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BETTER TIMES is published monthly for AA members in the Greater Toronto Area.

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Our Code is Love and Tolerance

If you have enjoyed the fellowship of any “friends of Bill W.” outside of our meetings, then you may also have enjoyed some healthy discussion. Lately we have been encouraged through events and situations in the GTA to look more deeply at and give more legitimate study of A.A.’s Steps, Traditions and Concepts, the seamless web that supports and holds us. This will be particularly true for many of us who were not familiar with our guiding principles. As Jack W. (Rox Glen Traditional Group) termed it “...this sort of civilized debate is a pleasure to engage in and it serves to remind me to be grateful to be part of a community that values the thoughts and beliefs of all its members. Ted B. (Bayview Group) adds “...the critical core of A.A. is actually strengthened.” So, to healthy discussion. The following is a question from a local A.A. group member which was recently sent to the GSO.

QUESTION

“Hi, can an A.A. group change the words to either the traditions or the 12 steps? If they do can they still call themselves an A.A. group? If so, how can we maintain unity with different versions of the steps/traditions? Can a group do this unilaterally? Or should this be raised through the General Service structure? Thanks for any guidance or experience that you can share.”

GSO RESPONSE

Thank you for contacting the General Service Office, and for your question.

Adaptations of our Twelve Steps are done by outside entities for their use, Fellowships such as Clutterers Anonymous, Gamblers Anonymous, Narcotics Anonymous, etc. But A.A. groups and meetings do not take it upon themselves to change what has been General Service Conference

approved, and especially not when it comes to the Steps and the Traditions.

According to the Charter of Alcoholics Anonymous, to change or amend the Twelve Steps requires the written consent of no less than three-quarters of known A.A. groups worldwide. This issue is about protecting the integrity of our Twelve Steps in accordance with our own Charter; this is about respecting the group conscience of A.A. as a whole as expressed through the General Service Conference.

In reality, an A.A. group can do anything. Bill W. used to say that every group has the right to be wrong, and we see in the office how, in A.A., so many matters are self-corrective. I can share with you that we do not “police” A.A. groups, but if we become aware that an A.A. group listed here at G.S.O. has in any way modified the A.A. Steps or Traditions, we do not list them because they are using their own Steps & Traditions, not those of Alcoholics Anonymous.

Mary Clare L.
 Public Information Coordinator
 General service Office

So as Paul R. (Omeme, Centennial Group) puts it simply, “...anyone is within their rights to rewrite the Steps, Traditions, the Big Book and any other thing they wish and they can even start Groups and form a Fellowship; they just can’t call it A.A. or reference it as A.A. in any way because it isn’t.”

Better Times is hopeful that we may also contribute to the discussion which provokes an even greater appreciation of just what we have. If you would like to continue this, in love and tolerance please send us your thoughts or questions on anything you hear in the meeting after the meeting and care to share.

Ted D. – Rox Glen Traditional

A.A. SERVICE AND EXPERIENCE IN TORONTO TREATMENT

A recent article looked at service in A.A. through the experience of James, a past District Committee Member. This month, service in A.A. shares the experience of a member who also happens to be a doctor and lecturer, and was an A.A. pioneer in the early days of treatment at the Bellwood and Renaissance Centres. Many readers will be familiar with Ed and Bobby Y. who started unofficially working in treatment in 1974. Dr. Ed explains where it all began. "... in my office. My waiting room was always full. You could hold an A.A. meeting any time out there. And Bobby would be there and say to a few of the guys 'there are some people who don't know what this is about so you might want to call it the cookie club... And for anybody who wants to, say it now! We will see you tonight!'" Dr. Ed reflected, "Some people come just to meet the people there and they go to have a coffee. Just the craziness of an A.A. get together."

"So I was really doing that treatment in my office. Nine-tenths of the people coming in were all referred by their sponsor or themselves, somebody: 'You gotta see Dr. Ed.'" "We tried to triage them because a lot of the stuff they wanted to have checked out, their family doctor could've done just as good a job. I wasn't going to deny the people coming in. In 1988, I officially was invited to be the senior consulting staff physician at Bellwood Health Services by the head medical director. I was with Bellwood in that position until 2000 – 12 years. In the beginning I shook them up, because they didn't know anything about the 12 Step, so I had to do some in-service meetings and bring them up to scratch."

"It was in the winter of 1998 – 99 as the Renaissance House moved from Spadina up to Downsview that I was invited to look after the women. I got a call from a guy who was the head of Renaissance. His name was Bill Wilson, no joke. And he says, 'Ed, the guy who was looking after our fellows out here has had two relapses.' And I asked, 'does the doctor really have to be abstinent?' And he replied, 'well yes, if he's an alcoholic, he has to be.' I said 'okay,' He asked, 'would you take over that?' I said 'yes, okay!'"

share your favourite **BIG BOOK** *quotes*

Last month we shared some of our favourite quotes – now we want yours. Please let us know what you find to be your most memorable and helpful quotes from the Big Book. Someone else will surely love them too. Please contact us at bettertimes@aatoronto.org <<mailto:bettertimes@aatoronto.org>>.

Dr. Ed went on to speak about the gifts that he received from service in treatment and A.A.. "The main thing for me was needing to keep up to date. And by doing that I have to keep my medical side up and my A.A. knowledge up. You know, I've learned I probably could have done a better job starting but it's something you learned all the way through. Anyway I've had a hell of a career. Like speaking across Canada and all over the United States. That's where I got to know a lot of the main speakers like Hal Marley and Max Wiseman, the old psychiatrist. "

"That's the beauty of A.A., there's nothing really specific that doesn't entail this, this, and this. And that's where people go to a couple of meetings a week. Now if that's all you got time for, it's better than one meeting. I did feel I was in a meeting almost all the time, certainly in the beginning, in my early days at the office. I would place a call to my sponsor asking 'what do I do with this one?' It was like being in a discussion meeting for 10 hours. I always realized that one of the things I was doing in my own A.A. life was that I had a hell of a good sponsor and that I was active in my group and other groups. I had my own life and then I had what we were doing, which at that time, in a way was professional. I don't know that you call it A.A. or what you call that positive stuff that we were giving them – they just go on to the next right thing."

Just like you and Bobby, Dr. Ed. Thank you for carrying the message and your service to countless members of A.A.

Ted D. – Rox Glen Traditional

11TH ANNUAL 11TH STEP PICNIC!

The weather is heating up, the grass is greener and this year's 11th Step Picnic has never looked so attractive and inviting! There's already a strong aroma of charcoal and hot dogs billowing in the air!!! Once again the 11th Step Picnic is taking place on Centre Island on Saturday, August 6th from 12pm-5pm. We encourage friends and family to join us on the island in the sun for friendship, food, fellowship and FUN! We will have some great speakers from AA and Al-Anon sharing with us some experience, strength and hope in their respected recoveries. What a great way to enjoy a beautiful Saturday afternoon outside – with good fellowship and positive attitudes which we are sure will have a lasting effect. Almost as good as the fresh corn prepared dripping in butter... is it August yet??? The turn out last year was incredible! People from all areas decided to come join us out on the island and we hope to see the same faces as well as many new faces this year to make the 11th Annual the best yet! So bring your frisbees, you're baseball gloves and your appetite to this year's 11th Step Picnic

and help make this an extraordinary day for all who enjoy food, fun and great fellowship! Be sure to take a peek at the website for more info and we will see you in August!

SPEAKER MEETINGS

Al-Anon/AA Speaker Meeting 1:00 pm
AA Speaker Meeting 2:30 pm

COST: FREE! FREE! FREE!

For information please contact: Marvyn W. 647-221-7338
Al-Anon contact: Lois B. 416-240-0743

IF RAINING, EVENT CANCELLED

www.11thsteppicnic.ca
www.11thsteppicnic.com

"If you are looking for something in this newsletter to criticize, you will find it. We aim to please everyone". The editors.

haveyouheard

RECENT MEDALLIONS

Dorothy L.	5	Parkway Group	June 6
Henry C.	10	Pine Hills	June 6
Darlene C.	5	Agincourt Acorn Group	June 7
Don H.	1	East York Group	June 7
Greg K.	1	Islington Group	June 7
Peter Mc.	1	Sunnyside Group	June 9
Stan A.	15	New Anchor Group	June 9
Mike W.	5	Stepping Stones Group	June 11
Jennifer D.	1	Pine Hills	June 13
Tim D.	1	Vision of Hope Group	June 13
Tom M.	1	King City Group	June 13
John L.	40	Amazing Grace Group	June 14
Jacquie Y.	1	New Anchor Group	June 16
Daisy P.	15	Crossroads (Port Credit)	June 19
Nat S.	5	Bloordale Group	June 19
Christine I.	1	Parkway Group	June 20
Bob E.	1	Reaching Out Group	June 21
Danny B.	1	East York Group	June 21
Milenko D.	1	Unionville Group	June 22
Shawn R.	1	Principles Before Personalities Group	June 26
Jeff N.	10	Friendly Group	June 27
Karen S.	5	Pine Hills	June 27
Dale K.	45	Royal York Group	June 28
Bill G.	1	Danforth Group	June 30

UPCOMING MEDALLIONS

Don H.	1	Keep It Simple Group	July 3
Bill W.	20	Miracle Group	July 8
Jane J.	1	Miracle Group	July 8
Christine C.	5	Pine Hills Group	July 11
Rick W.	1	OUnionville Group	July 13
Robert McC.	20	K.F. Group	July 16
Clay R.	20	Pine Hills Group	July 18
Mike C.	10	Beverly Hills Group	July 22
Martin R.	5	Danforth Group	July 28
Bernie L.	15	Danforth Group	July 30

DISCONTINUED MEETINGS

AUGUSTA DISCUSSION GROUP:
Tuesday, 5:30pm, **Permanent cancellation.**

FIFTH TRADITION (Scarborough) DISCUSSION:
Wednesday, 6:30pm, **Meeting discontinued.**

HOMESTEAD WOMEN'S:
Wednesday, 12:00pm, **Cancelled until further notice.**

RITA (Polish): Tuesday, 8:00pm, **Meeting discontinued.**

MEETING CHANGES

CHURCH STREET GROUP: Sunday 12:30pm, **Temporary cancellation**, meeting will be cancelled Saturday, June 4th and Sunday, June 5, 2011 only.

CONSCIOUS CONTACT: Saturday, 10:00am, **Temporary cancellation**, Conscious Contact Saturday, 10:00am meetings are cancelled until further notice.

RECOVERY GROUP DISCUSSION: Tuesday, 8:00pm, **Change of Meeting Day**, Recovery Group of Thornhill Monday meeting has changed to Tuesday, same time, same place.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

CENTRAL WEST ONTARIO CONVENTION:
Friday, August 12 – Sunday, August 14
Wilfrid Laurier University, 75 University Avenue West, Waterloo, Ontario N2L 3C5, Theme: "Freedom in Fellowship". A.A. Speakers all weekend, Al-Anon and Alateen all Saturday. Convention Registration is compulsory. For more info email: cwocinfo@bmts.com.

Lakeshore Districts' 39th Annual Conference:
Friday, August 12 – Sunday, August 14
(General Sikorski Polish Hall) 1551 Stevenson Road N., Oshawa, Ontario
AA, Al-Anon & Alateen Welcome. Ticket Prices:
Full Registration (includes banquet dinner) \$45.00;
Registration Only \$20.00; Banquet Only \$30.00;
Dance Only \$5.00; For more information email:
lakeshoredistrictsconference@hotmail.com.

REQUEST FOR CO-EDITOR

Do you like to read, write and proofread material? Have we got a great service position for you! The Better Times will soon require a co-editor. The job involves a monthly meeting about the content of up the upcoming issue, submitting and providing material (through interviews, etc.,) and editing and proofreading items. Please contact us at bettertimes@aatoronto.org.

June '11: Intergroup Report

GENERAL MEETING TUESDAY, MAY 31, 2011 / Semi-Annual Meeting

CHAIRPERSON'S OPENING REMARKS: Barbara H. (Rox Glen Traditional),

Executive Committee Chair: Barbara asked that Subcommittee reports be short and concise. She also clarified who has a voice on the Intergroup Floor and asked that members coming to the microphone identify themselves, their group, and their position. She then read a relevant section from the *The AA Group* regarding AA group conscience. There was a **collection of the 7th Tradition**, which totaled **\$198.35**.

Finance Report: Harold Y. (Port Credit), Finance Chair – Finance Report for Apr. 2011

	Income	Expenses	Net Ordinary Income
April	\$9,524	\$57,978	\$-48,454
Comp. to Budget	-2,132	39,101	-7,221
April Year to Date	\$168,294	\$151,369	\$16,925
Comp. to Budget	-5,339	-42,301	36,962

SUBCOMMITTEE REPORTS

ACCESS ABILITY: Sharolee G. (Pathfinders), **Executive Committee member:**

Discussion of Mayfest, held Fri. May 13. Few contacts were made. Held in the CNE Building, the committee had to pay \$196.00 for a double [power] outlet for one day; they may not be attending this event next year. The committee was present at Information AA Day. The People in Motion event will be held June 3 – 5 at the Queen Elizabeth Building. **Next meeting:** Sun. June 19 at 11 a.m.

CORRECTIONAL FACILITIES: Phil G. (Mississauga), **Chairperson:** Request from all CF District chairs is 'We need volunteers for most jails, as the meetings are underserved, and some longtime volunteers are getting tired'. We need to develop a comprehensive list of AA members willing to meet with recently released inmates, and accompany them to a meeting within 24 hours of release. Grapevines are always in demand. Corrections had a display at the Brampton Springathon and at Information AA Day. **Next meeting:** Mon. June 6.

INFORMATION AA DAY 2011: Dan G. (K.F.), **2012 Event Chair:** The wrap-up meeting for Info AA Day was yesterday [May 30]. The feedback was all positive, with one exception: There was an email suggestion that a better job could have been done explaining the AA service structure. Thanks to Vince and all committee members for their hard work. The next committee meeting will resume in September.

ONTARIO REGIONAL CONFERENCE 2011: Roger L. (Welcome), **2011 Event Chair:** After clearing an outstanding cheque, this year's ORC Committee had a remaining surplus of \$21,077 which will be given to Intergroup. The 2012 Committee will convene in September.

PUBLIC INFORMATION: Barbara H. (Rox Glen), **Executive Committee Chair:** The committee talked about getting Big Books into libraries and high schools and carrying the message into schools. **Next meeting:** Mon. June 20 at 7:30 p.m.

TREATMENT FACILITIES: Bruce D. (Fifth Tradition/Scarborough), **Executive Committee Vice Chairperson:** The TF Chair has resigned; the committee will elect a successor at the June Committee meeting. TF was present at Information AA Day and will be reviewing guidelines for the committee. **Next meeting:** Thurs. June 16 at 7:30 p.m.

TWELFTH STEP: Tom S. (Saturday Morning Discussion), **Chairperson:** Tom reported that we are continuing to have 2 phone volunteer orientation sessions per month. Also, each Intergroup Rep is asked to request if their home groups could provide two people to volunteer for the 12th Step list. One year of continuous sobriety, please. **Next Phone Training Sessions:** Sat. June 18 at 2:30 p.m. and Sun. June 19 at 1:30 p.m. **Next meeting:** Fri. June 24 at 7:30 p.m.

WEBSITE/BETTER TIMES: Aaron K. (Yorkville), **Chairperson:** The Newsletter is looking for a Co-Editor. A note to the subcommittees: Condensed versions of the reports to be included in the Better Times help the editing process and ensure that the most pertinent information is printed – and not left to be only fully available online. **Next meeting:** June 11.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS from Previous Meetings:

1. Recommendations from the ORC Committee: *At the April 2011 General Meeting:* Brad (St. Andrews) made a notice of motion that the 1st Recommendation of the ORC

2011 Committee be sent to the floor for a vote. Joe K (Golden Mile) seconded. Joe K made a notice of motion that the 2nd Recommendation of the ORC 2011 Committee be sent to the floor for a vote and this was seconded by Rick (Newmarket Group). At the request of a Floor member, Barbara read out the Recommendations in long form. After entertaining questions from Floor members, **a vote was taken. RESULT: 1st ORC Recommendation CARRIED** (1 abstention). **2nd ORC Recommendation CARRIED** (1 abstention).

2. Notice of Motion re: Intergroup service members: *At the April 2011 General Meeting:* A notice of motion by Vivien C (Public Information Chair) was brought forward from last month's meeting. Roger W (Fellowship Group) made a notice of motion that all members in Intergroup service should identify themselves with our last names and provide e-mail addresses to improve communications. Notice of Motion was seconded by Mikhail L. (Church St. Group). **MOTION WITHDRAWN.**

3. Notice of Motion re: CPC, Grapevine, and Self-Support:

At the April 2011 General Meeting: A notice of motion was made by Gord H (Bloordale) that the Self-Support, Grapevine and Cooperation with the Professional Community representatives from the 9 Districts be invited to meet at Intergroup and the chairs of these groups report to the Intergroup General Meeting. **Motion made** by Nicholas (Responsibility) that the Self-Support, Grapevine and Cooperation with the Professional Community representatives from the 9 Districts be invited to meet at Intergroup and the chairs of these groups report to the Intergroup General Meeting. This notice of motion was seconded by Joe K (Golden Mile).

A vote was taken. RESULT: MOTION TABLED until the June 2011 General Meeting.

4. Notice of Motion re: Agnostic Meetings:

At the April 2011 General Meeting: David (Welcome Group), made the following **Motion:** "The Welcome Group has made a Notice of Motion to ask that two meetings be removed from the next printing of the Meeting Books [Directories], Website, and [the] list of meetings given over the phone by Intergroup to newcomers. There are a lot of questions as to why these two meetings in Toronto (namely, 'We Agnostics' and 'Beyond Belief') are listed as AA meetings in our directory. To change the 12 Steps, AA requires a 75 percent majority to change anything in the Big Book. There were also two questions asked: What are the Procedures and Guidelines for a group to be listed in the meeting group [meeting directory], and what steps are taken to ensure that they are genuine AA Groups?" **Motion was seconded by Rob (Rainbow Group).** Maggie (Sunnyside) made a motion to put over [the Motion] until the next meeting. Tyler seconded. Barbara: **The Motion is to defer this discussion and the decision until next month's meeting. A Vote was taken. The opposition [to the motion] carries and we'll be discussing the Motion tonight. A vote was taken.** Those in favour of the motion? 24. Those opposed? 15. Abstentions? 9. **RESULT: MOTION IS CARRIED.**

5. Notice of Motion re: signing authority:

At the April 2011 General Meeting: Dave (Port Credit) made a notice of motion that the Guidelines of GTA Intergroup be revised to give the Executive Secretary [Office Manager] signing authority for financial transactions as recommended by the Executive Committee. This notice of motion was seconded by Sidrah (Stepping Stones). **A vote was taken. RESULT: MOTION CARRIED.**

6. Barbara informed Floor members that the current Executive Committee needs 3 more members. This item will be tabled until the June 2011 General Meeting.

NEW BUSINESS: This meeting is a Semi-Annual Meeting, when any changes/amendments to the Procedures and Guidelines of GTA Intergroup can be considered and discussed. Barbara informed those present that the Executive Committee had no amendments to consider at this time. She then asked if members from the Floor had any; none were forthcoming.

CLOSING REMARKS: Members were informed that the June General Meeting will be a **WORKSHOP MEETING.**

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned with the Responsibility Pledge.

NEXT MEETING: Tuesday, June 28 at 8 p.m. at Lansing United Church.

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

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