

# ANONYMOUS SOUTHJERSEY

SOUTH JERSEY INTERGROUP

AUGUST 2012

## G.S.O. Publishes Results of 2011 Membership Survey

*The most recent G.S.O. survey shows some surprising ways the fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous has changed and stayed the same.*

The General Service Office has been surveying members every three or four years since 1968, with a few goals in mind—to keep us informed about the fellowship, and to provide information about AA to the professional community and the general public.

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*Another statistic that stood out for me—how members came to be introduced to A.A. In 2001, the top answer was “self-motivated”; in 2011 the answer was “through an AA member”... There is good Twelfth Step work going on.*

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In 2011, more than 8,000 AA members from the U.S. and Canada participated (the questionnaire was distributed to groups registered with the G.S.O.). As I type this I realize that there are many, many members who either didn't have a chance to complete the survey or who just didn't want to—but the results do make you think.

*Survey continued on page 2*

## INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- 2**      *A.A. Survey cont.*
- 3**      *Tradition Eight Right-sizes a Sober "Expert"*
- 4**      *Step Eight Brings one AA Freedom from Self*
- 5 & 6**    *Women in A.A. cont.*
- 6**      *Acceptance/Surrender*
- 7**      *Editorial Policy, Question of the Month, Happy Anniversary, & SJIG Contact Information*
- 8**      *Fellowship Announcements*

## Women in AA in the 1950s

*Remembering what it was like to get sober as a woman in the early days of AA in the Twin Cities*

My name is Betty H., and I'm an alcoholic. In 1953 I got sober. I'm not sure what led me to sobriety—a three-day binge, my husband's threats to haul me to the state hospital, or suddenly being sick and tired of being sick and tired. Perhaps it was all of the above. I was in my mid-twenties but had already had a long history with alcoholism.

When I was a tot, my family, who were no strangers to drinking, thought it amusing to let me drink from their glasses to the point that I would get a buzz on. My mother found me in the pantry at about age two, drinking from my father's 'dead soldiers,' a neat row of bottles on the pantry shelf. I started living my life to accommodate drinking by the time I was thirteen. Back in the day I was a pretty good-looking chick. I knew if I sat on a stool at any bar on Hennepin Ave., I would need only to pay for one or two drinks. Soon there would be someone buying them for me. I'd get dolled up to go find that bar stool and that drunk. I always liked to think I was in control and would make trips to the restroom to force myself to throw up, so I could continue to drink. How's that for sick?

In my late teens, I had a baby and had to give her away. I was a victim of my alcoholism, and had many years to wonder where she was and how her life had progressed. That didn't prevent me from continuing my affection with the bottle.

My first marriage was a disaster, and I can't figure out how I got so lucky with the second. We married in 1950, so you can see that he put up with my behavior for three years before I decided to sober up. He begged me to do something about myself, and one day I did.

My first trip to an early Minneapolis meeting site, which was very new at the time, was a bit daunting. It was

*Women in A.A. continued on page 5*

Let's go back to 2001 so we can see what did or didn't change in ten years (keeping in mind that 7,500 members responded then vs. 8,000 in 2011):

Ages of Members in 2011		Ages of Members in 2001	
Under age 21	2%	Under age 21	2%
Age 21 to 30	11%	Age 21 to 30	9%
Age 31 to 40	15%	Age 31 to 40	24%
Age 41 to 50	24%	Age 41 to 50	31%
Age 51 to 60	27%	Age 51 to 60	20%
Age 61 to 70	15%	Age 51 to 60	10%
Over 70	6%	Over 70	4%

Guess we're getting a little older? And in terms of gender, we're slightly more feminine. In 2001 the fellowship was 67 percent male to 33 percent female, and in 2011 it was 65 percent men to 35 percent women. (Elsewhere in this edition of the newsletter, we've got a story about women in AA back in the 1950s---see what has changed in that regard and let us know what you think!)

In 2001 members attended an average of two meetings per week, and in 2011 they attended an average of 2.6 meetings per week. 77 percent of those surveyed in 2001 had a sponsor---in 2011 it was 81 percent. And home group membership rose from 85 percent to 86 percent between 2001 and 2011.

For me the nicest percentage increase was the length of sobriety---the average length jumped from seven years to ten years between 2001 and 2011. Nicely done!

Another statistic that stood out for me---how members came to be introduced to AA. In 2001, the top answer was "self-motivated"; in 2011 the answer was "through an AA member". We are bringing the message to more people! There is good Twelfth Step work going on.

--Patty H., Newsletter Chair

***We'd appreciate your reaction to the survey results---so please send us your thoughts for a future edition of the newsletter. The address is newsletter@aasj.org.***



*If you want more after reading this article, the complete results are available in the AA pamphlet "Alcoholics Anonymous 2011 Membership Survey" (P-48). They are available on the G.S.O.'s AA website, [www.aa.org](http://www.aa.org), or in the South Jersey Intergroup office. Just click on "For the Media" and go to "Background Resources."*

## FELLOWSHIP FACTOIDS

Did you know that there are over **114,000** A.A. Groups throughout the world?

**65%** of the Fellowship is Male, and the average age for an A.A. is **49**.

**86%** of our members belong to a home group, and **81%** have a sponsor.

## Tradition Eight Right-Sizes a Sober "Expert"

*The Eighth Tradition: Alcoholics Anonymous should remain forever nonprofessional, but our service centers may employ special workers.*

The intellectual arrogance and grandiosity that I brought with me when I first came into Alcoholics Anonymous were quickly and expertly enlisted into what was to become a ferocious, ongoing battle: Me vs. the Eighth Tradition. Ladies and gentlemen, welcome to the royal rumble.

The word "nonprofessional," in AA parlance, means that I ought to act in a way that neither affirms nor implies that I am anything other than a recovering alcoholic in a fellowship of other recovering alcoholics. If professional help is what I need, I should go where such help is available, outside AA. Seems clear enough. Yet, before I was 90 days sober, I had become legal advisor to a newcomer who was in divorce court; instructed another to stop taking his medication that a qualified doctor had prescribed; and counseled two AAs in a lover's quarrel.

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*I no longer play doctor or therapist and I don't give legal advice, but I still catch myself wondering whether the latest newcomer in my home group is really an alcoholic.*

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On what basis would I question anyone's qualification, you might ask? What else, except my expertise on AA and alcoholism itself.

Sometimes, in my zeal when encouraging newcomers to get involved with the Steps, I talk about them as if they were the be-all and end-all. If anyone had told me, even by inference, that I had to get on with the Steps, I wouldn't have stopped long enough to remark, "What an order! I can't go through with it." I simply would've run like hell.

Sometimes, I complain about the way officers conduct business in my home group and set myself up as the "expert" on our group. There were times when I was so sure I knew everything there was to know about AA history. When speaking from the podium, I would hook my thumbs in my vest like a professional nineteenth century politician pontificating about the way things should be.

Another area where I am made particularly aware of the Eighth Tradition is in speaking to non-AA groups. I have found myself on panels with experts in the field of alcoholism and have been introduced as an "expert"

myself. I make it a point to remember something I was told by a member of our local intergroup public information committee: "We need to maintain our amateur standing." The practical side to being a nonprofessional means I don't have to worry about giving a letter-perfect presentation every time.

Tradition Eight also suggests that our service centers may employ special workers. Some of the experience that helped formulate this Tradition was played out in the days of the Forty-first Street Clubhouse, when members had a hard time distinguishing between Twelfth Step work and office employment. In the early 1940s, this controversy was still new and I can just imagine the faces turning blue with resentment as alcoholics tried to understand that the secretary, for instance, was not being paid to stay sober or to do Twelfth Step work, but to answer the phone, write letters, keep records of business transactions, and so forth.

Newcomers still ask, as I did, why we have paid workers (professionals) in AA. As it was pointed out to me, the staff at our local intergroup office, for example, is not paid to do Twelfth Step work. By opening up and helping keep the doors to institutions and correctional facilities open, by collecting data on local groups and publishing updated meeting directories, along with many other fundamental activities, the intergroup staff is paving the way for Twelfth Step work, it's allowing for Twelve Step work to happen. Carrying the message of hope and recovery is the real "business" of AA. Attempting to conduct such an enterprise on a solely volunteer basis would be highly impractical.

Sticking close to simple, basic AA principles keeps me right-sized. Every recovering alcoholic at every meeting tells me, whether by word or deed, that non-professionalism in AA is one of the best ideas we ever had. Friends in my corner are quick to remind me of this whenever I get too big for my AA britches. So, in the fight for the heavyweight title, I choose to throw in the towel and surrender to the Eighth Tradition.

This way, we both win.

—W.H., New York, N.Y.

*Reprinted From Grapevine Magazine, August 1990, Vol. 47 No. 3*

## **Eighth Step Brings One AA Freedom from Self**

*The Eighth Step: Made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all.*

When I grew up I had a favorite uncle whom I've come to believe was an alcoholic, just like me. I was always excited to be around this uncle. He drank and seemed to have a lot of fun. At one time, he was a deputy sheriff, and so he knew everyone from one end of the county to the other. The first time I drank was with him, and the first time I got really drunk was with him--at the ripe old age of 11.

I was 18 years old when I was drunk one Sunday night and broke, so I drove up to his place to see if I could borrow some money. I found both him and a man who was living with him passed out. I stole the wallet of the man living with him and left the house unnoticed. This man blamed my uncle for stealing his money. The sheriff was called in. My uncle had worked for him and had drunk himself out of that job. It was very embarrassing and shameful for my uncle to go through that. Eventually, it blew over.

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*I felt a lot of guilt and shame when it came up in my thoughts, and I drank to make it go away. It was like a monkey on my back.*

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I left for the Marine Corps and tried to forget about the incident, but every now and then when I was back home I would think about it when I ran into my uncle. I felt a lot of guilt and shame when it came up in my thoughts, and I drank to make it go away. It was like a monkey on my back.

When I sobered up and was in treatment, this came up in my Fourth and Fifth Steps, so obviously it was on my Eighth Step list. It was meant to clear up the wreckage of my past so I didn't have to have it haunt me for the rest of my life.

My uncle, although a fun-loving man, had a very volatile temper. I was scared, to say the least, but I

knew I had to make that amends. I met with him on a Saturday morning in his garage and brought up the incident. He remembered it as though it were yesterday. I told him that I was the one who stole the money. Believe me, I was extremely uncomfortable. It was very awkward for both of us. I was, you could say, the apple of his eye and we had done many things together, so it really took him for a loop. I asked my uncle for forgiveness and told him I was very sorry for the misery I had caused him.

He looked me right in the eye and said, "Lee, what's between us is between us, and that's the end of it." When I walked out of that garage I was a free man, released of the bondage of self. This gave me faith that I was on the right path and that this AA business worked.

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Years later this same uncle was in an assisted care home. He needed help with his affairs but was strongly rejecting help, even from a very close brother, another uncle of mine. This other uncle asked me to help him. I met with my first uncle and told him we loved him and wanted to help him, but we needed his help to go through a power of attorney hearing.

With much skepticism on the part of a court administrator and others, the next day we had the proceeding. I prayed for the strength to go through with this and was prepared for the worst, but everything went without a hitch and people walked out of the room shaking their heads. I put my arms around my uncle and just cried. I know that when I made that amends to him years before he knew I wouldn't lie to him and he trusted me to do the right thing. Six months later he passed away and my other uncle was able to handle the estate without any glitches. There's only one way this would have happened and that is with God's help and guidance.

--Lee C.J., Fargo, N.D.

*Reprinted from the August 2010 Grapevine Archives*

difficult for them to find a group for me, as there were so few that welcomed women. I guess women were expected to stay home and drink 'in the closet'. I did get into a Robbinsdale club, and was willing to travel to find others, although I didn't drive. My husband was available to drive me, and in those days the groups were very much different than today. We'd meet in peoples' homes, the alcoholics sitting in a circle surrounded by the spouses in an outer circle.

Sometimes those spouses could be a little standoffish, as I believed they envisioned me as a little 'bar fly' that may have come on to their husbands at some bar. After my second meeting, my husband decided he was an alcoholic, as well, and moved into the inner circle instead of sitting with the women.

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*Because I found myself an oddity, being a woman in AA, I realized there were others to whom finding meetings posed a challenge. We started women's meetings. I got involved with the founding of the first women's local half-way house, as that was the closest thing women had to treatment at that time.*

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Meetings didn't usually start until 9:00 p.m., to allow people to get home from work, clean up, get dressed up and get ourselves to the designated home. The hostess was expected to provide a full meal for the attendees. Every three months, we would have a full pot-luck banquet to celebrate AA birthdays in the squad that had transpired in that period. We traveled from suburban Brooklyn Center across town to the north St. Paul suburb of White Bear Lake, where I found a meeting that I really liked, as the women seemed to welcome me.

I have to hand it to my husband, as he worked a physically demanding job, would shower and spiff up, drive us to the meetings, which, with dinner and all, could last several hours, and perhaps continue with conversations at late night diners, getting up early in the morning to get to work on time. Our entire social life was suddenly revolving around AA instead of drinking.

Because I found myself an oddity, being a woman in AA, I realized there were others to whom finding meetings posed a challenge. We started women's

meetings. I got involved with the founding of the first women's local half-way house, as that was the closest thing women had to treatment at that time. We shared our stories and became friends to the women there. We were always attractively and stylishly dressed as if to tell them that once an alcoholic not always a failure. I began to sponsor women in my groups and make trips with a few other members to small towns in the area to 'shake my tambourine,' so to speak. We were dedicated to helping form meetings in those towns so people everywhere would have AA. It was truly an adventure, and we were genuine pioneers in the program.

One day in 1956 a new woman, Kathy B., came to my Robbinsdale group. She was well-spoken, attractively dressed, and we bonded immediately. I became her sponsor. We loved dressing up, going out to lunch, shopping at antique shops and second-hand stores. She had a gift for putting her various finds together in her home.

Kathy had come to AA as a parent who had failed to respond to a family emergency due to her drunken state. Her younger son, Carson, had contracted meningitis, was very ill, and, as a sixteen-year old, had had to take the wheel of the car to get himself to the hospital emergency room, driving into a portion of the exterior wall as they arrived. She decided this was her wake-up call. Her husband continued to be a practicing alcoholic, which became problematic in her own sobriety, as she wanted to 'fix' him.

Eventually, she and I hauled him away from the restaurant he was working at, and drove him to the state hospital to have him admitted, much to his chagrin. I'll never forget seeing his nose pressed against the window as he watched us leave. Chefs were in the habit of switching to their work shoes at the restaurant, and, in his haste, he had slipped into someone else's street shoes, as we left, so, after a call from the hospital, we made another trip to bring him his own, as the ones he had were way too small. He stayed sober for some time before he began slipping in and out of sobriety. They had a daughter who was very young and an older son. She also had two boys from a previous marriage. Kathy's husband passed at a young age in 1973 and she only less than six years later with 22 years of sobriety. I remained in touch with their daughter for some time.

I have been a snowbird in Mesa, Arizona for many years, and have many wonderful AA friends there. Being late arriving there this past winter due to some health issues, I was busy saying my hellos after one of my regular meetings, mindful of a white-haired gentleman seemingly anxious to greet me. He finally approached me, asking if I remembered him. No, I couldn't say that I did, and he really didn't expect I would. He mentioned his name, Jim H., and that didn't ring any bells. Then he said he was Kathy B.'s son. I didn't remember Kathy having a son named Jim, so I mentioned Dave and Carson. He explained that he was Carson, and that his family had always called him by his middle name, but he had gone on to use his first name. I was stunned.

Here we were, thousands of miles from the Twin Cities, so many years having passed, and united in AA. Jim had heard various members of the group he joined last summer speak of me, and, because of my unusual last name, Minneapolis origins and number of years in the program, he decided I had to be his mother's former sponsor. I have had 57 years in the program and he has 30. He and his wife have adopted me as part of their small family, and it's a shame Kathy couldn't have lived long enough to really get to know his wife, as she exhibits the same creativity I always admired in her.

Speaking of family, you recall that I mentioned the daughter I had given away back in my teens. I never had any children after that. I was fortunate to have my second husband for forty-three years, but had always wished for a family. A number of years ago I had a phone call, and it was my daughter who had been searching for me. Surprised beyond belief, I didn't know what to expect of such a relationship, but it has been a total blessing, and it amazes both of us how alike we are in many ways. She has brought me a big, beautiful family to be a part of - grandchildren, great-grandchildren – the whole shebang!

Without my sobriety and the support of my AA family, I doubt I would be a part of these two families I am so enjoying. There are rewards in this program.

—Betty H. (as told to Deborah H.), Mesa, Ariz.

*From the online edition of Grapevine Magazine*

## Acceptance/Surrender

*Reflections on spiritual growth*

Acceptance of the fact that I am an alcoholic was key to my entrance to a program that has allowed me, one day at a time, to live alcohol free. Further, once the obsession to drink left me, it enabled me to work on my real problem (of which alcohol was but a symptom)--that problem being me!

Although acceptance of the fact that I was powerless was a necessary first step for me, that gift of acceptance was not enough, by itself, to take me any further into my journey toward sobriety. I then needed to surrender my will and my life to a power greater than myself, whom I call God. I had been on what I considered to be good terms with God for quite a few years, so turning my will and my life over to Him did not seem too difficult for me. In the course of making that transfer of power, I came to realize that my relationship with Him was not as warm and fuzzy as I thought it had been. I discovered that while many of my prayers were for good things (good health and prosperity for others); many were also of the "foxhole" variety (God, if you get me out of this mess, I promise I will never do it again!). Not once had I ever factored God's will into any of my prayers. That thought just never occurred to me--perhaps this is an example of the ego that ran my life.

Since the Twelve Step program, my sponsor and the folks in the rooms of Alcoholics Anonymous have helped me to include God's will in all my prayers, my prayer life has been revolutionized and revitalized. Now, when I pray for those "good" things I ask for God's will--not mine--be done. Then, when I am finished praying, I don't have to worry about the outcome of those prayers. I just rest comfortably in the knowledge and belief that God has heard my prayers--and if those prayers are sincere, He will act on them as He sees fit, not as I do.

Accordingly, my description of these two actions is shown as "acceptance/surrender." The diagonal line separating them is meant to show that I believe them to be a single action; therefore, not separated by a comma or dash-or connected with an "and." Should I attempt to practice only one of them, it would be similar to (for this alcoholic only) putting on one shoe, or placing only one arm through my shirt sleeve. It just wouldn't work!

*Acceptance/Surrender continued on page 7*

## Editorial Policy

Anonymous South Jersey is a monthly newsletter published by and for members of South Jersey Intergroup (although we welcome readers from other areas!). Opinions expressed herein are NOT to be attributed to A.A. as a whole, nor does publication of information imply any endorsement by either A.A. or South Jersey Intergroup. Quotations and artwork from A.A. literature are printed with permission from A. A. World Services, Inc., and/or The A. A. 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.

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Send your submissions to:  
newsletter@asj.org.

## Question of the Month

For next month's issue, we'd like to get your response to this question:

***Who or what brought you to your first meeting?***

Please email your replies by Friday, September 14th: newsletter@asj.org

Each day I ask God to help me to accept whatever will occur during the course of that day, and try my best to surrender the outcome of that day's happenings as being just the way that God has willed them to be.

--A Work In Proaress Alcoholic

## Happy Anniversary!

Collingswood A Way Out was founded in August 1994. It is a big book meeting held on Tuesday evenings at 8:00 pm at the Transfiguration School in Collingswood, NJ.

This group recently celebrated their eighteenth anniversary on August 7, 2012

— Jenn C., Archives Chair



## CONTACT INFORMATION FOR SJ INTERGROUP:

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

## **Fellowship Announcements & Things to Do**

**Saturday, August 18 - Introduction to Coastal Sea Kayaking with a tour of Edwin B. Forsythe National Wildlife Refuge. 9:00 AM. NJ Kayak, 409 East Bay Ave. Barnegat, NJ. [www.njkayak.com](http://www.njkayak.com). \$55.00 p/p. Sponsored by SJIG Social Committee & hosted by Sherrill Barrett: 856-889-5595. [sherrill@sherrillbarrettnutrition.com](mailto:sherrill@sherrillbarrettnutrition.com).**

**Sunday, August 19 - District 14 Fellowship Picnic. NEW LOCATION: Jersey Oaks Camp off Rt. 49, Shiloh, NJ, between Bridgeton and Salem. 12 Noon. Presale Tickets: \$10.00. Children under 8: Free. Bring your own chair and softball equipment. AA/AI-anon speakers, 50/50, Door prizes, Games. More Info call: Michele - 856.367.7009. Sides & Desserts Welcome. Rain or shine event. [www.jerseyoakscamp.org/direction](http://www.jerseyoakscamp.org/direction) for map.**

**Sunday, August 19 - Area 45 Summer Assembly - Registration, 8:30 AM; New GSR/DCM Orientation, 9:00 AM; Assembly, 10:00 AM; Lunch, 12:30 P.M.; Workshop, 12:45 PM; Committee Meeting, 1:30 P.M. - approx. 3:00 P.M.. Carslake Community Center, 209 Crosswicks St., Bordentown, NJ.**

**Monday, September 3 - Cumberland County Alcathon hosted by The Vineland Nooners Group located at Trinity Episcopal Church, 801 Wood St. Vineland NJ. 8 AM - 8 PM. More info contact: Unity Chair or [UNITY@aasj.org](mailto:UNITY@aasj.org) - food donations gratefully accepted.**

**Monday, September 3 - SJIG Labor Day Alcathon. Intergroup Office, 5090 Central Hwy. Pennsauken, NJ. 08109. 10:00 AM - 8:00 PM. New meeting every hour.**

**Friday, September 14 - "How It Works Speaker Group" 3rd Anniversary. Columbus Baptist Church, 24260 West Main St., Columbus, NJ 08022. 6:00 PM: Barbeque. 8:30 PM: Speaker: Chris R. (Ingram, TX). ALL WELCOME. More info: Barbara - 610.389.3712, Steve - 609.668.3483, Ryan - 609.213.4942. Covered dishes welcome.**

**Wednesday, September 19 - "But for the Grace of God" Group's 16th Anniversary (Formerly "John Barleycorn Must Die Group") 7:00 PM. Grace Episcopal Church, 7E. Maple Ave., Merchantville, NJ. Speaker and Refreshments.**

**Monday, September 24 - One Day at a Time group @ Cape Regional Medical Center will celebrate their anniversary Food donations call Sharon @ 856-261- 4266.**

**October 5-7 - CAIG 6th Annual "Waves of Sobriety Round-up". Clarion Hotel & Convention Center, 6821 Black Horse Pike, Egg Harbor Twp., NJ 08234. AA, AI-Anon & Alateen Speakers, Workshops, Marathon Meetings, Banquet & Evening Entertainment. Register online thru Pay Pal at [caigrp.org](http://caigrp.org). Info: Steve H. RU Chair: [Roundup@caigrp.org](mailto:Roundup@caigrp.org). Sharon T. Reg. Chair: [Shari923@msn.com](mailto:Shari923@msn.com)**

**The H&I committee is always looking for volunteers, speakers & hosts to carry the message of Alcoholics Anonymous. The H & I Booking Meeting takes place at the Intergroup Office in Pennsauken at 7:00pm on the last Monday of each month. Please contact H & I at [handi@aasj.org](mailto:handi@aasj.org).**