

September 2009

Education Edition



SOUTH JERSEY INTERGROUP

ANONYMOUS SJ

INTERGROUP ACTION

From the Treasurer: Are you grateful for being sober? If you have at least 5 years of sobriety and are not afraid of working with Quick Books? (or any similar Accounting Software), then it's your chance to step up and help your Intergroup. South Jersey Intergroup is in need of your service as an Assistant Treasurer for a two year commitment for 2010 & 2011. Please email or call current Treasurer, Joe Mc. Email: Treasurer_SJIG@verizon.net, cell#: 609-313-1270 or Marge K.

Turnout for the monthly **H&I** meeting on August 31 was light, there are still a large number of open commitments for October. The November meeting will be held on September 28 at 7PM in the Intergroup office. All Open commitments will be posted on the South Jersey Intergroup Website (aasj.org) as soon as possible, so please be patient. Volunteers of America operates a facility for homeless families and single women in Glassboro and are requesting an AA meeting be brought into their facility. Any group in the area wishing to act as a host group is asked to contact me.

Literature needs several Sales Volunteers for the 10am-Noon and the 6 pm to 8 pm shift. Training is provided. At present there are Eleven Openings. Contact Ginger at 609 970 2170

24 hours = **1-866-920-1212**

Newsletter_SJIG

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SOCIAL EVENTS

Yes, there are things to do!

The last **Camping Trip** for the year will happen September 18th and 19th. The Camping will be at Goshen Pond, near Atsion Lake on September 18th-20th . There will be a campfire meeting on Saturday night and a spaghetti dinner! The cost for the weekend is \$10, kids free.

There will be a **HALLOWEEN** Dance at Trinity Episc Church, 839 Haddon Ave Collingswood on Oct. 24th. Dress up and come on out!



Pizza, Pins & Pepsi means AA Bowling at Deptford lanes on the first Saturday of each month. Be there at 6:45pm and \$8 gets you three hours of bowling with other AA's, shoes AND Food. What a deal, Bowling skill not needed, often a liability!



Sadly, there will not be an event to celebrate the 50th anniversary of Intergroup service in South Jersey, but many thanks to all of you who have been a part of Intergroup in the past.

WHAT'S THE POINT? Ninth Tradition

Each A.A. group needs the least possible organization. Rotating leadership is the best. The small group may elect its secretary, the large group its rotating committee, and the groups of a large metropolitan area their Central Office or Intergroup committee, which often employs a full-time secretary. The trustees of the General Service Board are, in effect, our A.A. General Service Committee. They are the custodians of our A.A. Tradition and the receivers of voluntary A.A. contributions by which we maintain our A.A. General Service Office at New York. They are authorized by the groups to handle our overall public relations and they guarantee the integrity of our principal newspaper, the A.A. Grapevine. All such representatives are to be guided in the spirit of service, for true leaders in A.A. are but trusted and experienced servants of the whole. They derive no real authority from their titles; they do not govern. Universal respect is the key to their usefulness.

I think everyone will agree that we fit well the first part of this tradition. We are, to say the least, loosely organized. Yet it always seems to “come together” and turn out well. The next statement in this tradition is one we need to seriously consider. Rotating leadership does not mean people spinning in their office chairs. It does not mean playing “Musical Chairs”, as so many of A.A.’s organizations seem to do. New blood is needed to keep A.A. vital and relevant to the times. As with any society, our youth is our future. We need to nurture them and help them grow. This is why I’ve asked you Sponsors out there to encourage your sponsees to not be afraid to get involved, to try new things, to give of themselves to help others. They cannot fail, they can only fail to grow. And at its core, isn’t that what our little Program is all about?

As far as leaders go, we have too few. Everyone is quick to jump on the next passing bandwagon and ride along until the ride gets too bumpy. The true “spirit of service” is often lost on shortsightedness of the larger picture, on the immediate instead of the long-term. We look upon our leaders and expect perfection; but aren’t we all just growing? Mistakes are inevitable, but growth from their mistakes inevitably earns them the respect they deserve. That respect is the key to their usefulness. As we wind down to our elections this year, I would challenge you to talk to any of our Committee members and ask them but one question: Have you grown personally in your time in Service? I’m quite confident in the answer they’ll provide.

Peace... Andy... ;-) IG Chair Voorhees Big Book

“Are There Any Topics?” Cleaning House

Chapter Six of the Big Book, *Into Action* discusses seven of the twelve steps. The chapter has fourteen pages of which nine are devoted to Step Nine. This gives some idea of the importance which the writers placed upon this step. Step Nine is a working step, In step Eight, we have already identified the persons harmed and have done our best to become willing, now it is a question of acting upon that willingness.

Many an AA thinks that giving up the drink is a large enough amends in itself. *Into Action* states. “*Sometimes we hear an alcoholic say that the only thing he needs to do is keep sober.*” and “*A remorseful mumbling that we are sorry will not fill the bill.*”. What we are doing in recovery is what we should have been doing all of our lives, but were blocked by our disease. Too often we have worn out our quota of “I’m Sorry” and have lost credibility there, so how do we make up for the wrongs done is a difficult question for many AA’s and very often not one answered by quiet introspection. Talking to another AA, listening to how others have addressed the problem can help us tackle this difficult but vital step.

The 12 & 12 talks about classes of amends; those we can make amends to right away, those with whom it may take some time and those to whom we will never be able to make amends. When we identify the first class, it tells us that we should not hesitate because we are afraid; “*For the readiness to take the full consequences of our past acts, and to take responsibility for the well being of others at the same time is the very spirit of Step Nine.*”

Deacon's Corner

Do you know what makes a meeting a Closed meeting? The whole idea of Open and Closed meetings has gotten blurred and it is an important distinction when talking about AA meetings.. Most meetings I attend which say they are *open* discussion, seem to mean that they won't have a topic, but everyone is free to share whatever is on their mind; which of course they do. Another group I visited which says that it is a *closed* meeting displays an NA literature rack beside the AA literature rack. After all, a drug is a drug. Right?

Now the answers as to what makes a meeting Open or Closed are no secret. They are spelled out in the Pamphlet "**The A.A. Group....Where it all begins.**" Since no one reads any AA pamphlets after they are cured of alcoholism, (about six months) here's what **The AA Group** says about it:

Closed meetings are for A.A. members only, or for those who have a drinking problem and "have a desire to stop drinking."

Open meetings are available to anyone interested in Alcoholics Anonymous' program of recovery from alcoholism. Nonalcoholics may attend open meetings as observers.

The Blue Card, has one side for Open and another for Closed meetings, they are pretty similar except for the last words. The Open side says problems with alcohol, the Closed side says problems as they relate to *alcoholism*. A telling difference! ***Open Meetings are for people who want to know more about AA or just want to come to a meeting. Anyone can come to an Open meeting! Closed meetings are for Alcoholics. Drug Addicts, Students and folks with attendance papers really have no place at a Closed meeting, nor do children for that matter.*** Closed meetings also have the benefit of safeguarding personal anonymity. Visitors and persons required to attend AA meetings may not share the fellow AA's respect for '**who you see here.**' and there is no way that we can require them to do so. Your co worker with a DWI or the neighbor kid doing a college paper is free to tell the world that they met you at an **Open** AA meeting. That may not bother you if you have been around for a few years, but for the person new to AA, the assurance of anonymity is an important factor!

There are very few Closed meetings in South Jersey. Of over three hundred groups, only about seventy hold Closed AA meetings. So are we saying that there simply aren't that many people in South Jersey who have alcoholism? In trying to be Open to everyone, are we shortchanging the alcoholics in A.A.? Times change and things in AA have changed with them, but not always for the better and the change is not a necessity. Does your Group really know what an Open meeting means?

A SJ Oldtimer with over fifty years of sobriety told me that the thing that has impacted AA the most in the last twenty years is the way that many people have come to us. Rehabs have sometimes given newcomers misinformation about what AA is and what it isn't. They too often encourage 'sharing vs listening'. But what might work in a therapy group doesn't work in A.A. Courts have directed people to AA, because of the proven effectiveness of the program, *for those who want to recover*. Much misinformation has become accepted as AA practice, such as the concept of Ninety and Ninety as a sort of initiation process; but belonging to a group, reading the literature and being of service to others does not seem to be included in the misinformation package! Since we have gotten away from being 'hard' in AA, when we correct such misinformation, we are seen as Big Book Thumpers and Bleeding Deacons (for the few who get that reference!); so the bad practices become what people have learned to expect from AA. If you are an old-timer who knows better; perhaps you should speak up more in your group, starting with the idea of an Open meeting!

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR



There are no letters to the editor again this month. The Newsletter Committee continues to seek those SJ AA's who would like to get involved in writing or collecting items for the *Anonymous SJ*, as well as those who want to get involved on the production side of our



monthly endeavor. If you are reading this, chances are you enjoy the written word. Okay maybe not these particular written words, but written words in general and might like to be involved in the Intergroup communication effort. If that's you, contact Joe T. at newsletter@asj.org or leave a message at 856 486 4446.

Ten Percenters & Twelfth Steppers

Ten Percent of the People do Ninety percent of the work is an old organizational adage . Sadly this is too often true in local AA service. Speaking to AA friends in other states suggest that it isn't simply a South Jersey problem, but why is it so?

Why don't more AA's feel the need to get involved? Is it because they think that the service will be done by *someone* or perhaps they don't feel that they can do it or is it because they just don't care. Certainly there are those who simply don't have the time, even though all of us found the time to *drink*. Most service work only involves a few hours weekly or monthly! So are we making effort or excuses?

Service in any form, is carrying the message to another alcoholic. The point of being in a twelve step program is to practice the Twelve Steps, isn't it? The last of those steps has three important elements; 1)we had a spiritual awakening, 2)we tried to carry the message to others and 3)we tried to practice the principles we have learned in all of our affairs. If parts two and three aren't happening, maybe that spiritual awakening hasn't happened either.

Sure, service needs you, but don't you need service. Is this the year you get involved, re-involved or more involved?

LIM- In touch with AA's Worldwide

What would you do if there simply were no AA meetings around? Suppose that you were so infirmed that you could not leave the house, but still wanted the fellowship of other recovering alcoholics? Some AA members are in that situation. They live in remote places where there are no other AA's, they may be housebound due to illness or infirmity and can't get out to meetings or maybe they are merchant seaman and live on the seas or military men assigned in distant places. They all need the fellowship and what many of them have found is the Loners Internationalists Meeting. LIM is an AA correspondence system. People like you and I write to LONERS, who live in remote spots, HOMERS who are shut in and INTERNATIONALISTS, who are sober on the High Seas, (also Military members) Every two months GSO sends out the yellow four page "Meeting" where people share and contact information is given. You, as a LONER SPONSOR learn to pay more attention at the meetings you attend and pass along some of the shares in your letters to others far away. You can get involved by writing to LIM, P.O. Box 459, Grand Central Station, NY NY 10163 and letting them know that you want to be a part of the recovery of someone that you will never meet

To paraphrase Step Six, Don't say "*I will never get involved!*" but rather "*I haven't gotten involved yet.*"
This month's Featured Intergroup Service is::

ANSWERING SERVICE/TWELFTH STEP:



Ever call AA, anywhere and no one answered the call? Pretty lonely feeling, especially if it is the first time that you have worked up the courage to make that call and admit that you might (possibly.) have a problem. AA phones do a lot of things, they open the door for new people, give information to visitors and above all connect those in trouble with a solution, another alcoholic. Phone shifts are two hours long and while most are filled at present, training is available so that you can fill in or take the next shift which opens up. South Jersey phones are answered by AA's 24/7.

So how do I get involved? You contact the committee chair, which currently is Beverly M. through the Intergroup Office or website. Bev will make arrangements to meet with you, train you on what you need to know and also give you the supplies that you might need.

I wouldn't know what to say? What would you say to someone at any meeting? You say the same things. This isn't counseling work, AA has none of that. Just one alcoholic talking with another..

What sort of calls would I get? The bulk of AA calls are about the where and when of meetings. Often, visitors passing through, but sometimes new people. Some callers are looking for a way to get to a meeting. Other callers have general questions about AA. Some want non AA information and a small number are folks who are simply at a loss and AA is their last resort. Phone volunteer connect callers with an AA Group or with the committee or agency that can answer those questions.

But suppose I can't answer the person's question? Almost impossible. Bear in mind that we are not calling them, they are calling AA and that usually means that there is alcohol somewhere in the story. Your personal experience and the information that you have gained in the rooms of AA will let you answer any questions about us.

How long would I have to answer phones? Many people have had phone shifts for years, but there is no set time involved.

Where would I do it? Either in the IG office or by call forwarding at your home or anywhere.

What's the normal routine? If you are forwarding the calls. You will log on and calls will come to your phone. Many people will answer the phone, "Hello, Can I help you?" and the caller will usually ask if this is AA. If it's a friend calling, they think that you have gotten very polite. Most calls are brief.

This committee also manages the Twelfth Step list. This list is used by Phone Volunteers to connect callers with AA members in their areas. The list is upgraded on a regular basis.

Next Month: Bookers & H&I

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Read a few at each meeting!

Sat Sep 20 -CAIG Unity Breakfast 8 AM Grand Hotel , Cape May \$23

Mon Sept. 21 - Blackwood Women's Step will celebrate their 20th anniversary with sandwiches and snacks @ 7pm - speaker will begin at 7:30 pm. Local: Blackwood United Methodist Church - 35 E. Church St. - Blackwood, NJ.

Nov 20 - 22 - 3rd Annual Cape Atlantic Intergroup Waves of Sobriety Roundup. The Grand Hotel, Cape May , NJ.
For information call: Chris K. 609-816-4907.

Wed. Sept. 23 Ventnor Margate group is celebrating its 55th anniversary at 8:30 pm. The group meets at Ventnor Community Center Newport Ave and the beach Ventnor, NJ. Food & speaker - all welcome

Fri-Sun Sep 25-27 -New Jersey Round Up– Asbury Park, NJ www.njroundup.org November 20 - 22 - 3rd Annual Cape Atlantic Intergroup Waves of Sobriety Roundup. The Grand Hotel, Cape May , NJ. For information call: Chris K. 609-816-4907

Sun Sept 27, The Triboro- Riverton Group 36 Anniversary is at 7:00 PM eating and speaker. Sacred Heart Church, 405 Linden Ave. Riverton NJ 08077 Hall basement rear of church.

Sat, Sept 27 Mount Holly Step and Tradition - 35 Garden Street - Presbyterian Church Extension - Meeting from 10:30 to noon and food afterwards.

Sat, Oct 24th HALLOWEEN Dance. Trinity Church, 839 Haddon Ave, Collingswood 7-11PM \$10 pp

Sat, Oct 24 - A Day of Sharing (A Singleness Of Purpose) hosted by Cape Atlantic Intergroup. Absecon Methodist Church, 100 Pitney Rd., Absecon, NJ. Registration: 9:00 AM. Program starts: 9:30. Lunch will be provided. NEW

Sun Nov 15, Collingswood Senior Ctr. Collingswood, NJ will be holding the General Service Area 45 elections - reg. @ 8:30am - election begins @ 10:00am - direction on website www.snjaa.org

Openings for Maryville Women's Meeting

Mondays 8 to 9 p.m. Sept 7, Nov 2, Dec 7, Dec 28

Sundays 2 to 3 p.m. Sept 13, Oct 25, Nov 8, Nov 15, Nov 22, Dec 13, Dec 20, Dec 27



Dead Meetings

Sometimes it takes more than a resentment and a coffee pot to keep a new group going. Are there dead groups in your area? Groups which are listed on the meeting schedule, but just aren't there? The problem is that when a group folds up, there is no one left to tell the Intergroup Meeting List Committee about it. Recently a young lady called the AA phone and was outside a meeting place in Malaga, but the meeting had been gone for quite a while. New meetings pop up every time the list is printed, some make it, some don't. If your group has meeting lists over a year old, it's time to restock and if you know of some which just aren't there anymore; please let us know.