

THE MONTHLY REPRIEVE



HUDSON-MOWHAWK-BERSHIRE District 5 Newsletter **August 2011**

Please distribute this Newsletter to your groups

AA Principles of the Month

Step 8 -Made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all.

Tradition 8 -Alcoholics Anonymous should remain forever nonprofessional, but our service centers may employ special workers.

Concept 8 -The trustees are the principal planners and administrators of over-all policy and finance. They have custodial oversight of the separately incorporated and constantly active services, exercising this through their ability to elect all the directors of these entities.

Tradition 8 Check List

1. Is my own behavior accurately described by the Traditions? If not, what needs changing?
2. When I chafe about any particular Tradition, do I realize how it affects others?
3. Do I sometimes try to get *some* reward—even if not money—for my personal AA efforts?
4. Do I try to sound in AA like an expert on alcoholism? On recovery? On medicine? On sociology? On AA itself? On psychology? On spiritual matters? Or, heaven help me, even on *humility*?
5. Do I make an effort to understand what AA employees do? What workers in other alcoholism agencies do? Can I distinguish clearly among them?
6. In my own AA life, have I any experiences which illustrate the wisdom of this Tradition?
7. Have I paid enough attention to the book *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*? To the pamphlet *AA Tradition—How It Developed*?

Concept 8 Check List

- Do we understand the relationship between the two corporate service entities (A.A. World Services, Inc., the A.A. Grapevine) and the General Service Board?
- How can the business term “custodial oversight” apply to the trustees’ relationship to the two corporate service entities?
- Does my home group subscribe to G.S.O.’s bimonthly newsletter Box 4-5-9? The A.A.Grapevine? Do I?

Eight Step Prayer

God help me to become willing to own my part in these matters and to clean up my side of the street. Help me to make amends to all I have harmed. Thy will be done for this person as well as for me. AMEN

Announcements

EACYPAA HMB AREA has won the bid for the 2012 conference. It will be held in Saratoga Springs, NY during spring of next year.

EACYPAA Host committee will meet every Wednesday at 8:40 pm after the Young people in recovery meeting at 36 Phila St. Saratoga Springs, NY (2nd floor). People are needed to fill positions and Committee members are needed, to plan and make arrangements for the conference. For more information or to volunteer send an e-mail to chair@togypod.org

Meetings that need support

- Friday night Elnora group, 8:00 PM Jonesville United Methodist Church. Service positions are also available.
- Sunday Big Book Study Meeting 6:00 PM at The Prince of Peace Church Clifton Park Rout 146.
- Adirondack Freedom group 12:30 Saturday Ballston Spa Community center, 20 Malta Ave.
- Alliance Group 12:30 Sunday Alliance Church 257 Roland Street Ballston Spa, NY

Public Information (PI) Committee Report

This past week, I saw two newcomers step up to service. One woman has 30 days and the other has 2 months. One did so because she feels grateful to all that AA has “given her”. The second lady said she has been looking for something she can do, be involved with. The beauty of service is that we show up to do one thing and we end up doing something unexpected. In these 2 cases, a group of us met to assemble letters and meeting schedules for mailing. We ended up laughing and sharing, getting to know the newcomers and answering questions they had.

I also got to see our district committee in action this week. Keeping our primary purpose in mind, we came together on decisions which will hopefully help the still suffering alcoholics in our communities. One thing we decided to do is purchase and place a Big Book, a Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions, and a Living Sober in each of 13 public libraries in our district. One of our functions in PI is to put information about AA anyplace where there might be an alcoholic who needs our message. (I personally heard someone sharing their story once say that he happened to be in a library, desperate and at his bottom, when he saw a Big Book on the shelf and it saved his life.)

We are also sending out a letter (as I mentioned) with information about meetings and the Saratoga Telephone Answering Service to all the hotels, motels, and B&B's in District 5. We have made a great effort to find as many as we could, but if you know of one that did not receive this by the end of August, please contact us and we'll be sure to send one out to them.

Anyone interested in participating in this committee or learning more about it, please attend our next meeting on **August 23rd, from 7-8 pm at The Alliance Church, 257 Rowland Street, Ballston Spa**. You can also email d5pichair@gmail.com and we'd be happy to send you information, or call Heidi T. @ 399-4004.

32nd Annual New York State Information Workshop, Friday-Sunday August 19-21, 2011 386 Watervliet Shaker Road, Latham, NY(Carondelet Hospitality Center)

Manhattan Share”A”Day “Join in Love & Service”, Saturday August 27th 9 AM – 5 PM, 345 East 15 & 1st Avenue, New York, NY10003 (Heath & Professional High School).

EACYPAA Host Committee kickoff event, BBQ at Grafton Lake State Park, 11 AM August 28th 2011.

EACYPAA Host Committee camp out, Pine Hills Campground September 9-September 11 see www.eacypaax.org for more information.

In this time of economic hardship AA is not immune, our expenses continue and grow but our income remains the same or decreases. Here is a write-up from Bill W. from 1957 on our responsibility.

"Our spiritual way of life is safe for future generations if, as a Society, we resist the temptation to receive money from the outside world. But this leaves us with a responsibility - one that every member ought to understand. We cannot skimp when the treasurer of our group passes the hat. Our groups, our areas, and AA as a whole will not function unless our services are sufficient and their bills are paid. When we meet and defeat the temptation to take large gifts, we are only being prudent. But when we are generous with the hat we give a token that we are grateful for our blessings and evidence that we are eager to share what we have found with all those who still suffer."

Bill W., November 1957

1988 AA Grapevine, The Language of the Heart, p. 221.

Experience, Strength, Hope

I am responsible....

A good friend of mine in the program tells the story of how, when faced with the prospect of surrendering his will and his life to the care of God, he was afraid God would ask him to give away all his possessions and move to Africa to be a missionary. The first time I heard him tell his story, I identified with his thinking – I had had that exact fear when taking the Third Step. I worried that God would choose for me some life of great sacrifice, one in which I would be resigned to quiet misery. God, it appears, is not without a sense of humor.

I got sober in August 1994, during the orientation week at my medical school. I was 23, full of arrogance and self-pity, and was motivated only to ease my own internal suffering. Thankfully, through God's grace, good sponsorship, and lots of step work, I stayed sober and completed my degree. During my residency, I had the opportunity to volunteer in the Amazon Jungle in Peru delivering care to local villagers. Still largely motivated by self, I imagined an amazing vacation with some volunteering in the clinic to justify my presence there. I have found in sobriety that God uses my defects to lead me to where I can be useful. I was surprised to discover that the moments I enjoyed most involved interacting with and helping the local people, whether in the clinic, at meals, or watching the pick-up soccer games that were the highlight of the social calendar of the village. The seed was planted – I wanted to pursue more opportunities to bring free medical care abroad.

Due, at first, to financial constraints, and subsequently, a life becoming more and more centered on selfish pursuits, my desire to repeat my experience in the Amazon remained unfulfilled. I reached another bottom in sobriety, nine years away from my last drink. At some point previous I had made the decision to devote my energy toward finding a relationship that would 'complete me' in lieu of service work, step work and regular meeting attendance? Spiritual and emotional pain are wonderful motivators – as my 18 month old marriage crumbled, I crawled back to AA, and under the direction of a friend (the same friend mentioned earlier in this story), launched into vigorous action on the 12 steps. The effect was nearly immediate, and after cleaning up the wrongs I had done others, I commenced to work with newcomers. The ninth and tenth step promises materialized in my life. In the face of the 'certain trials and low spots' in life, I was able to see them as opportunities for spiritual growth rather than excuses for wallowing in self-pity. I began to imagine, and talk openly about, resuming my passion for medical mission work, but took no action.

One day, I was talking with a social worker at one of the hospitals I work in, and she was recounting her adventures in Africa doing mission work. I mentioned my desire to resume medical volunteer work, and she proposed a trip to Africa to deliver care to areas where access to medical care was limited. I found myself in Tanzania 9 months later with a team of 8 others, and we delivered care and medicine to 750 people in one week. While on the trip, I met the bishop who was coordinating our trip from the African side, and one night I shared the story of my recovery from alcoholism with him and his wife. They were moved, and asked me to return to their home country of Kenya to share my experience. Six months later, I returned to Africa.

The weeklong trip involved scouting sites and making contacts for another medical trip. While there, I was asked to share my recovery experience with some men from the bishop's church. Afterward, many shared with me the huge scope of the problem of alcoholism in Kenya, and asked me to help. On returning home, I was introduced to a fellow AA who had been to Kenya, and was returning in a few months. I shared with her a

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vision of bringing copies of the Big Book in Swahili, and when she departed; she took a dozen copies with her and started a meeting in the town of Njabini where she was staying.

The following spring, I helped lead a team of 19 people to Nairobi to put on a free medical camp for two weeks. With such a large group, we were able to serve 2000 people with free care and medicine. I had broken my anonymity to the group prior to the trip – I was bringing 60 copies of the Swahili Big Book, and at 2 pounds each, needed help transporting them to Africa. During the medical camp, I noticed that I was seeing a significant number of men who couldn't stop drinking and wanted help. I provided them with a copy of the Swahili Big Book and the Kenya AA website. One night, at dinner, I was sharing my excitement over this opportunity with some of the team members, and they smiled and laughed. I asked what was funny – they admitted they had been screening for alcoholism, and sending potential candidates in my direction. I was, and still am, deeply touched that these individuals, who have no direct experience with alcoholism, would jump in of their own accord and help afflicted alcoholics.

I stayed on in Africa an extra week after the team departed with the hope of carrying AA's message in Kenya. I made contact with the Nairobi intergroup and donated 24 Big Books. My bishop friend had me share my experience with two groups of men in his town. I had the opportunity to visit the group started in Njabini by my friend from home and drop off some Big Books. Two men had remained sober since the meeting was started. Because of the local outreach work done through his church, my bishop friend has close contact with the Officer in Charge at the Naivasha Maximum Security Prison. He arranged for an appointment with the man, and I briefly shared my story with him, explained the physical allergy and the mental obsession, and alluded to the spiritual solution contained in our basic text. He had never heard of AA. I gave him 12 copies of the Swahili Big Book for the prison library. He was very excited about the hope our program offers, and asked that I return to speak with his guards. I admit that my ego was bruised; I had imagined speaking to the 3000 prisoners, but as usual, God had a plan, and it was far better than my own.

Two days later, I shared my story with 350 of the guards from the largest maximum security prison in Kenya. None had ever heard of Alcoholics Anonymous. I donated another dozen Big Books, and answered questions. Before leaving, I passed on the contact information for intergroup in Nairobi to the Officer in Charge, so that he could arrange to have an AA meeting brought into the prison. When I phoned my contact in Nairobi, he was excited, and jumped at the chance to bring a meeting in, despite the hour-long drive each way. Before leaving Naivasha, I left my last two copies of the Swahili Big Book in the local library.

I am already planning my next trip to Kenya, and just received 54 Swahili Big Books from my district literature chair yesterday. I can't wait to see the ways God will use me as His instrument. My fear of living a life resigned to quiet misery was unfounded. Never before have I known such joy and purpose, and I owe it all to AA. 'Whenever anyone, anywhere, reaches out for help, I want the hand of AA always to be there, and for that, I am responsible.'

Mike S.

Clifton Park, NY

The September GSR meeting will be September 9, 2011 at 7:00 PM at 1st Baptist Church., 45 Washington St. Saratoga Springs, NY.

Great Opportunities for Service

Please Announce

District 5 has the following service positions open.

- Special Needs alternate.
- Women's Treatment coordinator.
- Treasurer Alternate.
- Grapevine and Alternate
- Corrections alternate
- Functions, Public Information, and CPC Committee members.

For information contact your group's GSR.

Deadline for submission of materials for inclusion in the September Newsletter is September 11, 2011.

The District newsletter is now available on the area web site at www.aahmbny.org

Treatment Meetings

Volunteers are needed for treatment / detox meetings at Conifer Park Mondays 6:30 pm, Tuesdays 7:00 pm and Thursdays 6:30 pm. Contact Mike at 812-5411 to volunteer. **Spanish speaking AA's** are also needed for these meetings.

The origins of the AA prayers may be found at the following website <http://www.vanalstyneaa.org/prayer-and-meditation.php>