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

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Courage To Change AT THE MISSISSAUGA FALL ROUNDUP 2011

I remembered that courage was not the absence of fear; it was the ability to continue in the face of it. (from *Grounded – The Big Book*, 4th edition p. 526)

“Any change, even a change for the better, is always accompanied by drawbacks and discomforts.” – Arnold Bennett

It takes courage to change, because the real work of letting go of old habits to establish new ones, is an inside job. Letting go of the familiar (even if the familiar is full of consequences that hurt oneself and others) really does require courage. Why? The thought of change evokes fear and confronting a fear requires courage. We come to AA to change our drinking habit and learn that this is only a small part of the changes we must strive to make in order to live a life that is happy, joyous and free.

The theme of this year’s Mississauga Fall Roundup is ‘Courage to Change’. The panel of speakers will provide inspiration to those at any stage of their journey of change.

Learn from them, through their stories, how they were able to confront their fears and make changes for the better. Our all-day program includes six speakers, from AA, Al-Anon and Alateen.

One of the most popular and powerful features of the day is the Family Panel – members of the same family share their unique perspectives on dealing with alcoholism.

As always, the Sobriety Countdown promises to be a Roundup highlight.

Come join us on Saturday, October 1, 2011 at St. Mary’s Ukrainian Church, 3625 Cawthra Road, Mississauga, from 8:00 a.m. till 3:30 p.m. There is plenty of parking and the location is easily accessed by public transit. An elevator is available for those who need it.

Tickets are available from Committee members at meetings throughout Mississauga and the surrounding area beginning in August. The ticket price remains the same as last year at \$20! And this includes coffee and snacks during the morning, as well as a hot and cold buffet lunch featuring perogies and cabbage rolls. Buy a ticket for yourself, your sponsee, sponsor or for someone else you care about. Hope to see you there!

Carol McP – MFR Publicity and Promotion Chair

DIVERSIONS AT MEETINGS (CELL PHONES, DOGS AND JOKES)

I received an email recently from a friend regarding cell phones at meetings. A great eye opener, especially when related to our traditions regarding “primary purpose” (Tradition 5) | continued on page 3

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Better Times thought it useful to point out that...“Any literature that pertains to the principles of AA or is approved by a Group Conscience - is perfectly acceptable to be read by any AA member or in an AA meeting. GSO Box 4-5-9 1978 (Volume 23, No 4) So, in fact there would seem to be no index of forbidden books...read on! Furthermore, we are pleased to print letters from our AA members in the GTA which express your concerns with regard to your sobriety, and AA as a whole; we simply ask our readers to “keep an open mind” and keep on writing.

Dear Sirs:

I am 23 years sober in A.A. When I first heard “Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow” things began to become more manageable for me. I was consumed with guilt about yesterday, and tomorrow was too overwhelming. So that left me today and I can manage today – there were times when I broke it down to minutes and seconds. This piece of prose along with the Serenity Prayer put things into perspective for me and I can manage today.

Last month's Better Times article about “Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow” gave me an opportunity to seek knowledge – this is what I discovered. At the National Archival Conference in September 25-28, 2003 in sunny Florida: Introduction started with the following; “The three most published A.A. authors are

Bill W., Richmond W. and Ralph P, in that order. Ralph wrote under the pen name of Father John Doe and wrote the fourteen Golden Books along with three other books, all of them still in print and read by A.A. people to-day. Richmond W. of Daytona Beach Florida Group published the “Twenty-Four Hours a Day Book” in 1948, which became the great meditational book of early A.A. from that point on. The Old Timers say without hesitation that they got sober by using two books: Bill's “The Big Book” and Richmond's “Twenty-Four Hours a Day Book”. Thank you for the opportunity to increase my knowledge about this wonderful programme and the fascinating people travelling the road to recovery.

Eleanor W. – Liverpool Group

haveyouheard

RECENT MEDALLIONS

Robert D.	25	Prince Edward Group	August 1
Viola W.	25	Place To Share Group	August 1
Art R.	20	Anniversary Group	August 3
Dorothy C.	50	Danforth Group	August 4
Kathy W.	1	Back to Basics Group	August 5
Theo A.	5	Stepping Stones Group	August 6
Paul H.	1	Keep It Simple Group	August 7
Terry C.	1	Place To Share Group	August 8
Catherine C.	1	Stepping Stones Group	August 13
Bob B.	5	Keep it Simple Group	August 14
Brian B.	1	Pine Hills Group	August 15
Mike W.	10	King City Group	August 15
Susan M.	1	Prince Edward Group	August 15
Harvey P.	1	Prince Edward Group	August 22
Carolyn B.	10	Sunnyside Group	August 25
Norma N.	30	New Anchor Group	August 25
Nikki S.	1	Silverbirch Group	August 26
Rob R.	5	Islington Group	August 26
Danielle R.	5	Stepping Stones Group	August 27
Karen D.	10	Credit Valley Group	August 28
Wendy R.	1	King City Group	August 29
Harold S.	25	East York Group	August 30

UPCOMING MEDALLIONS

Guelph M.	5	East York Group	September 6
Laurie B.	30	Royal York Group	September 6
Bob D.	35	Chartwell Group	September 8
Brad H.	1	St. Andrews (Scarborough)	Sept. 10
Dianne M.	30	A Place To Share	September 10
Kristof P.	5	High Park Group	September 11
Bernadette W.	1	King City Group	September 12
Ron S.	20	Prince Edward Group	September 12
Edward H.	1	East York Group	September 13
Melissa T.	5	Mount Royal Group	September 13
Erika I.	1	Pathfinders Group	September 14
Debe M.	5	New Anchor Group	September 15
Lauri G.	1	Westmoreland Group	September 19
Robbie M.	20	Markland Wood Group	September 22
Catharine M.	1	Stepping Stones Group	September 24
Jeff M.	1	Stepping Stones Group	September 24
Cindy C.	20	Fellowship Group	September 26

DISCONTINUED MEETINGS

CENTRAL WOMEN'S MEETING: Sunday 11:00am, August 28 and September 4, 2011 only. **Temporary cancellation.**

HOMESTEAD WOMEN'S:

Wednesday, 12:00pm, **Cancelled until further notice.**

MEETING CHANGES

973 GROUP: Thursday 7:30 PM
Bathurst Group Change of Meeting: Effective September 1, 2011. The Bathurst Group will hold its Thursday meeting on Tuesday (a change from Monday) and it's closed meeting will take place on Thursday (a change from Wednesday).

MIDTOWN GROUP: Monday 8:00 PM
Midtown temporary closure. The Midtown closed discussion at Trinity St. Paul's Church is closed on Monday September 5th, 2011. 8 pm Meeting.

KEYS TO SERENITY: Tuesday 8:00 PM
Keys to Serenity temporary closure. We are temporarily closed on the following dates:
Tuesday August 30, Thursday September 1, Tuesday September 6, Thursday September 8

ANNOUNCEMENTS

CHURCH STREET GROUP: Saturday 12:30 PM
20 Year Anniversary Church Street Group
Come and Help us celebrate this very special meeting on Saturday September 24th @ 12:30 pm.
Location: 519 Church Street

Better Times apologizes for a misprint in the article *Our Code is Love and Tolerance* in our July 2011 issue. The following quotation is a response from the GSO which should have been published with the following question but was mixed up with an earlier version of the response. Thank you for your understanding.

QUESTION

“Hi, can an AA group change the words to either the traditions or the 12 steps? If they do can they still call themselves an AA 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 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.

If we are aware that an A.A. Group listed here at G.S.O. has in any way modified the A.A. Steps, we enter into dialog with that group to discuss the information noted above and to lovingly suggest that if they are using the A.A. Steps, that they use the A.A. Steps as written. We have no additional experience beyond the step of entering into dialog.

It is up to each A.A. entity to determine the criteria used for listing A.A. groups, or for rendering their listing to be inactive.

From A.A. Directories, page ii

As embodied in the Fourth Tradition, the formation and operation of an A.A. Group resides within the group conscience of its members. While, hopefully, every A.A. Group adheres closely to the guiding principles of the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions, A.A.W.S. neither monitors nor oversees the activities or practices of any A.A. Group. Groups listed in the directory are listed at their own request. A directory listing does not constitute or imply approval or endorsement of any group’s approach to or practice of the traditional A.A. program.

**Mary Clare L.,
Public Information Coordinator,
General Service Office**

Diversions at Meetings | continued from page 1

and “money, property and prestige” (Tradition 6). My friend pointed out too, that not only is it a major distraction (for everyone at the meeting) if it goes off, but it also brings “dishonour” to AA – a place that is helping us to live a better life, a place that deserves utmost respect.

Equally distracting (and disruptive too) are dogs at meetings. I have wracked my brain trying to find a legitimate reason to bring one to a meeting. It is clearly an attention-seeking and ego-inflating behaviour that takes no account or consideration for others in the same room. Some folks love dogs, others hate them, some are allergic to them and others fear dogs. Whatever our individual feelings are, each of us has the right (and expectation) to choose our level of contact with dogs and not have them thrust upon us. This should hold true at AA meetings as well.

As we mature in AA, our ability to laugh at ourselves and humorous situations becomes progressively more acute. Oftentimes, a well-delivered message includes funny

anecdotes and incidents appropriate to and related to the speaker’s experience, strength and hope. (As a newcomer, I can remember being almost shocked at the amount of laughter in AA rooms.) Some folks seem compelled to start their talk with a joke or one is delivered from the floor during announcements. Why? Just for the sake of telling a joke? And a lot of these jokes are off-colour, sexist, put-downs or sarcastic. I suppose they might be alright at a Toastmasters meeting or in a bar, but in AA where we deal with serious life or death issues, I suggest, they are misplaced.

I am not immune to the trappings of “money, property and prestige” but through the teachings of AA they are taking on a less prominent role in my life. As a steward of the AA program, these issues (cell phones, dogs and jokes) jeopardize and put at risk the message being delivered to the newcomer – “our primary purpose” and dilute “the joy of good living” to which we all aspire.

Norm P.

August '11: Intergroup Report

GENERAL MEETING – TUESDAY, JULY 26, 2011

ADOPTION OF MINUTES – June 2011: MOTION to adopt Minutes as presented moved and seconded. **MOTION CARRIED.**

CHAIRPERSON'S OPENING REMARKS: Barbara H. (Rox Glen Traditional), **Chairperson:** Barbara shared the following to Floor members:

- Barbara welcomed everyone to our new location, and announced general housekeeping items.
- AA Service Manuals were provided for Group Reps (one per group); more will be available next month.
- The **Traditions Workshop** announced at the June General Meeting is set for **Sat. Oct.15** from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.
- Barbara outlined which members have a voice on the Floor, and asked members to come to the microphone when addressing the Floor.

It was then announced that one item of business needed to be addressed at this time: With regret, Barbara announced that our Office Manager, Judy, has resigned for personal reasons. The Executive Committee has extended an offer to a new candidate (Gail). Our Procedures and Guidelines calls for ratification from the Intergroup Floor on this item. Barbara then asked for a Motion from the Floor to hire Gail under the same terms and conditions as Intergroup's former Office Manager. **MOTION CARRIED.**

Barbara shared that a gift was purchased for Judy by the Executive Committee in appreciation for her service. She stated that "We very much appreciated Judy's service over the past several years" and asked that everybody give Judy a round of applause for her efforts.

Finance Report: Don M. (Hill), Finance Committee Member: GTA Intergroup Alcoholics Anonymous. **Finance Report for June 2011.**

	Income	Expenses	Net Ordinary Income
June	\$9,464	\$13,921	\$-4,457
Comp. to Budget	-3,921	-4,752	831
June Year to Date	\$227,557	\$211,926	\$15,631
Comp. to Budget	29,805	-16,093	45,898

Total Income before Operating Expenses for June was 29% below budget due to low Group Donations. Year-to-date Total Income before Operating Expenses is 15% above budget and 14% over last year due to strong Group Donations in previous months and increased ORC surplus. Total expenses for the month of June are 25% below budget due mainly to staff position not filled. Year-to-date total expenses are 7% below budget but 14% more than last year due to hardware purchases and the database project.

Prudent Reserve as of June 30, 2011: Book value + accrued interest: \$287,308 which represents 305 days (10 months) of budgeted Operating Expenses. An additional \$40,000 was transferred to the Prudent Reserve and \$6,400 interest was accrued on investments in June. Don informed those present that the postal strike did affect somewhat distribution and sales in the Literature Department. He also emphasized that there is funding available for subcommittees for any special projects they may have to aid in carrying the message; please let the Finance Committee know if assistance is needed. **Phone System Update: more Twelfth Step volunteers are needed** in order to implement the system. Progress in this regard is ongoing.

SUBCOMMITTEE REPORTS

The following reports outline the various subcommittees and their roles in carrying the message.

ACCESS ABILITY: Cathy Z., Chairperson: We had our regular meeting on July 17. We have decided to look for an alternative to Mayfest next year. The costs have gone up considerably and we no longer feel our involvement is helpful. People in Motion was a big success this year so we are hopeful we will be given the opportunity to return next year. We have been asked to participate at District 22's service day in September. We will set up a table and give a brief presentation on what our committee does. Once again I'd like to remind everyone to notify Intergroup if your meeting is wheel chair accessible. It is important to ensure that the room the meeting is held in is accessible and that there are accessible washrooms available. We cannot designate a meeting as

accessible without accessible washrooms. We would also like groups that do have wheel chair access to post instructions on how to get into the meeting in the notes section for their meeting online. Items like which door to arrive at and where the ramp is are important to know ahead of time. Our **next meeting** will be Sun. Aug. 21 at 11a.m. at 234. Yours in loving service, Cathy At this point in the meeting, there was a **collection of the 7th Tradition**, which totalled \$130.19.

ARCHIVES – Gord H. (Bloomdale), Chairperson: On July 17, an Oral Histories Workshop was held. Maire O'B. (Past Archivist), Eddy G. (present Archivist), and Jim (assistant) facilitated the Workshop. Gord has an Oral Histories Workbook available for anyone interested. The committee is working on accessibility for members to archival materials, and will create Procedures for this endeavour. On July 18, the Area 78 Archives Chair (Area 78 includes Calgary area) was in Toronto, and was given a tour of our Archives display at 234. Four more boxes of archival materials from the late Tommy H. have been received. Members who are interested in assisting with these materials are encouraged to attend the **next Archives meeting** which will be held on Fri. Aug.12 at 7 p.m. at 234. The **27th Annual Archives Breakfast "What was AA like back then?"** will be held on Sun. Nov.6, 2011 at the Oasis Convention Centre (Mississauga). The day will feature a buffet breakfast and two long timer speakers (Audrey G. /54 years, Toronto and Don C. /53 years, Oakville). Tickets are \$25 and available from Archives members (see flyers). **CORRECTIONAL FACILITIES:** No report was given. This committee will meet again in September.

COOPERATION with the PROFESSIONAL COMMUNITY (CPC): No report was given. **Next meeting:** Mon. Aug.8 at 7 p.m. at 234.

INFORMATION AA DAY 2012: No report was given. This committee will meet again in September.

ONTARIO REGIONAL CONFERENCE 2011: No report was given. This committee will meet again in September.

PUBLIC INFORMATION: The Public Information Committee met on Monday July 18 at 7:30 pm. In attendance: Districts 2, 6, 10, 12, 14, and 18. Absent: District 4, 22, and the P.I. Events Coordinator. All Districts present have been very busy with various activities including getting Big Books into their public libraries and both public and separate school boards. Beginners Pamphlets and holders were distributed to many community centres, food banks and police stations throughout the Districts. We were invited to participate in the Mount Pleasant Business Improvement Association's Fall Fair but declined. As the objective of this fair is to promote (advertise) the local businesses, it is not appropriate for AA to participate as Tradition 11 states "our public relations policy is based on attraction, not promotion..." **Next P.I. Meeting:** Mon. Aug. 15 at 234 from at 7:30 p.m.

TREATMENT FACILITIES: Daniel U. (Welcome), Chairperson: Treatment Facilities has adopted procedures and guidelines for their committee. Committee members are also generating new ideas and ways of carrying the message into facilities in the GTA (i.e. starting meetings in facilities that currently have no AA service meetings). **Next meeting:** Thurs. Aug.18 at 7:30 p.m. at 234.

TWELFTH STEP: As no meeting was held in July, no report was given. **Next meeting:** Fri. Aug.26 at 7:30p.m. at 234.

WEBSITE/BETTER TIMES: Aaron K. (Yorkville), Chairperson: The Better Times is in need of another Co-Editor. If you are interested to be part of this vital team, please see me or apply online. If you have a submission for the Better Times, please have it in by the 10th of the month. Notices for the website will be posted promptly. **Next meeting:** Sat. Aug.13 at 1 p.m. at 234.

RECEPTION: Bruce D. (Fifth Tradition), Executive Vice Chairperson: 70 members were present this evening: 42 groups, 5 subcommittees, and 2 district liaisons.

CHAIRPERSON'S CLOSING REMARKS: Barbara and Floor members officially welcomed the new Office Manager, Gail, with applause. Barbara also thanked those in attendance for their dedication to service.

NEXT GENERAL MEETING: Tuesday, Aug. 30 at 8 p.m at Timothy Eaton Memorial Church, 230 St. Clair Ave. West (west from St. Clair subway Station on Yonge line). The meeting will be held in the Flora McCrae Auditorium.

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

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