



The Fourth Step

“Made a searching and fearless inventory of ourselves.”

The Fourth Tradition

“Each group should be autonomous except in matters affecting other groups or A.A. as a whole.”

I am stuck in my head—on taxes. The government has caused me to make a fearless and thorough inventory of my finances, and has found me in need of paying them even more money...but if I could not make ends meet with taking taxes out of my unemployment wages, what makes them think I can pay it now? Sobriety can be ironic! But always worth it.

So I will reach into my AA toolbox and pick out those tools I know I can use—call my sponsor (again), call a friend or two or three, got o a meeting, share, and oh, yes mail in the down payment check. I must remember—it’s not in my time....

Thanks for letting me share.

We are the fellowship and the fellowship needs ‘we’.

In service, Judy

South Jersey AA Contact information

Website: www.aasj.org

AA information: toll free 866-920-1212

AA literature & office: 856-486-4446

Newsletter: newsletter@aasj.org

“When anyone anywhere, reaches our t for help, I want the hand of AA to be there. For that I am responsible.”

Please see this newsletter, the aasj.org site, and your local home group for chances to be of service.

Steering Committee Meeting Highlights

Answering Svc -With 39 (!) of 56 shifts reporting, our volunteers fielded 274 calls during March, making the average number of calls per reporting shift was Seven with a low number of One and a high of Twenty-Two Presently there are three (3) shifts covered by AA groups, as "group commitments".

The service schedule is finally back to the point where only Six shifts are vacant. Two of these are overnight shifts (Fri and Sat). **New volunteers** are invited to fill the remaining vacancies. The schedule is subject to frequent change, so we encourage interested AA's to contact us by email (website) or by phone to get the most up-to-date information about open shifts..

No 12th Step Coverage along the River!

During March, we were prompted by an event involving the 12-Step list to review and examine the phone committee records kept at the IG Office. The "event" referred to in the above paragraph brought to our attention the fact, that our new 12-Step list has a "gaping hole" in the coverage among the communities along the Delaware River, from Pennsauken all the way north to Burlington, and including Moorestown, Cinnaminson, and Delran. Not a single resident in these communities signed up last fall. Please help to get us a few names from these towns!

H&I 17 groups show filling **122** out of **139** commitments. We have 2 open speaking commitments for the month of April: Unity Place 2 located in Hammonton Thurs 1145 am to 1230 pm April 21 & 28. We have 3 open hosting commitments.

Memorial Day Alcathon

Unity—There will be a 24 hour alcathon on Memorial Day, from 6pm the evening before to 6 pm the day of. The place is the same, in Woodbury. Volunteers and speakers are needed.

H & I Open APRIL Speaking Commitments

Unity Place 2 Thurs (Hammonton) 1145 am to 1230 pm April 21

H & I Open MAY Speaking Commitments

Wounded Healer (Pitman) Mon 600 to 700 pm May 2, 9, 16, 23, & 30

Maryville **Women** (Franklinville) Mon 8 to 9 pm May 23 & 30

Maryville **Men** (Franklinville) Tues 8 to 9 pm May 3 & 31

Maryville **Women** (Franklinville) Wed 8 to 9 pm May 25

Ancora (Hammonton) Thurs 7 to 8 pm May 12 & 19

Unity Place 2 (Hammonton) Thurs 1145 am to 1230 pm May 5, 19 & 26

Go Fourth!

It's April and time to mention the Fourth Step. For some reason, the Fourth Step has taken on the status of an Obstacle course in sobriety. As if you have to get well enough to take on the thing that you need to do to get well!

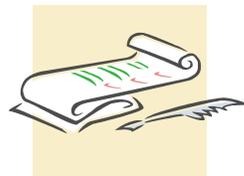
My own experience with it was pretty much apathy followed by apprehension and coupled with angst. It took a while for the first, second and third steps to finally hit me because I was a moving target, but with a lot of help from above, I slowed down enough to realize that just not drinking was not going to work, because I came to believe that I would return to the bottle if I did not do something more. That something was this big dark nasty called the INVENTORY. This was not the first time that I had come to AA and I had upgraded my drunk resume considerably in my absence. I wasn't happy to look at those years, much less all of the time before. Why all of this retrospection? Was all of this necessary? Let's get on with the sobriety stuff!

Still I knew how my way always worked out and I heard others, many of whom, sounded a lot like me, talk about the changes they had discovered in recovery; so I knew that I had to give it a shot. Now here was a problem. I was one of those who read the white part of the book. I thought I was pretty bright, but it just didn't dawn on me that the Mr Brown business was actually describing the inventory. Surely it couldn't be that simple? This sounded like a real soul ripper and that stuff seemed pretty light weight. No, I needed something more complex. My first attempt at an inventory, as I see it now, was pretty lame. I'd give it a C, maybe, but it was a beginning and that is what is important. Remember that the inventory leads to the rest of the 'working' steps and that we measure progress not perfection.

A bit later I was working at a rehab and we had tons and tons of inventory guides. It was the most baffling thing you might encounter. Then some AA friends introduced me to the Joe and Charlie talks and that was a real eye opener and I revisited the inventory with a different perspective. A perspective I might have gained by asking for help earlier. Still progress not perfection.

Over the years in AA, I have found that a beginning must be made in the steps. Simply staying away from the drink is not the same as recovering from our malady of Alcoholism. The boot camp of AA are Steps Four through Nine. No one shows up at Boot Camp ready to master the obstacle course. It takes work and effort. Don't let the fourth scare you into apathy. Seek help and make a start

Anonymous



Letters from the Newsletter



To say that the Newsletter gets few letters would be gross understatement. The newsletter gets No letters or comments. Zip, Zilch, Nada, Bumpkis! Which is especially odd in that we occasionally present articles which we think might raise an eyebrow or inspire rebuttal.

Then too, there is the lack of general comment, whether in praise of local AA or on some aspect of our South Jersey AA or Intergroup which you may find, not to your liking. It is okay to have other than mainstream opinions. Just read the letters in the Grapevine if you don't think so. A few months back, I took one Grapevine article to some meetings I was attending and invited those there to read it. They were all very much annoyed at the author. Two issues later, many other AA's wrote to the Grapevine in response to the article. Not all of them were printed, only about a dozen and while they were polite about it, they certainly conveyed their disagreement.

If you would like to read that article, it is entitled "*Why Are We Shouting?*" and is available online at the Grapevine Archives. Speaking of the Grapevine; it's called AA's Meeting in Print and it was started in 1944 by six AA's, four women and two men in an apartment in New York. The first issue had eight pages and a copy was sent to all of the AA groups, (about 300) and also to all the known AA's in the armed forces overseas. (we were at war then too) Think about those numbers. There are well over 300 groups meeting just in our Intergroup alone. And there are armed forces AA groups meeting in Afghanistan! If you have never read the Grapevine, you are missing a lot. Going away on vacation doesn't have to mean a vacation from recovery. Take along a copy of the Grapevine and read it at the beach, by the pool, on the plane..

Back to local events. The newsletter at one time had themes and asked for sharings on those themes. We would publish a quarterly issue with those collected sharings. While we have departed from that, we still welcome your comments. If there was a point raised in a meeting that got you thinking, please write those thoughts down and send them to us. If you wish to remain Anonymous, that's fine, but please note your home group (or groups) if you would.

AA is a fellowship, not something other than its members (you) but the collective of them. Your voice is important and we hope to provide you with a chance to use that voice here in your newsletter.

Please be a part of us

Newsletter Committee

Fellowship Announcements and Things To Do

Wednesday, April 27 - Ellisdale Back to Basics Group celebrates 22nd Anniversary. Ellisdale United Methodist Church, 926 Province Line Rd. Allentown, NJ 08501. 7:00 PM: Food. 8:00 PM: Speaker.- Dick S. with 49 years from Casalan Friday Night.

Friday, April 29 - Sunday, May 1 - Recovery Spiritual Retreat: *Knowledge of God's Will for Us*. Pope John Paul II Retreat Center, 414 South Eighth St., Vineland, NJ. Co-ed with two to a room at \$120.00 each. Private room at \$230.00. Contact: Bobby Frantum (856) 356-7443 or Kevin Laughlin (856) 466-3256. Deadline for pre-registration is April 20th.

Monday, May 2 - Westville Monday Night will celebrate 41 years with 2 great speakers and desserts. food @ 7pm speakers to follow. St. Luke's Episcopal Church, 3rd. & Highland Ave. Westville.

Thursday, May 5 - OSTR (Open Step and Tradition) Group celebrates their group anniversary. Cross Keyes United Methodist Church on N. Main Street in Williamstown, NJ. Food begins at 7:00 PM and meeting starts at 8:00 PM There will be two speakers (AA and Alanon).

Thursday, May 5 - Blue Anchor Group Anniversary. 7:30 PM. Berlin Baptist Church, W. Broad St., Berlin, NJ

Saturday, May 7 - Cherry Hill Young People's (SJCYPAA) Barbecue at the Subaru Pavilion. Cooper River Park, Cherry Hill, NJ. 4:00 - 9:00 PM. Free. Sport games, etc. Bring anything you want.

May 12 - 15 - 6th Annual International Seniors in Sobriety Conference. Holiday Inn, Long Island. Workshops; AA & Alanon Meetings & Speakers; Spiritual Conference; Fellowship & Banquet. Tour of Stepping Stones (Home of Bill W. & Lois). Contacts: Coni M. cmot@optonline.net, Nancy O. nomh@optonline.net, Nancy B. nblomberg@segalco.com.

Sunday, May 15 - Area 45 Spring Assembly. Elmer Grange Hall off Rt. 40 at Pole Tavern Circle, Pilesgrove Twp. Registration at 8:30 AM. New GSR/DCM Orientation at 9 AM. Assembly Meeting at 10 AM and Committee Meeting at 1PM. Includes continental breakfast and lunch. All are invited. See www.snjaa.org for further directions and info.

Sunday, May 15 - Step by Step Group is celebrating it's 21st Anniversary. St. Mark's Lutheran Church, Haddon Ave. & WHP, Oaklyn, NJ. Dessert at 6:00 PM. 2 speakers: Sonny & Claude at 7:00 PM

Friday, May 20 - Marlton Group (POP) Anniversary. 11:00 AM. Prince of Peace Lutheran Church, Rt. 70 & Cooper St. ¼ mile east of Rt. 70. 2 Speakers

Friday, May 20 - Sunday, May 22 - NERF (Northeast Regional Forum), Sturbridge, MA, 01566. Sturbridge Host Hotel and Conference Center, 366 Main St. For more information call G.S.O. at (212) 870-3400 or see www.aa.org.

June 3 - 5 - Matt Talbot Retreat Group #114 Serenity Weekend for Recovering Alcoholic Men. Marianist Family Retreat Center, 417 Yale Ave. Cape May Point, NJ 08212. Cost: \$150/pp. More info: hunter42@ptd.net or Scott: 570-234-7698. www.capemaymarianists.org

June 10-12 - Akron, Ohio will celebrate Founder's Day with a convention. If you would like to go, we will be taking a bus to Akron. Total cost for bus, room and registration is \$400 + many surprises. For more info call Wayne : 856-534-0104

Saturday, June 11 - Founder's Day Picnic, Subaru Pavilion at Cooper River Park, N. Park Drive. Cherry Hill, NJ. 12:00 - 5:00 PM. Bbq & Refreshments. Speaker: Al B. at 2:00 PM.

Friday, July 22 - Baseball Game. Phillies vs San Diego Padres. 7:05 PM. Information & tickets call: Jack W. 856-768-1039 (cell)

Saturday, July 23 - Back Bay afternoon fishing charter aboard the Duke O' Fluke out of Somers Point, NJ. Sponsored by SJIG Social Committee. 1:00 - 5:00 PM. \$25.00/pp includes rod, tackle, bait & mate's tip. Contact Mike Lore: 856-779-1830 or mikelore@voicenet.com Directions: <http://www.dukeofluke.com/directions.htm>

Our thanks to Wayne P. for his work in collecting and distributing this information

The Topic was Complacency

At a meeting I attended recently one topic offered, after the speaker finished, was complacency. Although there were perhaps fifty people present at the meeting, it seemed a bit difficult to get any of them to share. After the meeting finished, a friend of mine noted that he could pick out the eight or ten people at the start of any local meeting who would share. At first, I thought that he meant that some folks tend to hog the meeting, but what he meant was that the majority of people at meetings simply won't share. I realized that he was right. Oddly enough at this meeting, the topic was complacency and that's just what he was talking about.

Why don't people share at meetings? Some may say that they are fearful of speaking in front of people, but isn't fear one of those character defects that we are talking about in the Fourth Step. Also, these people are probably the same that they see on a weekly basis! Others might say that they lack time and don't have anything to offer. Sometimes the time that they are talking about is years not months. (One fellow recently said that he *only* had twelve years!) What we are 'supposed' to be sharing is our experiences, our strength and our hopes. Those qualities aren't questions of time, but of life. They are your experiences, the strength that you have found or perhaps the hope that you will find that strength in AA.

What do you lose by not sharing? Sadly that part remains unknown. What did you gain by finding AA? What would you be like if you had not found this program of recovery? Remember that the AA program of recovery is based upon one alcoholic helping another! If you are not sharing of yourself in meetings; how are you helping that other alcoholic? It's not about keeping score. Our experience has shown that those AAs who work with others tend to get better? Sharing yourself at meetings is working with others. You don't know that what you have to share will not be the absolute thing that a faltering alcoholic in that meeting must hear to find sobriety.

Don't be an AA Thief! Don't take what you can and not give back.

If you have never shared before, then share at your next meeting. If it has been a while since you have shared, suggest a topic and share on your experiences with it. AA is a fellowship not a lecture series. Try and be involved in that fellowship. Staying on the sidelines and watching others seek sobriety doesn't work very well.

Joe T

How Important Is It Group

Washington Twp

