

# ANONYMOUS SOUTHJERSEY

**SOUTH JERSEY INTERGROUP**

**October 2016**

## Staying Healthy in Mind, Body and Spirit

Hello, my name is Bob. I am an alcoholic and I also have mental illness. My sobriety date is October 6 1985. I started drinking in the early 70's. Back then there were a lot of other substances circulating around. Little did I know some of these other substances would cause brain damage that would catch up with me years later.

In 1979 I had a psychotic episode and I was prescribed Prolixin for my delusions for the first

time. I drank for thirteen years, seven out of the thirteen years I drank on top of my medication. Alcohol potentiated my medication, but this made sense to me as I could drink half as much and get just as drunk. I was playing a game that could have killed me.

It took a long time for me to hit bottom because I didn't have the money to drink as much as I wanted. Back then any kind of

mental illness was very stigmatizing. I was ashamed of my illness. I was embarrassed at being labeled schizophrenic. My family didn't understand, my friends didn't understand, nobody could understand. People called me a Waco and I hated myself. I had such low self-esteem.

*(Continued on page 3)*

### What Is the Price of Admission?

I attended an 8th tradition meeting not long ago, and came away thinking about what it meant to me at this time in my life. A lot of good things were shared about its purpose. Some said that if there were a fee or charge for services rendered, like getting a sponsor, or having to pay for meetings, they would have never tried AA as a means of getting sober.

Others said they would have paid any price to have this precious gift. I believe pain is a by-product of injury or illness caused by our own doing. It amazes me now that for all of those years, the insanity of my disease led me to believe that my actions and the way I lived my life were normal. In the beginning, I drank to take away tension, to feel good, or to give me the strength to handle my problems and the willpower to cope with any situation. After many years of drinking, the disease manifested itself into

*(Continued on page 6)*



### God is in the Grammar

There's a long-time AA'er who absolutely insists on folks getting the articles of "How It Works" correctly. That is to say that one must be fastidiously careful to say, "Having had a spiritual awakening as the (not a) result of these steps...". That attention to detail is not without important lessons (Nietzsche after all, famously said, "God is in the grammar").

An "awakening" as a result of the Steps, is, after all, just one more, ho-hum awakening among many. An "awakening" as the result of the Steps is a definitive, measurable result of practicing the Steps in a serious, disciplined manner. It is the promised result and it is a

*(Continued on page 6)*

**Inside This Issue:** No More Faking It ♦ SJI Trivia ♦  
♦ Opportunities for Service ♦ Get Out and Get Involved ♦ Announcements and Things to Do

# After Five Years of Faking It, a Young Member Gets Honest About Her Beliefs

I came to my first AA meeting by accident, sort of. I was there to support a best friend in high school who was sober. I had been dabbling in drinking with some pain but I wasn't at my bottom—yet.

At that first meeting, the seed was planted when an AA member said, "It's not how often you drink or how much you drink. It's what happens when you drink." In response, I told myself that I was only a weekend binge drinker and was only 16. But a few months later, I hit an emotional bottom with painful repercussions. I knew exactly where to go because this time I was ready. I had lived that member's foreshadowing statement.

I came to AA desperate and incredibly green to anything Twelve Step-related. I took all suggestions, no questions asked. When spirituality arose, I did what was suggested to me and conceived my own Higher Power to the best of my ability. I used the group itself as my Higher Power for quite some time, along with my deceased great-grandmother and nature.

Someone suggested I pray and develop conscious contact with my Higher Power. But I never felt a genuine connection to this idea, though my ears perked up when fellow members talked about God. I hoped I could take what they were doing and incorporate that into my spiritual repertoire.

For five years, I tried "fake it till you make it." My impression was that if I didn't have a Higher Power, I would drink again. The fear of that notion kept me earnestly and enviously searching for what everyone else seemed to already have. I didn't tell anyone I was struggling to come to some understanding of a Higher Power. I didn't ask anyone whether I could stay sober without a conception of one. Also, I had a wonderful sponsor who believed, and I felt that because I didn't, I had failed.

Then the day came when a fellow member and friend was open about his atheism. I was intrigued and honestly awestruck that it was acceptable to be both sober and atheist. That day was the beginning of an alternate route of spirituality for me. I learned that the best thing I could do was to continue to search, question and investigate. Eventually I came to the realization that I'm an agnostic and have been my entire life. I needed to be true to myself because I was feeling increasingly different in a room full of people who I needed to feel connected to.

The Fellowship around me embraced me wholeheartedly. My sponsor then stopped suggesting prayer and saying things like, "Let Go and let God." We started together figuring out what spiritual tools would work best for me. In meetings, I began speaking openly about my view and letting others know that it's OK to honestly let

people know where you're at spiritually. We all need to be open-minded to others' ideas. We need to be honest and willing to change.

I've met opposition for my beliefs. I've also had people have the utmost gratitude to know they're not alone and that we can stay sober regardless of what we believe or don't believe. I've sponsored Buddhists, Christians, agnostics and those who are in the process of discovering. I still have a sponsor who believes in God. For me, the beauty of sobriety is that I can learn from everyone and anyone.

I've had the pleasure of helping like-minded AA members start a group—the first in our area—that my friend the atheist calls We Agnostics. It's a meeting where people can express themselves freely. We just had our one-year anniversary. It's amazing to see the growth the group has had and to feel the growth it has provided me. I have the gift of getting sober young and the pleasure of helping others be true to themselves. I couldn't ask for anything more.

Cara A., St. Peters, Mo.,

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## Mind

From page 1

In the 80's I was sent to a halfway house in South Jersey. Drinking while going there was against their policy. But I figured alcohol is legal, the heck with you I'm drinking. I wound up in a condemned house that was infested with bats and roaches. At the time I occasionally did other substances that made me more depressed. I was so suicidal I almost stepped in front of a tractor trailer on route 130. Still I kept drinking.

I remember when I was in the halfway house they used to put me down because of my drinking. Fortunately, I got out of the halfway house and moved back with my parents where I live now. I started to work for a temp agency back in the 80's. This is when my drinking progressed. In the end I was starting to have pain in my liver and my hands started to shake in the morning. I thought the shakes were because of the Prolixin and not the alcohol. I would be up to twenty beers in one night. I was drinking mostly beer and whisky boiler makers. Around this time I was driving from bar to bar. I was lucky the times I was pulled over the police let me go. I went to a fancy place in the next town and I thought I was high class because I was drinking champagne. I was turning into a bum. At the end I starting to have black outs.

In the 80's I was having psychotherapy in Philadelphia with one of the best doctors in the city. Dr.

H. diagnosed me with Schizophrenia psychotic type. When I told Dr. H. of my drinking he said, well let's just try two beers in a night. This was impossible. I was seeing the best Dr. in Philadelphia, and he could only help in a very limited way. Later when I was sober I found my first sponsor was better than the best psychiatrist in Philadelphia. After Dr. H retired I was still having positive symptoms and I thought all my problems

would be solved if only I could find the right Doctor.

For patients with mental illness whether its schizophrenia or manic depression, recovery is mainly four things, the right doctor, the right medication, the right dose, and total abstinence from street drugs and alcohol.

In the 80s when my drinking was progressing my life was a life of alternating spells of rage

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## **2016 DAY OF SHARING**



**SAT., OCT. 15, 2016  
8:30AM TO NOON**

**Carslakes Community Center  
207 Crosswicks St.  
Bordentown, NJ 08505**

***THE THREE SOUTH JERSEY INTERGROUPS AND  
AREA 45 AS COMMITTEES DISCUSS THEIR  
COMMON SUCCESSES, PITFALLS, AND  
SOLUTIONS!***

PLEASE COME OUT AND SHARE YOUR  
EXPERIENCE, STRENGTH AND HOPE AS IT  
RELATES TO A.A. SERVICE!  
CONTINENTAL BREAKFAST IS PROVIDED!

## Mind

From page 3

and depression. And for some reason I said to myself God help me. I had a spiritual awakening! I had been in a living hell and AA raised me out of that hell I had been living for the past decade and a half.

My sponsor at the time thought it would be best if I got rid of my medication and I threw it all down the toilet. I thought that if I stopped drinking I didn't need the med's any more. It was a serious mistake. There were members in AA telling me I was not sober because I was on medication. We are not Doctors. If you have mental health issues it's best to get professional help. Mental illness is nothing to be ashamed of. A chemical imbalance is simply that. In my case it is excess dopamine in my brain. It is entirely a physical malady, just like diabetes or high blood pressure.

In 1986 I had a complete nervous breakdown. When I got out of the hospital I was newly sober. I had a handful of phone numbers. I got to the end of my list of phone numbers and I reached a guy from a neighboring town. Bill sent me to a clubhouse in Camden where they twelve stepped me. That was where I got sober. Over the years I

have lived in many clubhouses and they saved my life many times over.

For new members of AA I strongly suggest you join a local club house. They are all over. Simply look on the back of your

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*We are not Doctors. If you have mental health issues it's best to get professional help. Mental illness is nothing to be ashamed of.*

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meeting list. In the early days of AA there were only a handful of meetings and you would have to drive sometimes hundreds of miles to get to a meeting. Some countries are totally without a meeting. Meetings are going on around the clock in the US so there is no excuse for not making a meeting.

Over the years I have been to meetings all over New Jersey. I have been to meetings in Portland Oregon, Washington DC and New York. I make a meeting and don't drink today.

I was on Prolixin from 79 to 89. I have found the medications of yesterday are a far cry from the medications of today. Clozaril, the medication I take today is a miracle drug. It really works. Not only does it work continuously it has fewer side effects than the Prolixin. It is so nice to not be depressed. Clozaril fits into my synapses like a key fits into a lock. I

have found out I have underlying minimal brain damage syndrome stemming from drugs and alcohol. Some patients suffer hallucinations or auditory voices. For me it is paranoid and grandiose delusions. Schizophrenia is not split personality.

When I first got sober I thought I would never be able to enjoy life any more. But this is not true. There is a whole sober world out there. There are hobbies, movies, bowling,

sports, meetings, diners, conventions and so forth. I have my ham radio license and I talk to people all over the world. I do a lot of activity for my home group. I get supplies once a month and I make lots of coffee. I found it very helpful to do AA service work. It keeps me sober.

Next June I will graduate from Drexel University with my Bachelor of Science in electrical engineering. It's funny, me a disabled person able to achieve such a great accomplishment. But it has been many years of hard work.

As it says in how it works, there are many AA's with grave emotional or mental disorders but they can recover if they have the capacity to be honest. So I guess I am very honest.

Thank you,  
Bob

## 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.

### CONTACT INFORMATION FOR SJ INTERGROUP:

South Jersey Intergroup Association, Inc.  
PO Box 2514  
Cherry Hill, NJ 08035  
Office/Literature Sales: 1-856-486-4446  
Email: Info@asj.org  
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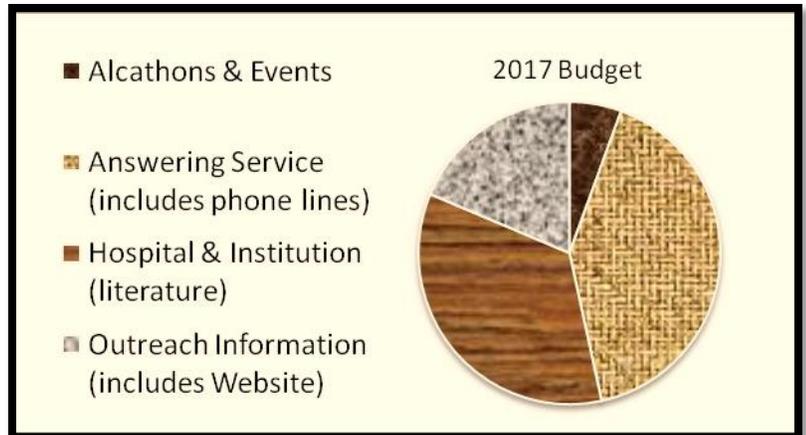
SJIG holds its monthly meetings on the third Wednesday of the month at 8 pm at St. Bartholomew's Episcopal Church 1989 Route 70 East, Cherry Hill, NJ

## Trivial Pursuit

October Trivia Question:

*Where do send our group's contributions?*

Here's the answer to the August/September trivia question, how does your group's contribution to Intergroup help the newcomer?



Sobriety is like pizza...



When it's good, it's  
**REALLY** good, and when  
it's bad, it's still  
**PRETTY DAMN GOOD!**

## Admission

From page 1

something I could no longer control, or live without. Many times before this journey of sobriety, I tried AA to learn something more, something new about myself. I wanted to drink and act more responsibly. It was hopeless; I simply could not stop.

Today, after several years in the program, my will power, and the fact that I was in denial, also the ability of a functioning alcoholic lifestyle, kept me from staying in long enough to let the principles of the program

take hold. Divorce, loss of material things, the loss of love and respect from my wife and children, and even my employer.

All of these things didn't seem to be enough pain. I always believed there was a God, but that He only existed to judge and punishment for the way I chose to live my life. One day, a good friend of mine convinced me to turn to God for answers for the pain I was in and the pain I was causing others.

When I turned my will and my life over to God, I felt the pull of his love for me, and the beckoning of his will drawing me back to AA once again.

Over eight years later, I have not had a reason to take a drink. That does not mean that I have this thing licked at all; it means that just for today, I will use the tools that have kept me sober. I continue to turn my will, my life, and any pain I may come up against, to a loving Higher Power, who only wants the best for me, and those I come in contact with. Yes, there is a price for admission into the fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous; it is pain.

Big Mike



Grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change,  
Courage to change the things I can  
and Wisdom to know the difference.

## Grammar

From page 1

With that lesson in mind, I consider the Serenity prayer. "God, grant me serenity", is different than, "God grant me *the* serenity." *The* serenity to accept the things I cannot change (similarly with 'courage' and 'wisdom') is a more specific (and limited) type of serenity. It is just that amount needed for acceptance.

'Serenity' (without the *the*), is of a much more generalized variety and goes beyond just the serenity needed for acceptance (although that is a great deal). Leaving off the *the* in the serenity prayer gives a whole different tone and aspect to the prayer (makes it a different prayer altogether) and, I believe, is the way the prayer should be recited in its original form.

If I say the prayer correctly (and should that prayer be answered), I get more serenity than what is needed for acceptance of the things I cannot change; I get a wider, broader, roomier serenity. I get serenity in general; for all aspects of my life (ditto, courage and wisdom).

So, "God, grant me serenity, to accept the things I cannot change", and more besides; for serenity, in general, will be useful in all aspects of my daily existence; not just to accept what I cannot change. Serenity, wisdom and courage, are mighty things to have, in all our endeavors. The Serenity prayer, said correctly, makes bold enough to ask for those things.

Masonville Marty



## October Service Opportunities

### OPEN SHIFTS

#### **Answering Service:**

Saturday morning shift is open, 8:00 am to 10:00 am. Sign up for the waiting list to hear when other shifts open up.

Sign up to be available for a 12 Step call  
Please contact [answeringservice@aasj.org](mailto:answeringservice@aasj.org) for more information on any of these opportunities.

#### **Literature Sales:**

The Literature committee is looking for volunteers to cover shifts and/or substitute. For more information, please contact Jimmy at [literature@aasj.org](mailto:literature@aasj.org) or call 856-486-4446 during literature hours.

### SPEAKERS NEEDED

H&I (Hospitals and Institutions) is looking for speakers to visit the following facilities:

Monday: Ancora State Hospital - 202 Spring Garden Rd, Hammonton NJ 7-8pm October 31 (arrive 30 min early).

Tuesday: Cooper Psych Unit - 1 Cooper Plaza, Camden NJ 8:00-9:00pm October 4.

Wednesday: Unit Place I - 1 Keystone Ave, Cherry Hill NJ 12:40-1:30pm October 19, 26  
Delaware House - 21 Ikea Drive, Westampton NJ 1:00-2:00 pm, October 12.

Thursday: Ancora State Hospital -202 Spring Garden Rd, Hammonton NJ 7-8pm Oct 6,13,20,27 (arrive 30 min early).

Unity II - 121 S. White Horse Pike, Hammonton 2:00-3:00 pm October 6, 20.  
Daybreak - 368 White Horse Pike, Atco NJ 10:30-12:00pm October 13, 20, 27.

Saturday: Virtua Memorial - Psych Unit 8:30-9:30pm October 15, 22.

Please contact Patti or Frank at [handi@aasj.org](mailto:handi@aasj.org) if you are able to take one of these commitments.

Cumberland County Jail : Anyone in Cumberland County looking for a good service commitment should consider joining the effort to bring meetings into Cumberland County Jail. Please contact District 14 or e-mail [info@aasj.org](mailto:info@aasj.org) for contact info.

High Schools: The public information committee needs your help to bring our message to high school students. Please contact Eileen at [publicinfo@aasj.org](mailto:publicinfo@aasj.org) for more information.

### WRITERS WANTED

Newsletter Articles: Please submit articles to [newsletter@aasj.org](mailto:newsletter@aasj.org) by October 7 for our November newsletter.

Group History: Make it easy for future members of your homegroup to see how your group started by submitting your group history to the Archives Committee. Please visit <http://www.aasj.org/downloads/forms/grpHistoryFrm.pdf> or e-mail [archives@aasj.org](mailto:archives@aasj.org) for a Group History Questionnaire form.

# Get Out and Get Involved

**Day of Sharing:** This event will be on October 15, 2016 at Carlslakes Community Center, 207 Crosswicks St. Bordentown, NJ 08505 at 8:30 am – Noon. Join Area 45 and the Intergroups in South Jersey to discuss our common successes, pitfalls, and solutions in AA service. Continental breakfast will be provided.

**Intergroup Reps wanted:** If your home group is not represented at Intergroup, please join us on October 19 at 8 pm at St Bartholomew's Episcopal Church (Rt 70 in Cherry Hill). Be sure to stop at the Unity table to learn more about being an Intergroup rep.

**Public Information:** We need some people to help with distributing literature and meeting lists to places such as hospital emergency rooms, libraries, and police departments. Please e-mail [publicinfo@aasj.org](mailto:publicinfo@aasj.org) for more info.

**Social Events:** Want to get involved? The committee will be holding its next formal meeting on Tuesday September 27 at 7:15 pm at the intergroup office in Pennsauken. Bring ideas! It's up to you!

**Sunday, September 25** - Triboro-Riverton Group celebrates 48 years with great food being served at 7pm and Annette T. from Mt. Holly sharing 44 years of sobriety at 8pm. Sacred Heart Church 4th & Linden Ave, Riverton, NJ.

**Sunday, October 2** - CAIG Unity Breakfast, 800AM-10AM All you can Eat Buffet. 10AM Speaker: Candace M. from Los Angeles, The Grand Hotel, ,1045 Beach Av., Cape May, NJ. \$27p/p *Mail:* to CAIG Unity, P.O.Box49, Absecon,NJ.08201 #300 Limit NO TIX @ Door, Regis.Chair: Jenna W. [609.947.1273](tel:609.947.1273), Unity Chair: TerriV. [609.334.9443](mailto:609.334.9443) [UnityChair@capeatlanticaa.org](mailto:UnityChair@capeatlanticaa.org)

**Saturday, October 8** - Swedesboro Weekend special group celebrates their 14th anny 9:00 am eat - 9:30 am speaker. Betheseda United Methodist Ch. 1433 Kings Hwy.

**Saturday, October 8** - Morning Glory Group anniversary. Meeting and 2 speakers 9:00am. Come early and have breakfast with us.

**Wednesday, October 19** - The Burlington Group will celebrate their 69<sup>th</sup> anniversary. Finger Food and Dessert at 7:00pm, Mystery Speaker at 7:30pm. St Mary's Guild Hall, Broad and Talbot Sts., Burlington, 08016

**Saturday, October 22** - 6<sup>th</sup> Annual FreedomFire. Appel Arts & Music Ctr. 457 Shirley Rd. Elmer, NJ Donation: \$10.00. 4:30PM Food & Fellowship, 6:30PM Speakers. Joanne M – Haddon Heights, Robbie W. – Wildwood. Bring a lawn chair or blanket. More info: Rich-856.904.3534, Amy-856.404.0237, Jesse-609.217.1295. GPS coordinates: 39.64019 x -75.17577.

**October 28-29** - Haddonfield Grace Ch. 19 Kings Hwy E. will have a couple days of speakers giving their experience, strength, & hope. Fri. 7pm - 10pm, Sat. 10am - 10pm. No reg. fees. Will be supported by the basket.

**Monday, October 31** - Audubon Last Mile Step and Tradition Group will be celebrating it's 24th Anniversary. Desserts will be served at 7:00 pm before the two speakers. We are located on the corner of Wyoming and Graisbury Aves. in Audubon, NJ. United Methodist Church.

**November 18-20** - 10th Annual Waves of Sobriety Grand Hotel, 1045 Beach Ave. Cape May. Cape Atlantic CAIG. For more info contact the website: [www.wavesroundup.net](http://www.wavesroundup.net) .