

Hot News

December 2011



SOUTH JERSEY INTERGROUP

Anonymous SJ

The Twelfth Step

“Having had a spiritual awakening as a result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to alcoholics, and to practice these principles in all our affairs.”

The Twelfth Tradition

“Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our traditions, ever reminding us to place principles before personalities.”

I am reminded of my entrance into AA and the utter defeat I felt when I walked through the door the first time. I sat down, tried valiantly not to cry, and heard someone say that the only requirement for AA membership was a desire to stop drinking. I knew I really did not want to stop, but had to. My life was headed down the tracks of a runaway train.

I was met with a smile, a handshake, a “keep coming back” when I left and a sense of safety in the rooms. This was my first encounter with step 12 work in action. Every meeting, every filled coffee pot, every greeter, every chair person, every speaker, even those who share are all twelfth step work in action.

Ever so slowly, as I made my way through the steps for the first time, did I understand what was going on. I finally got the saying “You have to give it away to keep it.” The AA paradoxes started to make sense!

As I sign off as your Newsletter Editor, I wanted to take this opportunity to thank all of you who have allowed me into your lives. I have learned a lot these past two years about AA, myself and giving back. Thank you to those people who have contributed, who have read this newsletter and those who work tirelessly to keep the message alive.

I wish you all a wonderful holiday season and a new year filled with peace and joy.

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 856-920-1212

AA office: 856-486-4446

Newsletter: newsletter@aasj.org

“When anyone anywhere, reaches out 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 Service: Vacant shifts currently number four (4). (one overnight shift remains open)

With 32 of 56 shifts reporting (incl. the vacant shifts), our volunteers fielded 176 calls during the month. This makes the average number of calls per reporting shift less than six (6), with a low number of nil (0) and a high of sixteen.

This being the month of December and the last month before passing the baton, I'd like to thank, fist of all, all our great volunteers, and co-chairs Fran (ret.) and Lisa, who all made the "job" so easy for me. A very Merry and Blessed Christmas to Everyone and a Happy, Healthy New Year!

H & I: We had 9 groups show filling 121 out of 144 commitments. There has been a recent lack of H&I reps attending the H&I meeting. Please announce at your home groups that H&I reps should attend the monthly meeting. If your group does not have an H&I rep, please try to appoint one. There have been a few commitments that have gone unfilled. In addition, H&I will need a chair and co-chair. If anyone is interested, please let us know.

We would like to thank Septa Scott for filling out an application to be a host at Kintock Halfway House. We are still in need of a host at this halfway house in another building. ***Our next meeting is December 26, 2011 at 7:00 p.m. at the Intergroup Office.***

We have **6** open hosting commitments

1. Maryville Women (Franklinville) Sun 2 to 3 pm 3rd & 5th week only
2. Maryville Women (Franklinville) Mon 8 to 9 pm 2nd week only
3. Kintok (Bridgeton) Tues 700 to 800 pm 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th & 5th week
4. VOA (Camden) Wed 700 to 800 pm 2nd, 3rd & 5th week
5. Seabrook (Deerfield) Women Fri 730 to 845 pm 1ST 2nd 3rd & 5th week
6. Underwood (Woodbury) Sat 4 to 5 p.m. 3rd & 4th week

Literature: The bank statement has been balanced and documentation filed in the literature filing cabinet. The total inventory value of literature is \$23,262.60.

The Road Show is looking for more commitments and more volunteers. If you would like to have literature sold at your home group meeting or volunteer for service, please contact the Road Show at literature@aasj.org.

Volunteers are still needed for literature sales at the Intergroup office Weekdays 10 AM – 12 PM and Monday - Thursday evenings 6 – 8 PM. 1 year sobriety is required. Please announce at all your meetings.

Thank you to Joe C. for training new volunteers and filling in when necessary.

Public Information: We are scheduled on Jan. 4 & 11 to speak at Haddon Township High School. Also, Jan 5 at 12 noon, we are scheduled to speak to medical students in Stratford, nj.

As always, the IDRC programs for Camden, Burlington and Gloucester Counties continue to operate smoothly. Thanks to all who volunteer their time.



THE GHOST OF BILL W.

Uptight before Christmas, all through these rooms
alcoholics were stricken with holiday gloom.

They prayed, "Santa, please make us happy, joyous & free,
bring us candy and presents and serenity."
Greed filled their minds and envy their hearts
and someone said, "It's time for the meeting to start!"
"Does anyone have a topic tonight?"
Every face in the place turned wintery white!
They lost all self-seeking, self-pity and self-will
when down through the chimney came the ghost of St. Bill!

He chuckled and said as he sat himself down
"Call the White House and tell 'em there's a new Dubya in town."

Then he looked through a big book and said with a tear,
"Wow! No one rewrote this after all these years!"
Clean house, help your neighbor, be loving and kind,
and don't take the first drink one day at a time."
"How could a message as simple as this
be realized, analyzed and intellectually dismissed?"

There lies the reason this ghost has arrived:
to re-give a gift that has saved all your lives!

Then he set up a big screen and a DVD
so every lost soul in the meeting could see.
He played a movie of drunks at their best and their worst,
what is and what was, when blessed and when cursed.
There were scenes of a housewife passed out at a bar,
a respectable businessman wrecking his car,

A fight in a kitchen, a fight in bed,
a fight at a reception between newlyweds.
An empty bottle, a desperate man
alone in a motel with a gun in his hands.

He puts down the gun and picks up the phone
and whimpers and blubbers, "Honey, let me come home."
She hangs up as she tells him, "Don't call here anymore."
He reaches for the phone book and falls to the floor.
Somehow that phone book seems to capture his gaze:
it's open to a number under the A's.

Then all of the people in the movie converged
on the poor side of town in the basement of a church.
Driven together in a willing herd
to hear of hope and deliver the word.

The ghost of Bill W. turned off the TV
and said, "The first word of the first step is 'we'.
I suggest you start there and see where you go.
Be thorough and fearless, and please-take it slow!
Let faith set the tone, let love make the mood
'and as for a topic...how about gratitude?'

Just don't drink, go to meetings and, yes, you should pray
and be glad you're alive and sober today.
Be a good woman, be a good man
and be of service whenever you can.
Be a good mother, be a good dad

and be of service whenever you can.
Be a good mother, be a good dad
and try to be good to your kids when they're bad.
Be a good husband, or lover, or wife...

Merry Christmas to all, and to all a good life

Thank You, Louise

I recently had the opportunity to look over a journal kept by a newcomer, with thoughts and sayings covering the first few months. I was amazed at the progression I saw in this person, even in 90 days. What amazed me more was what I read.

It really is a simple program. We really do have a lot to do and learn. We are surrounded by people who want us to win. To personalize this, as my sponsor taught me, maybe I don't like everyone I meet in the rooms, but I respect everyone because I understand. I get it. I know the pain, the ray of hope that starts out as a slit and gets brighter and brighter. I know from pain comes growth. From growth I can start to act like the human being I should have been all my life. I can live life on life's terms. I can be happy. I can be prosperous. I can give back.

Don't drink. Under any and all circumstances do not drink. Go to meetings. Ask people how they get through a day without it. Ask people for advice if you cannot ask for help. The answers are at the meetings, as I read in this journal. The long timers are more than willing to share their experience, strength and hope with any who are willing to listen.

The author of the journal sat and listened, was willing to open up her mind and heart, and is today a sober woman with less than a year(!) who has a gleam in her eye and love in her heart. It is an awesome experience to watch someone heal, to transform right before our eyes. Their gratitude is astounding most times and helps me remember.

Tis the season to be merry...jolly...Tis the season to Believe in the magic. I think I will take the child within myself and open up to the possibilities all around me, in this season, in the program, in my life as a whole.



Fellowship Announcements And Things To Do

Monday, December 19 - Egg Harbor City Harbor Light group will celebrate their 32nd anniversary : food starts at 7:30pm followed by speaker. Located 351 Cincinnati Ave. (under the water tower) Egg Harbor City.

December 24 & 25 - 24 hr. SJIG Alcathon beginning at 6:00 PM on December 24 at Kiss Club in Woodbury. (818 N. Broad St.) Continuous meetings until Christmas night at 6:00 PM. Come out and support our Intergroup. (food donations are welcomed)

Saturday, December 24 – OPEN HOUSE – EVERYONE WELCOME Stop by for a bite to eat, enjoy some holiday cheer or just to get a break from the chores of the day. If you know someone new, send them over and we will be sure they have a great holiday. Plenty of food and fellowship – no need to bring anything, but animal shelter donations will be graciously accepted. Jimmy and Larry,113 Cobblestone Lane, Westville NJ. 8:00 AM until 10:00 PM. Contact: 856-842-3060

Sunday, December 25 - Vineland has their Christmas Alcathon beginning at 8:00 AM (dinner at 2:00 PM). Last meeting at 9:00 PM - food donations are welcomed - volunteers are also welcomed. Location: Trinity Episcopal Church, 800 Wood St., Vineland, NJ.

December 31 & January 1 - SJIG 24 hour Alcathon beginning at 6:00 PM on the 31st with continuous meetings until New Years Day at 6:00 PM. (food donations are welcomed) Christ Episcopal Church, 162 Delaware St., Woodbury.

Saturday, December 31 - 482 Social Club New Year's Eve Bash. 8:00 PM - 1:00 AM. 1585B Rt. 73 next to Spa Fitness. Rt. 73 S to Rt. 130 S. Entrance off ramp. Members free, Non-Members \$10.00. Food & Dancing. More info: Bill H - 609.828.6856 / Bud F - 609.284.3194.

Saturday, December 31 - New Year's Eve Party. New Beginnings Club,101c Rose Ave., Runnemede, NJ. (GPS users enter 1001 Rose Ave). 8:00 PM. \$20.00 p/p. F-F-F. More info: Anna - 856.981.7021.newbeginningsclub.org

Saturday, December 31 - Cape Atlantic Intergroup New Year's Eve Dance Party. 7:00PM - 1:30 AM. Located @ Absecon Methodist Church, 100 Pitney & Church Sts., Absecon, NJ. Dinner and Dance in the main hall. Cost: \$15. Doors open at 6:30

Monday, January 2 - Shiloh Serenity Group will celebrate their 13th Anniversary. 7:00 PM Speaker: Stella J. followed by food. Seventh Day Baptist Church, East Ave & Rt. 49.

Saturday, January 7 - Woodstown Group Celebrates 57th Anniversary. Woodstown United Presbyterian Church Hall, 7:00 PM-Eat / 8:00 PM-Speaker. 46 Auburn Rd, 1 block West of Rt. 45S. Woodstown NJ, 08098

Wednesday, January 11 - Bordentown 123 Beginners Step Meeting will celebrate their 9th Anniversary. Christ Episcopal Church, 128 Prince St., Bordentown NJ.

Desserts @ 7:30 PM meeting @ 8:00 PM

Sunday, January 29 - Gloucester City Sunday Night Group Anniversary. 1st Baptist Church, Sussex Street between Somerset and Monmouth Streets. 7:00PM, Direction Tip: Turn off of Broadway onto Somerset @ "Wing Hings Restaurant" turn right onto Sussex. Streets are one-way. Food @ 6:00 PM, followed by Speakers: Sr. Maurice and Sr. Rose.

Wednesday, February 15 - Bridgeton group celebrates their 42nd Anniversary. 2 speakers followed by food - St. Andrews Episcopal Church basement - 186 Commerce St., Bridgeton. Food @ 6:30 PM - Speaker @ 7:30.

No Exceptions

Many A.A. members create an unnecessary mental hazard for themselves over the approach of the Christmas and New Year holidays.

The newcomer, in particular, who has joined an A.A. group since the last holiday season is prone to spend some unhappy moments worrying about how to refuse a drink, and thus avoid a bender, when family and friends are participating in the Yuletide celebration. The problem often seems very real to him despite all he may have heard or learned about the application of the 24-hour plan. Habit is still a strong factor and his custom has been to get cock-eyed, perhaps without intent, on Christmas Eve and then to continue the binge well through New Year's Day, provided his endurance holds out.

Prolonging the Accounting Having very likely spoiled Christmas for the entire family, the alcoholic is usually bothered by remorse but not yet ready to face the unpleasant facts and the only escape seems to be to remain drunk for a few days longer. He rationalizes something in this manner: Isn't it the time of year to celebrate and won't employers be more lenient than usual if the job is neglected? Besides, aren't the members of the family a little intolerant of a chap's right to have fun when others are enjoying the season's good cheer?

The difficulty of coming through the holidays unscathed can be intensified for the new recruit to A.A. ranks by lack of understanding of the alcoholic illness on the part of relatives or friends. Without realization of the catastrophe they may bring about and often acting from the most hospitable motives, sometimes augmented by the few snorts they have indulged in themselves, these good people occasionally don't accept the A.A. member's first statement that he is just not drinking. They proceed to give him the insidious argument that Christmas or New Year's only comes around once a year and certainly a drink or two on such an occasion can't possibly hurt anyone. Perhaps for a moment his guard is lowered and John Barleycorn, always alert, gets in a swift one. In my personal experience in A.A., which includes four of these holiday seasons, the argument of the special occasion has been trotted out several times, by people who, I am certain, wish me well and who, furthermore, have good reason to know I have not handled liquor successfully for a long time. (At other seasons of the year it doesn't occur to them to even offer me a drink, much less argue that I should take one.) I then have to quietly remind them that I am an alcoholic and that the calendar date has no bearing on that fact. In my experience, this explanation suffices and, still a little puzzled perhaps, they at once become absorbed in their own drinking processes.

No Exceptions

When Pearl Harbor came and, much later, when V-E and V-J days arrived, there were some timid souls who made dire predictions that the effect of such emotional events would be disastrous to the A.A. membership. Their fears were not well-grounded because the majority of members had so completely adopted the 24-hour plan of living. At the start of each of these days our minds, by long habit, had been made up not to drink on that particular day just as they had been for many days previously. Why then should we make any exception over war or peace? And, by the same token, why make any exception of Christmas or New Year's? It is fundamentally as simple as that. In approaching Christmas then, there are, it seems to me, two important ideas to keep constantly before us: (1) We aren't going to have any fun if we take the first drink; and (2) we must make up our minds to refuse that drink before it is even offered to us (preferably at the beginning of each new day). If we adhere to those two simple principles we can have a really magnificent time over the holidays.

Certainly there is no need for us to be grim about our inability to hoist a few. For once, we will know what is going on about us and there are always many holiday parties in our groups or with our closest A.A. friends, where good cheer abounds without the adjunct of the wassail bowl. This year also, it seems, we can look forward to "Peace on earth" and we, who belong to the great company of A.A., should understand better than most the Christmas message, "Good Will Towards Men."