

ANONYMOUS SOUTHJERSEY

SOUTH JERSEY INTERGROUP

DECEMBER 2015

Reports from the Field on Day of Sharing

Gratitude for Day of Service

As first thought, the Day of Sharing sounded bleak, dry, and not very exciting. "The day our Area's 3 Intergroups get together to discuss our common successes and pitfalls!" Oh joy! I thought. Then the A.A. wisdom kicked in, to never say no to A.A. I have a duty and responsibility to the program that saved and changed my life. The decision was made. I'm going to Absecon. After researching several ways to get there, the group I was traveling with decided to go via train.

The morning of, I began with the daily reading of my choice. The thought for the day: "What am I going to do today for A.A.?" was the very first sentence. Wow, how ironic! I knew I was supposed to attend this event today. So my answer, I'm going to suit up, show up, and participate. The ride there was filled with early morning laughter, short stories and strong desires for that first cup of coffee. A short

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Sharing Our Progress

Hi Everyone. I want to thank everyone who attended this year's Day of Sharing. We had over 65 people in attendance and all three of the Intergroups and the Area were well represented. I especially want to thank Cape Atlantic Intergroup for hosting and all who served as moderators that day.

I thought that it would be helpful to present a list of items that were covered during the report-backs from the round table discussions:

1. Need for mentoring or Service Sponsorship - as individuals rotate out of their service positions the new person moving in could use some help from the outgoing chairperson.

2. Knowing what the previous chair did would be helpful to the new chairpersons. The person rotating out of the position could provide them with

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April in December: Learning to Fight Better

This month marked the last wedding that I had to attend/be a part of for the year. And while I love that my life is full of wonderful friends and family who want me in their wedding, boy is it a lot of work. Being in a wedding is one expense,

obligation, and emotional hangover after another. I made it through the various engagement parties, showers, bachelorette parties, rehearsal dinners, long wedding days full of pictures, and champagne toasts (ginger ale for me, please!)

and as I reflect, I've come to a bizarre conclusion. Sobriety has really helped me "fight better."

Now of course I don't go into these affairs looking to get my feelings hurt or intentionally be overly sensitive. But one of the joys of being an alcoholic also means I come with highly sensitive emotions and feelings. This most recent wedding day was rather high stress. I had

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Inside This Issue: Driving and Crying ♦ Giving It Away by Pat P. ♦ Staying On-Guard During Holidays ♦ To the Editor ♦ Announcements ♦ Things to Do

Grapevine Exclusive

Driving and Crying

A share overwhelms a newcomer's heart and puts her on the main road to Step Two

I really didn't want to go to my meeting tonight, because it was raining and hubby made a fire and the house was warm. Plus, it was getting dark and really cold outside. But off I went anyway.

As soon as I walked in the door, a man said, "Want to lead tonight's meeting?" I said, "Sure." We read from a page in the chapter "The Family Afterward," from the Big Book. The passage was about a newly recovered alcoholic who found his Higher Power. I didn't have much to say, as I am only 39 days sober.

People began to share their experience, strength and hope on the reading, and I listened intently at first, then started to get a little panicky because I was practicing in my head what to say to close the meeting. That's when I heard a guy named Gilbert share. Immediately, I stopped and turned to look at who was talking. His voice was my father's—almost exactly. He spoke of how he was a terrible father when he was drinking and didn't realize it at the time.

My own father never recovered from alcoholism through AA meetings, nor did he have a spiritual awakening (none that I was aware of anyway). My dad was a "dry drunk" who passed away at the age of 78 from a stroke 10 days before my wedding. He was a verbally abusive, frightening drunk when I was a kid growing up. He was a functioning alcoholic, however,



much like me, and he was always home, but never present. He never attended, not even once, any of our childhood activities, plays, softball games or graduations. I had much resentment toward him, even after his death. And even worse, I was turning out just like him.

As Gilbert continued to share, he spoke of how badly he felt that he was not there for any of his kids' school plays or sporting events. As he was apologizing, I heard my father apologizing. I started to well up with tears but knew I couldn't cry because I needed to finish chairing the meeting. Somehow, I got through it.

The second I went outside and got in my car, I started sobbing uncontrollably. I realized God had allowed my father to speak through Gilbert and apologize to me. An overwhelming surge of love, forgiveness and joy flooded my heart. I finally understood my father. I cried as I drove. I knew then that there really was a God. A great weight lifted. I wanted to write this down so I will never forget this night. I finally forgave my father. I am free.

—J. P., Murrietta, Calif.

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The Paradox of Giving It Away to Keep It

My sponsor taught me about the four paradoxes of AA. They are: we surrender to win, we suffer to get well, we die to live, and we give it away to keep it. These come from the story "The Professor and the Paradox" found in the second edition of the Big Book.

In this season of giving and receiving, I will focus on the last.

One of my favorite passages in the Big Book (third edition) is on pp. 128-9: "Like a gaunt prospector, belt drawn in over the last ounce of food, our pick struck gold. Joy at our release from a lifetime of frustration knew no bounds. Father feels he has struck something better than gold. For a time he may try to hug the new treasure to himself. He may not see at once that he has barely scratched a limitless lode which will pay dividends only if he mines it for the rest of his life and insists on giving away the entire product."

I don't know at what point I realized in my sobriety that AA's spiritual program of the 12 Steps really was a limitless lode--probably when I had solved problem #127 by working one or more of the steps--I just know I gradually had the dawning realization that this spiritual program really had depths I would never totally plumb, and that I could live life on life's terms and have a real and rich and deeply satisfying life. Not a life based on fantasies, those grandiose dreams I dreamed while drunk, but a life doing the so-called "small things"--cleaning the house, paying bills, going for a

walk, celebrating a friend's birthday, making a holiday dinner, etc., etc., etc. And yes, the sadder things--tending to an ill loved-one, going to a funeral, sending a sympathy card, calling on a bereaved one. All the "little things" that make up the tapestry of life.

I read about the Famous People--those who have made such a difference in the world--the architects, artists, scientists, educators--and I realize I won't be in that elite cadre of people. My contribution is to be a loving friend, a supportive family member, a volunteer to my community. All the things I couldn't do drunk--but can sober. This is part of the "limitless lode" for me.

And what about the "giving it away in order to keep it"? Well, that's the volunteering, offering and giving help and support to

loved ones, doing service work in AA. And on and on and on.

Isaac Newton said in his famous PRINCIPIA MATHEMATICA: "For every action there is an equal and opposite reaction." He further went on to say they happen simultaneously, and one cannot happen without the other. I believe that's true of giving and receiving. Every time we give, we receive the gift of giving. Every time we receive, we give the opportunity for another person to receive the gift of giving.

It's like that parable of the difference between heaven and hell. In hell everyone's arms are too long to feed themselves--so they sit at a table full of food and starve. In heaven, same scenario, only everyone is feeding each other. We give it away in order to receive it.

--Pat P.

Staying on Guard During the Holidays

With the holiday season upon us, we should take a long look at ourselves and be on our guard against *over-jubilation*. We really should avoid taking credit for our good deeds or our accomplishments, as if these are of our own doing, and remember that these have been given us by the Grace and the Mercy of our Higher Power.

We also have to be always on our guard in the way we celebrate with family and friends; and this goes whether we have one day, one month, or many years of sobriety. Our friends and family will appreciate our recovery efforts and realize that we have put forth those efforts and continue to put forth those efforts every day. Perhaps in the end, our Creator will say to us, "Job well done."

God bless all of us for getting through another Holiday season without taking a drink.

Big Mike

Progress

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a written set of duties and dates where service was performed.

3. Cooperation with the Professional Community mentioned that the Adopt-a-Doctor program has seen a good amount of success and that each Intergroup Committee should consider participating in this.

4. As a committee member "showing up" and asking for help when needed is a sign of strength and that collectively our experience shows that those who ask for help usually get it.

5. Although it is helpful to have the skill set when taking on positions like Treasurer, Web Site Chair or Registrar, having willingness to perform the commitment and learn as you serve is a good recipe for success.



6. The Literature round table made three points:

a. It is always helpful to have the most up to date literature for sale. New books and pamphlets are always of interest to fellow AA members.

b. Encourage members to bring up issues that they have with the literature so that they could be properly vetted and possibly suggested to GSO as changes.

c. Since the Intergroups do such a good job of selling literature, both AA and Grapevine, maybe the Area Grapevine Committee should stop selling books and concentrate on promotion of the Grapevine.

Again, thank you to all that participated in the Day of Sharing and please share this information with fellow members.

In Loving Service,
Andrew L

Gratitude

From page 1

trip on the NJ Transit Atlantic Rail took us within one block of our destination.

Upon arrival our group jumped right in to help set up. We picked our seats, dropped our coats and settled in. The room filled quickly with smiling faces, old friendships, and hands holding those iconic Styrofoam cups. God, I love this I thought. I sat and looked around at all the joy and love we receive when we get up and get out into service. The Day of Sharing formally started with Andrew L., our Alternate Delegate, taking the podium and giving a short intro-

duction to what we will be discussing, and assigning the groups per committee that we'd be breaking into.

After the address, we broke into our corresponding groups. Being without a committee that I serve on, I chose to attend the Website and Newsletter Committee table. I listened to the common problems associated with our Traditions and use of social media. Ideas on how we can better protect the Fellowship, and our personal anonymity. This followed with passionate discussions of our 3 different Intergroup Newsletters. After our groups sharing, one person from each committee presented their table's summarized reports to the crowd.

Sitting back and listening to the different reports, I was overwhelmed with a feeling of gratitude. To see a committed group of A.A. members so excited to discuss, share, and learn from this experience warmed my heart. For I know deep down, that I must continue to give this thing away to keep it. If I stay in the center of the A.A. Triangle, amongst the three sides of Recovery, Unity, and Service; I will continue to carry on our Founders' Legacy. In love and Service...

God Bless,
Young and Sober,
Michael E.

Editorial Policy

Anonymous South Jersey is a monthly newsletter published by and for members of South Jersey. Opinions expressed herein are NOT to be attributed to AA as a whole, nor does publication of information imply any endorsement by either AA or South Jersey Intergroup. Quotations and artwork from AA literature are printed with permission from AA World Services, Inc., and/or the AA Grapevine, Inc.

Contributions from readers are encouraged—you can write about your experience, strength and hope in general, or you can focus on one of the steps or traditions. You can also write about something that touched you at a meeting, something that bothered you at a meeting, or some service commitment you especially enjoy. Submissions are edited for space and clarity. Contact information is required and anonymity is respected.

Due to space limitations, we are unable to publish flyers for events in this newsletter. However, we are happy to include your gathering in the general list of fellowship announcements.

Please send your submissions to newsletter@asj.org.

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SJIG holds its monthly meetings on the third Wednesday of the month at 8 pm at St. Bartholomew's Episcopal Church 1989 Route 70 East, Cherry Hill, NJ

To the Newsletter Editor:

Thanks you for your service. October's front page headliner article had no place in Our Newsletter. It goes against our traditions and should not have been featured in the Newsletter. The code was always, "about AA, for AA and by AA". By adding in the last sentence, something to the effect of, "thank God for AA", does not make it right. This is not just my opinion but that of others in our fellowship.

In this November's publication, you bid your goodbyes as the outgoing Chair. I always agree that, not much gets done without a team, and I was encouraged by your words that you had one. But I have say to you, as a friend, that your statement of the past Anonymous Newsletter Staff was ill-thought of and insensitive. Much of the format your team had to work with was laid out by others before you; just like our traditions, all the hard work was done for us.

This reminds me of when I became Literature chair and comparisons were being made of me and those before me. I never went down that road and I still won't. I took the higher road and gave them credit for having those shelves ready and there for me. I was always taught, and it's in our step work, that I can not make myself feel better by making someone else feel worse.

I try and keep many of the hard copies of the Newsletter and I cannot find the accuracy, let alone any reason, in your statement that, when you took over, there were 70% Grapevine articles. If I remember, you and others were regulars. My view would be that, in the last two years, 70% of the articles entered were by just two members. This month's issue would follow suit. Thank you for your time and let's see how the December issue works out.

Joe C.



Enjoy the Gifts of Sobriety

April in December

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the night before the wedding and the day of we spent hours getting ready. I'm talking HOURS. It began at 7:30

am and while we donned our hair and makeup and various canned shots, we primped and pampered for the day and evening ahead. And sure, everyone around me was drinking champagne and getting a little looser, but I was just there being a good bridesmaid and trying to do my best in the situation. And I was a champ (if I do say so myself!) all day with the various tasks—which kept us at the venue until almost 1:00 am finishing up more pictures and cleanup.

But, as I alluded to earlier, I'm sometimes a little sensitive, and when my boyfriend said a few things that hurt my feelings a little bit, my tension and stress ran a little higher.

The old me would have "shown him" by getting good and



drunk. I would have danced with other guys, ignored him, made a scene and likely would have been crying and being way more dramatic than I'm even capable of now, shamefully turning a little comment into a huge deal.

Or, the old me would have shut down completely and drank silently, so when we left I was good and drunk and extra emotional in order to launch into a huge conversation/fight/sob fest for the car ride home.

But the sober me held it together. This night was about my friend, and my hurt feelings could wait. In fact, they would wait until the following day. Because sobriety has brought some clarity to my world and I know what is a productive conversation and what is just a bad idea. When I'm hurt I've learned (well, I'm



really trying—progress not perfection!) to bite my tongue and wait until I am not bringing high emotions and drama to something that should just be a "hey, when you said this it hurt my feelings and I want us to work on that."

I've talked to others in sobriety and have often received agreement when I say that going to weddings now that I'm sober just isn't really as enjoyable. And I definitely try to make the best of them, especially when it is my own friends and family we are celebrating. But they aren't my favorite and I'm on edge—making my emotions and sensitivities even higher. I'm glad to have survived my last wedding of the year—and that I had this little reflective insight about myself.

How nice it is to no longer have those crazy blow up fights over nothing, that escalate from a hurt feeling to tears and waking up the next day not entirely sure what happened. Just one more reason I'm so thankful for my sobriety!

**Happy Holidays from Your Friends at
the Newsletter Committee. Keep Coming Back!**

Fellowship Announcements

Barrington Meeting is Moving

Monday Barrington 1:00 PM AA Meeting is moving! The Just For Today Group of AA that meets Mondays at 1:00 PM at the Barrington Presbyterian Church is moving to Ascension Lutheran Church in Haddon Heights starting November 2, 2015. The address is 534 4th Avenue in Haddon Heights. Please join us!

Meeting Focus

The Monday night "Language of the Heart" meeting in Mullica Hill is now focusing on the Grapevine publication called "Emotional Sobriety". In this collection of Grapevine stories, sober women and men describe the transformations sobriety can bring as they practice the principles of AA in all aspects of their lives. Come join us Monday's at 7:00 PM, Trinity Methodist Church, 284 Cedar Rd., Mullica Hill, NJ.

Grapevine Publication

Sober and Out is the title of a new Grapevine publication (cost \$11). It is a collection of stories by AA members who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgendered (and a few friends) from the pages of AA Grapevine.

New Meetings

New Washington Township beginner meeting. How Important Is It Group, Thursday's 7:30 PM. St Charles Borromeo School. Johnson & Stagecoach Rds. Open. Joe 856 589 5710.

New Open Big Book Meeting. Saturdays at 7PM at the Center for Family Services, 108 Summerdale Road, Voorhees, NJ 08043 (upstairs).

New Women's Meeting. "Sisters Share and Care." Tuesdays 6-7pm. Big Book—Step Study. Zion Lutheran Church, Fairview and Pavilion Aves., Riverside.

New Speakers Meeting starts May 7, 2015. Grace Speakers Group. Thursdays at 8:30pm. Grace Church in Haddonfield, 19 Kings Highway East, Haddonfield, NJ 08033.

Meeting in need of support

Friday Nite Live Group. Friday 6-7pm. Holy Trinity Church, 2211 West Landis Ave., Vineland.

New Meeting Times

Tuesday Night's "A Way Out" group (originally at Transfiguration Church in Collingswood) is now meeting from 8:00 to 9:00 PM at Logan Memorial Presbyterian Church, Calvin Hall, 18 West Merchant Street, Audobon, NJ.

Willingboro Group Monday Night New Time: 7:00 PM. First Presbyterian Church, Calvin Hall, 494 Beverly-Rancocas Road, Willingboro, NJ. Meeting format and location will remain the same. Come out and support the group!

New Year's Alcathon

New Year's Day Alcathon – Friday, January 1st 2016 –hosted by the Burlington Big Book Group. 7:00 AM to 7:00 PM (meetings every hour on the hour). St. Mary's Guild Hall, corner of West Broad and Talbot Streets, Burlington City (opposite the River Line). Food donations accepted and welcomed. Contact Pat M. at 609-456-8887 to volunteer to take a meeting.

Fellowship Things to Do

December 2015

Saturday, November 21 – Gratitude Dinner sponsored by South Jersey Intergroup. \$30.00 p/p Nicolosi's Catering, 1 Hessian Ave, Woodbury, NJ. 7:00 – 11:00 PM. Tickets on sale at IG Office, IG Meeting (3rd Wednesday at St Bart's), Edward S: 856-524-816.

Thursday, November 20-22 – Cape May 9th annual Waves Roundup at the Grand Hotel hosted by Cape Atlantic Intergroup more info: www.caigrp.org.

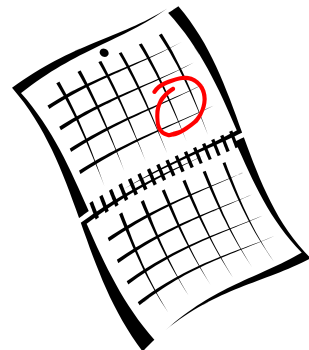
Thursday, November 26 – Thanksgiving Alcahthon, 8:00 AM to 8:00 PM at St. Andrew's Episcopal Church, 186 E. Commerce St., Bridgeton, NJ 08302 (meetings every hour on the hour). For more info, contact Marci R. (856-776-3149) or Detroit Dave (856-506-1653). Food, fun and fellowship.

Saturday, November 28 – Magnolia Saturday Night's 44th Anniversary, 8:30-10:00 PM, Two Speakers and Desserts. Dessert contributions welcome. Holy Trinity Lutheran Church (Bldg. in rear), Evesham and Warwick Rds, Magnolia, NJ.

Monday, November 30, 2015 – The Harbor Lights Group celebrates its 36th Anniversary at 7:00 PM with Food and at 8:30 PM with a Special Guest Speaker: Jeff B –North Jersey Area 44 Chair. For this special occasion, the group will meet at Zion Lutheran Church, 312 Philadelphia Avenue, Egg Harbor City (1 block from the group's regular meeting place –parking at 351 Cincinnati Ave., under the water tower). Appetizers and dessert donations are welcome.

Wednesday, December 2 – 18th Annual "Friends of Bill" Mens' Christmas Dinner at Nicolosi Catering - Hessian Ave. & Rte. 45 West Deptford. Cost: \$40 There will be a silent auction, 50-50 tix, speakers, and a great buffet (men are encouraged to bring a new toy). For more info call Jack H. 856-304-7001.

Friday, December 11 – the Friday night "How Important Is It" group of Washington Township, at St. Charles Borromeo Gym, 176 Stagecoach Road, Sicklerville, NJ, will be holding their annual "Candle-light Gratitude" meeting at 7:00 PM. This is an open meeting and all are welcome, especially spouses, your group members and newcomers, with participation by all encouraged. Come share your gratitude; then everyone is invited to stay for fellowship and a buffet dinner, to be served by our group members.



HAPPY HOLIDAYS

"The Trustees and Committee members of the South Jersey Intergroup want to extend their heartfelt thanks to all our readers for supporting Intergroup throughout the year and their warmest wishes for a New Year filled with sobriety, joy and sharing."