contact us at bettertimes@aatoronto.org.

Trustee Emeritus, Michael Alexander leaves a legacy

(1921-February 16, 2010)

Looking back across the half century and more he has had ties to A.A., Class A (nonalcoholic) trustee emeritus Michael Alexander says, "A.A. doesn't stand still any more than humanity does. But even as it reflects changes in society as we know it today, substantively A.A. has stayed the same, adhering to the spirit of its Steps, Traditions and Concepts." Since his introduction to A.A. in the 1950s, Mike adds, "the membership has grown from barely 200,000 in 70 countries to nearly 2 million in 180 countries." Mike served as a Class A trustee of the General Service Board from 1976-1985, then as trustee chair from 1988-1993... Mike came to know Bill and his wife, Lois, "and so many others who helped to shape the service structure of A.A." He is quick to note, however, that "I did not relate to them as alcoholics. In my capacity as a legal adviser, I saw them as solid, sensible, knowledgeable business people."

Mike remembers that "working with Bill was a rewarding experience, not only because of his extraordinary vision but also because his early training in law provided a common ground for understanding."

We forget sometimes that Bill completed the requirements for graduation from Brooklyn Law School in the 1920s—he just never got around to picking up his diploma. Mike has a special spot in his heart for Lois, who lived until 1988, some 17 years after Bill's death. "It was my great privilege to be her friend and adviser," he says. "Like Bill, Lois was a person of great magnitude. In my view, there would have been no A.A. but for her, at least not in the way we know it today." In his years as a trustee, Mike says, "there was no single activity other than sleep that engaged so much of my time as A.A. Actually I've been around A.A. so much and so long, I tend to forget that for me, a nonalcoholic trustee who seldom drinks alcoholic beverages, it's okay to drink. Besides, I prefer coffee."

When Mike assumed the responsibilities of trustee chair in spring 1988, three years after

rotating out as a trustee, his wife, Claire, was rather surprised, he says. "But then she attended an A.A. Forum with me. She met the people, heard the talks and was deeply impressed by the good will and devotion to A.A. that prevailed. 'Now I understand why you're so committed to A.A.,' she told me."... Today, 14 years after rotating as trustee chair, Mike still goes to open A.A. meetings in Manhattan and on the east end of Long Island, still participates as a nonvoting member in meetings of the board of trustees, and shares his experience, strength and hope with new trustees every summer at the July meeting of the board.

Without a doubt, A.A. in time shapes the character of those whose lives it touches. I am a different person because of A.A. and, I believe, a better one... I salute Alcoholics Anonymous for all it does for humanity, and for what it does spiritually for its members and for friends like me."

(Box 459, Vol. 53, No. 6, pp. 3-4)

Máire O'B, GTA Intergroup Archivist

haveyouheard

Recent Medallions:

John W.	25	Port Credit	March 10
Kasey S.	5	Back to Basics	March 12
Sam K.	1	Port Credit	March 12
Mike J.	5	Kennedy Park	March 15
Brant G.	10	Rox Glen Traditional	March 18
Giovanna R.	20	U of T	March 21
Ken G.	5	Prince Edward	March 22
Derrick B.	30	Maple Group	March 25
Roy L.	35	Northwestern	March 28
Danny V.	1	Keep it Simple	March 28
Paul M.	5	Parkway	March 29

Upcoming Medallions:

Jeremy D.	1	Back to Basics	April 2
Tony C.	10	Back to Basics	April 2
Hans P.	1	Kennedy Park	April 5
Sarah M.	1	New Anchor	April 5
Wayne K.	20	Golden Mile	April 7
Daniela V.	5	Maple Group	April 8
Kasey S.	5	Back to Basics	April 12
Janet E.	15	Anniversary	April 14
George H.	15	Anniversary	April 21
Ann B.	1	Saturday Morning Disc	April 24
Bill J.	1	Anniversary	April 28
Frank D.	1	Maple Group	April 29
Tim C.	25	Mississauga	May 2
Abdi J.	1	Westmoreland	May 4
Bill J.	1	Anniversary Group	May 5
Dave A.	5	Lakeshore	May 9
Sandra H.	10	Lakeshore	May 16
Mary P.	20	A Place to Share	May 21
Mike Q.	20	Westmoreland	May 24

Things We Cannot Change

Richard Y. passed away with 32 years & 11 months of sobriety. When personal pity party became over-active, his suggestion: "Let's visit an AA member shut in or hospitalized". He always expressed gratitude, hope, higher power, meetings and activism.

Benny L. of the Beaches Group passed away Feb. 8th at 80 years old with 33 years of sobriety. Benny was committed to service – at his home group, the ORC, District 22, GSR,TF,CF,PI & Archives. His actions were louder than his words.

New Meetings:

Back Room Men's Big Book Discussion (C) Thursday 6:45pm (WEST): Meeting located at St. Mathias Anglican Church, 1428 Royal York Road.

Just for Today (C) Sunday 5pm (EAST): Meeting located at the Church of the Resurrection, 1100 Woodbine Avenue. This is a step discussion.

Vision for You Open (O) Tuesday 8pm (EAST): Meeting located at Konko Church of Toronto, 398 Kennedy Road. Meeting starts April 6th.

Vision for You Discussion (C) Tuesday 6:30pm (EAST): Meeting located at Konko Church of Toronto, 398 Kennedy Road. Meeting starts April 6th.

Meeting Changes:

New Life Discussion (C) Tuesday 7pm (SUBURBAN WEST): As Mar. 2 the new location will be First United Church, 151 Lakeshore Road W, Mississauga.

New Life Group (O) Tuesday 8:30pm (SUBURBAN WEST): As of March 2 the new location will be First United Church, 151 Lakeshore Road W, Mississauga.

Park Royal (C) Thursday 7:30pm (SUBURBAN WEST): As of March 18th, meetings will be at 7:30pm (not 8:30pm.)

Announcements:

Celebrate Sobriety will be held April 2-4 in Vancouver. For more information visit www.celebratesobriety.org

East York Roundup to be held on Saturday, April 24th at 11am at St. Columba Church, 2723 St. Clair Ave. E. (1 block east of O'Connor). Opening AA & AI-Anon speakers at noon and topic panels throughout the day. Potluck dinner at 5:30pm and closing speaker at 6:30pm

45th Annual Blossom Time Convention will be held May 7-9 at the Crowne Plaza Hotel in Niagra Falls. Speaker meetings, discussion meetings, marathon meetings, etc. Full AI-Anon & Alateen Participation. For more info visit www.blossomtimeconvention.com.

Spring AA Convention will be held Saturday May 8th at 8 am at Wesley United Church, 275 Pembroke St E. Speakers, panels, food and fellowship. Everyone welcome.

First Meeting of Russian Speaking AA Groups will be held May 15-16th in Chicago, IL. For information contact:suviksvik@yahoo.com.

5th Annual East Archives Breakfast will be held Sunday May 16th at 9am at 781 Warden Avenue. For more information go www.aatoronto.org.

The 39th Annual Manitoulin & Espanola Rainbow Round-up will be held May 21-23 will be held at Little Current, Manitoulin Island, Ontario. For information email rainbow.roundup@yahoo.ca

Info AA Day will be held Saturday May 29 at Lansing United Church (Yonge and Sheppard subway). Cost of the day is \$5, and includes a pot luck luncheon.

2010 International Convention of AA will be held July 1-4 in San Antonio, Texas. For more information go to www.aa.org.

January '10: Intergroup Report

Chair's Opening Remarks: John C. (Half Century), incoming Executive Committee Chair: John gave kudos to Florence B., past Operating Chair, for all her efforts during her tenure.

Finance Report: Don M. (Hill), Finance Chair – Finance Report for the month of January 2010

	Income	Expenses	Net Income
January	\$15,788	\$12,801	\$2,987
Comp. to Budget	-33	-170	137

SUBCOMMITTEE REPORTS

Access Ability: Donna M. (Sunnyside), Chairperson – Have received our invitation for Mayfest and will start early to get ASL Interpreters. Main problem was the big decrease in visitors to the subcommittee tables at the ORC. Also dealt with literature storage and transportation to events. There will be no Access Ability meeting in March.

Questions: John (Kingsway): *What do we do to accommodate the deaf alcoholic?* Deaf person handles getting an Interpreter. Groups need to indicate if ASL Interpreters are allowed at closed discussion meetings. Valerie (Mount Royal-York): *What and when is Mayfest?* A cultural festival for the Deaf Community. It will be held May 14 at the St. Lawrence Centre.

Archives: Glenn G. (East York), Executive Committee Liaison – No meeting in February. Glenn was sad to report that two members of this committee had passed away (Benny L. /Beaches and Frank/Weston).

Info AA Day: Phil M. (Bloordale), Chair – GSO Speaker and Area Delegate have

been booked. Event will take place on Sat. May 29 all day at Lansing United Church. Cost of the day is \$5, and includes a pot luck luncheon. Subcommittee panels will also be present. Event tickets/flyers will be made available next month.

ORC 2010: Jim A. (St. Andrew's Saturday Night), Treasurer – The event, themed 'Celebrating Sobriety' will be held March 19, 20, and 21 at the Fairmont Royal York Hotel. Registration: \$30. Banquet: additional \$60.

Public Information: Vivien C. (Fellowship), Chairperson – Are waiting for decision from TDSB for allowing to make presentations to schools. Are scheduling another 'Speaking at Non-AA Meetings' Workshop in April or May. Young People's Posters from GSO are available for \$1.00 each. We are participating at the Ryerson Healthy School Expo on Monday March 1. We have been asked to do a radio interview. Speaking requests have been received from private schools.

Twelfth Step: Jim O. (Markland Wood), Chairperson – Phone scheduling is going well. All greeters will be given Spares Lists so they can schedule their own replacements if they can't make a shift. We need volunteers! One year of continuous sobriety and a Phone Training Session is needed to be on the phones.

Website/Better Times: Aaron K. (Yorkville), Chairperson – Looking for a new Webmaster. Please contact us if you're interested. Please keep sending in submissions for publication by the 10th of the month for Better Times.

Winter Season Open House 2009: Vlad G. (Mississauga), 2009 event Chairperson: Vlad thanked all who attended the event. All leftover food was donated to the Good Shepherd.

To see the complete minutes go to www.aatoronto.org.

Letter to the Editor – A Member's View

Dear Editor,

I would like to express my views on the material, "Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow" as printed in Better Times January, 2010.

I was a member of AA for approx. 20 years when I heard this read for the first time at an AA meeting. As I listened to it read, I remember asking myself where this piece of prose came from. It was my view then and now that this material is in direct conflict with the AA Steps and message. This material is saying that whatever I might do today - lie to people or steal from them, etc. etc., all I have to do is wait until tomorrow and tell myself yesterday is gone, I can't undo a single act I performed or cannot undo a single word I said. I wish this "easier softer way" was in AA when I came as I could have gone around and told everyone I owed money to, and there were lots, that they should forget about it as yesterday is gone. The Twelve Steps of AA instruct me to trust in God and clean house; to clear away the wreckage of my past and as for Y.T.T. the wording of the material is telling me to forget about it. I'm very grateful that I chose the AA way and not the easier, softer way in this non-AA material.

When I walk into an AA group, all I want to see and hear is the AA message. This is what has given me life for a long time now and I feel newcomers are being cheated as they are not getting the AA message delivered to them.

Bob D., Friendly Group (Edited due to space restrictions)



Miracles Happen in Sobriety

Continued from page 2

...I was not judged by these people. I was just welcomed. They told me I could have what they had, which made no sense at the time.

Over the following weeks I continued going to meetings, listening, speaking with people, and learning I was not the only one in pain and with a deadly affliction. Other people hid booze from those they loved too; our secret was out. Some of them also did things they did not remember, and all of them came into the rooms as I did - broken and sad. It was comforting to know I was not alone. I heard my story, or parts of it, every time someone shared their story.

With the help of a Higher Power, a loving sponsor, and a twelve step program of recovery, I am now able to live life on life's terms one day at a time. There is nothing good or bad that happens in a day which will be relieved or made better by picking up a drink. Knowledge of that is a miracle.

Today I laugh from the heart when I'm happy and cry when I'm sad. I am honest with people and can once again stand up for myself. There is little need to apologize if I genuinely do the next right thing throughout each day with the help of my Higher Power. That is a miracle. I am learning to live in the moment, which I do with the help of the Serenity Prayer. That is a miracle too.

If you are new or coming back and are going to a meeting today, you don't need to stay long. Just wait for the miracle to happen.

**Elaine L.
Unionville Group**