

Literature Committee

We're highlighting the various SJIG committees as many of the chairs will be rotating out at the end of the year. If you are looking for a service commitment, one of these posts might fit the bill!

The literature committee's main job is to make sure groups and committees have access to AA literature, such as Big Books, Step Books and Grapevine publications. "We are the clearing house of South Jersey AA. If you or your home group needs or requests anything from the AA Conference-approved Catalog, we will make every effort to acquire it for you," says Joe C., chair of the committee.

"...We don't want anyone, anywhere, to reach out and feel neglected." --Joe. C.

When you think of Grapevine, Joe says, "Many out there only see the monthly magazine in print, which we do stock. But the Grapevine has some 15-plus books that have stories submitted by AA members

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A Searching and Fearless Moral Inventory

Step Four—“Made a Searching and Fearless Moral Inventory of Ourselves”.

I did not have any character defects, so I believed, until I did my first fourth step. I came into the rooms believing that I was generally a good person, that I drank too much, and that my drinking harmed no one other than me. But once my sponsor and I felt that I was solid with steps one, two and three, he set me on the path to doing my fourth step. Although I struggled with the fourth step at first, the fourth step allowed me to begin the process of cleaning up the wreckage of my past so that I could journey further beyond that "triumphant arch through which we passed to freedom" referenced on p. 62 of the Big Book.

My current philosophy regarding step four is based upon my endeavor to do a "searching and fearless moral inventory", at least as "searching and fearless" as I could be when I did my first fourth step, and as I can be when updating my fourth step as my life and my character defects continue to unfold. My sponsor had me regularly attending Big Book and Step meetings and handed me the Hazelden fourth step instructions as his sponsor had done with him. With pen and new notebook in hand, I set out to write my fourth step. I tried for months to follow the Hazelden method, but I simply could not fit my thoughts regarding my resentments and fears into its format. I am not saying that the Hazelden format does not work, but it did not work for me. Ultimately, after numerous conversations with my sponsor, I chanced to call an old drinking buddy who, at the time, had double digit sobriety. My old friend suggested a different format for my fourth step, simpler, and based more upon the Big Book version of the fourth step.

I took up pen and notebook again and created three sections: resentments, fears and sex. I made columns on each page, similar to those used in the Big Book on page 65. I added a fourth column on the right titled "My role" to indicate what I brought to every resentment, fear and sex issue I listed on the left side of the paper. While for months I had tried to

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from as far back as the late 1940s. We also keep Spanish literature along with a dictionary to assist. We don't want anyone, anywhere, to reach out and feel neglected."

It is through the literature committee that you can also buy CD recordings of the Big Book and Twelve and Twelve, wallet cards printed with the Serenity Prayer, and of course—meeting lists. In fact, Joe says meeting lists are one of their most important items, estimating that they sell 20,000 copies a year.

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The literature committee chair is also responsible for making sure the office is staffed by volunteers, who work in two-hour shifts. (In fact, the chair of this very newsletter got her start at intergroup-level service with a Thursday night shift.) He also organizes staff for "Road Show" commitments, which Joe describes as "a small traveling Literature Room." A group needs to request that the Road Show attend their meeting (often an Anniversary, but not always)—and then Joe's team will bring all the conference-approved literature and other materials to that meeting. Joe is quick to point out that it's not about making money though—and he gets more out of attending these meetings than perhaps the people who buy books.

Joe started as a Road Show volunteer in April of 2010, so he's been with the literature committee in one form or another since then. What are some of his best memories?

"The excitement on the face of the young lady who was sent by her Home Group to do the literature purchase and we were there. She had the envelope with 7th tradition money. She left with her eyes gleaming. I will never forget moments like that."

"...You know, without our readings we would be the inmates running the asylum—and to literally have a hand on who it may reach has been beyond my wildest imagination."

The literature committee requires a time commitment that may be more than some would expect. Joe recommends that the next chair find a co-chair who "wants it as much as you do, who is willing to learn and put the time in. Because we are all volunteers we have other things that take us away from our commitments, so a co-chair that helps cover these spots is a huge help. I have Marge K. who has played a tremendous role in our success.

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--Patty H., newsletter chair.

You may find more information about the Literature committee, or volunteering on aasj.org, under Resources. Or you may call Intergroup at 856-486-4446, or through email literature@aasj.org.

Tradition Four

Traditions are set forth to help AA stay on track...to assure the continuation of this great fellowship of men and women. Tradition 4 states that "Each group should be autonomous except in matters affecting other groups or AA as a whole". This tradition seems pretty straightforward – the group can and should make decisions about its operation without interference by intergroup or general services. I didn't understand this tradition and what it meant until I reflected back on some of my experiences this past year.

During last year, my first year of sobriety, I had the opportunity to travel for business to several different states. Wanting to be sure I kept my sobriety as my first priority, I visited several AA groups in various states. During my visit to a group meeting in San Francisco, I experienced a group that ran differently than my home group. They read the 9th step promises in the middle of the meeting, they celebrated "birthdays" instead of "anniversaries" and they recorded the visitors (first name and home city) in their log book. At first, I almost developed a resentment – how could they be "anonymous" if they were recording my name? How could they be so different? Why were they doing it wrong? I didn't dwell on it, as visiting the meetings still helped me not drink.

I now understand that each group's conscience defines the internal workings of the group such as the meeting format. Each group makes up the rules of operation and implements them. Sometimes, the group conscience makes decisions that some, even intergroup or general services may not like. An underlying tenet of this autonomy is that groups can and will make mistakes and when these mistakes affect others, they need to be corrected. The Twelve and Twelve book gives a good example of a group decision (the "AA Center") that went awry but the initiator of the group learned from that decision. The autonomy clause in this tradition allows for these mistakes, and as Bill W. stated back in 1948, every group has the "right to be wrong."

I now know that the groups across the country are not doing it wrong, they are just abiding by tradition 4. Now when I visit other meetings, I appreciate these differences and value them as part of my recovery.

-- Andrew P, Daily Reflections, Haddonfield NJ

decipher my character defects and emotions, when my paper had these simple labeled columns, my pen began to move and a life time of pent up feelings poured forth and filled half of the notebook.

As it turned out, I did have character defects...Through more meetings, more discussions with my sponsor and other alcoholics, and more conversations with God, I was able to identify fear as the root cause of all of my character defects and resentments.

As it turned out, I did have character defects, I had harmed people and I had a lot of work to do to clean up my side of the street. Through more meetings, more discussions with my sponsor and other alcoholics, and more conversations with God, I was able to identify fear as the root cause of all of my character defects and resentments. My bad actions, motivations and behaviors--the product of my ego gone wild--were all based on the fear that I would lose something I had or not received something to which I thought I was entitled. (See, 12x12 p. 76.)

In my experience, there are but a few simple rules for doing step four. The first rule is the Nike approach, just do it! There are many different formats for doing the fourth step, and one or more will work for anyone seriously trying to do a "searching and fearless moral inventory" of themselves. For me, the format does not matter as much as the content. The Big Book sets forth the appropriate content on pages 64 to 71. I am also a big fan of adding a part for "my role" in the resentments, fears and sex conduct. The next rule is that the fourth step is to be written down on paper. Pages 64 and 69 of the Big Book direct us to do this. A fourth step done only in my head is still as crazy as my head is. The last rule is -- just do it!

The rewards of doing a good fourth step are liberating and life changing. In addition to finally finding out what behaviors and motivations I need to change to live a happy and contented life, I also finally faced my fears. As page 68 of the Big Book promises, when we identify our character defects and our fears, and ask God to remove them, "we commence to outgrow fear." For someone who came into the rooms believing that I feared nothing, finding out that my life was fear-driven was a revelation. Finding out that almost all of my fears were merely Bogeymen, or irrational, I was able to commence living in the solution rather than living in fear.

-- jerseybrett

The Changes

Through the years, one member describes her journey through sobriety.

My journey begins in April, 1988 with a 30-day inpatient treatment for several life-threatening addictions. I am filled with denial.

Three months later, I enter treatment again, this time with my significant other. We both work hard at this sobriety thing and complete a six-week outpatient treatment. This time it makes much more sense to me. Both of us make lots of meetings.

At eight months of sobriety, I have to choose between my significant other, who I suspect is using, and my sobriety. I kick him out, and I mean it, and for the first time really take the First Step.

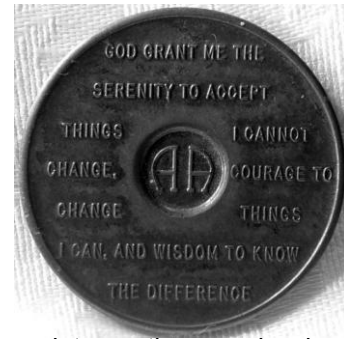
At nine months of sobriety, I finally understand that I am indeed an alcoholic and not just a drug abuser. I realize that, during the previous four years, not only did I drink daily, but I truly abused alcohol.

At 11 months, I am planning a humdinger of a relapse but decide to go to just one more meeting. I hear just what I need to hear—a person who had nine years is back after a three-month bender. The relapse is cancelled. It is one of those God deals.

At two years plus, I hit a wall—deep, deep depression. I don't want to drink or use drugs, but I want to die. Perhaps some childhood stuff? I go into a residential program for family issues and learn a lot about me. The counselors are surprised that I haven't had a drink. I tell them AA has taught me that it will not make any problem better. I just want to deal with this depression and the ghosts that bother me.

I do intense work there and continue therapy for seven years. This constitutes a great big Step Two: Please, God, restore me to sanity. During this time, I never let up on AA meetings—this is my foundation and my strength to walk through the depression.

At five years, the guy I kicked out comes back in my life. We take steps toward a permanent relationship. We are in counseling and try to change our old relationship ideas. We live together and grow in AA. We get married in the chapel where we had graduated from alcohol treatment. One hundred people attend, mostly sober friends from AA. We honeymoon at Niagara Falls and stop off at Akron, Ohio, to visit the birthplace of AA. At Dr. Bob's



grave site, we run into another couple who are also on their honeymoon.

At 11 years, my husband has a major heart attack and is airlifted to a hospital. I remain calm; I pray for God's will. Our AA friends are there to support us through it all. He survives with minor damage, but more changes must be made to our lives. We both have more gratitude than ever.

At 12 years, I get the chance to retire after 31 years of working. Lots of talking to friends in the program ... lots of praying. My husband and I are both afraid, but we pray for the strength to make the right decision. I take a leap of faith and retire. I'm 49 year old.

Now I have to get used to a calm, serene life. I get to do all the Twelfth Step work I want and increase my regular meetings from two to four or more a week. I am in heaven.

At 14 years of sobriety, I travel alone to Akron for Founders Week. I help out at the local Intergroup and meet some wonderful people who have since become dear friends. I take the Third Step in Dr. Bob's bedroom, on my knees around the bed with other alcoholics. There are no words to express the joy I feel.

Today I have 15 years of sobriety. Right now, I'm working on a huge problem I've had for a long time—trusting other women. I now sponsor several and have a woman sponsor. I am learning to trust them and to love them.

For 15 years, I have trusted this thing called Alcoholics Anonymous. It has never failed me and has rewarded me with a peace in my heart that I never felt possible. I have a wonderful sober husband, and he and I both put our sobriety first and each other second. We know we wouldn't be together were it not for this Fellowship.

—Karen M., Floris, Iowa
(from the April online edition of the Grapevine)

Directions from the Station

Don't let transportation be your reason for skipping a meeting.

Getting around South Jersey without a car can be difficult. But if you can get to a train station, there are a lot of AA meetings within reach.

Two of them, on Monday and Wednesday evenings, are at Epworth Methodist Church in Palmyra, which will also be the location for the South Jersey Intergroup's Memorial Day Alcathon on May 27 (more details about that on page 7). It's a five-minute walk from the train station. (Since there's no parking lot at the church, you might be walking a minute or two even if you do drive.)

When you get off the train at Palmyra, turn left to head down the northbound ramp, towards Riverton and Trenton. Walk a short block to the railroad crossing. Cross the tracks -- that's important! -- and then cross Broad Street. Turn right to walk a few yards to Morgan Avenue and then turn left on Morgan. Walk one block to Fifth Street, where you'll see the church on the corner, big and white. Turn left on Fifth Street. The meetings aren't in the church, but in the stone building next to it. The sign at the door says Church School and Office.

The beginners' meeting on Wednesday ends at seven-thirty, giving you plenty of time to walk to Sacred Heart in Riverton if you're up for another meeting at eight. And from there, it's a short walk to the Riverton station. If you're traveling north on the train you can't hang around too long or you'll miss the last one.

These stations are on the River Line, which connects with PATCO at the Broadway station in Camden. The fare is \$1.50; you buy your ticket at a machine and then stamp it at another machine and keep it with you.

AA members who drive are usually happy for some company on the way to meetings and back, and the fellowship in the car can be as valuable as the fellowship in the room. But sometimes it's nice to get to a meeting on your own.

--James G.

Grief and Sobriety

For a few years, I remained abstinent from alcohol. I didn't use a program, or any recovery network. Self-will and sheer stubbornness worked for me for a while. After all, life was smooth sailing and nothing had threatened the lame limbs upon which my sobriety had been precariously balanced. At the time, I hadn't even considered myself an alcoholic. Sure, I worried about my drinking--it was too much too often for too long. But I was in denial about the ways in which my drinking had affected my life.

After my second child's death, I simply couldn't NOT drink. I had no other coping skills. I wanted comfort. I wanted the pain and grief to end, and alcohol was the only thing I knew that worked for pain. My daughter's death catapulted me into a place of dark, desperate drinking. Before she died, I still held the illusion that my drinking was sometimes fun, something I chose to do.

Grief drinking is an ugly business. And nothing about it is entertaining, fun, or light. There is no social element to it, though I suppose it was my social lubricant to be alone with myself. I drank and cried. Grief drinking brought my bottom up very quickly. Two years later, I found myself in the rooms of Alcoholics Anonymous. In the first ninety days of sobriety, I went to ninety meetings, maybe more. I heard story after story of grief and loss. Some of the loss occurred before sobriety, so I heard about my own grief drinking in those stories. Others were about how people remained sober through tragedy, sickness, loss, grief, anger. Those stories gave me hope. Everything they said seemed downright impossible to do two years earlier. People showed up to meetings hours after learning about the death of their mother, or friend, or brother. I watched people turn over seemingly impossible tragedies to the care of God, and I watched them get through those tragedies sober.

Now, with over two years of sobriety, I hear old timers talk about death as an act of great privilege to witness, a sacred act, because they were able to make amends, be the daughter or son their parents had wished for. The grace and dignity of my fellow AAs in the face of such profound loss remains one of the reasons I keep coming back.

--Angie Y.

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 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 A.A. World Services, Inc., and/or The AA Grapevine, Inc.

Contributions from readers are encouraged—write to us at newsletter@assj.org. Contact information is required and anonymity is respected. We edit for space and clarity only.

Due to space limitations, we are unable to publish flyers for events in this newsletter.

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

Origin of "I am Responsible...?"

Question: Where did the phrase "I am responsible" come from?

Answer: The Responsibility Declaration was written by Al S., a former Grapevine editor and trustee of Alcoholics Anonymous for the 1965 International Convention held in Toronto. Bill W. expanded on the theme in an essay called "Responsibility Is Our Theme" for the July 1965 Grapevine. It became a regular feature of the Grapevine shortly thereafter.

The Responsibility Declaration: "I am responsible. When anyone, anywhere, reaches out for help, I want the hand of A.A. always to be there. And for that: I am responsible."

This goes hand in hand with the Fifth Tradition. The long form says "Each Alcoholics Anonymous group ought to be a spiritual entity having but one primary purpose—that of carrying its message to the alcoholic who still suffers."

-- Frank Z., Area 45 50th Convention Chair

Announcements

The chair and co-chair of the newsletter committee (and many others) will be rotating out at the end of the year. Now is your chance to get involved in service at the Intergroup level. If you think you might be interested in taking over the newsletter, we're happy to help you make a smooth transition. Please contact Patty or Angie at newsletter@aasj.org for more information.

Please check with SJIG about other committee positions that will be opening up next year. You won't be sorry to get involved—it's a great way to help your fellow AAs.

Deadline for May submissions:

May is the fifth month, so we're looking for submissions on the fifth step and tradition—or anything else you'd like to talk about. Please share your experience, strength and hope with our readers. The deadline for May's newsletter is Friday, May 10th. You can send submissions to newsletter@aasj.org.

Question of the Month

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

What do you emphasize to the newcomer about A.A.?

Please email your replies no later than Friday, May 10, to newsletter@aasj.org.

Fellowship Announcements & Things to Do

April-June 2013

Sat. April 20 - Early Risers Men's Group meeting will celebrate its 5th anniversary at Transfiguration Church on Magill Rd., Collingswood, NJ starting at 7am.

Sunday, April 28 – Tansboro will celebrate its 23rd anniversary at 10 am. Food and speakers—get there early!! Address is Winslow Township Annex, Rt. 561 and Factory Road (the Seniors Citizen Center).

Thursday, April 25 – Oaklyn's How It Works meeting celebrates its 26th anniversary. Food at 7pm, followed by two speakers at 8pm. All are welcome.

May 16 - 19 – Tri-State Round-Up. 29th Annual "Fellowship on the River." This is an annual AA event with Al-Anon and Alateen participation. Held at Don Laughlin's Riverside Resort Hotel and Casino, 1650 Casino Drive, Laughlin, NV 89029. Website: www.tristate-roundup.com. Discount for registering online and for registering before April 15th. E-mail address: tristateroundup@hotmail.com

May 18 – 19 – "Circle of Hope Roundup", sponsored by the Reading-Berks Intergroup. Held at the Rodeway Inn (formerly the Ramada) at 2545 North 5th St., Reading, PA 19605. Speakers from local area as well as Florida and Las Vegas. Register at www.CircleOfHopeRoundup.com. Email for information: Info@CircleOfHopeRoundup.com.

Sunday, May 19 - Area 45 Assembly/Committee Meeting will be held at Elmer Grange Hall, 535 Woodstown-Daretown Road, Pilesgrove, NJ 08098. 8:30 am registration; 9:00 am new GSR/DCM Orientation; 10:00 am Assembly Meeting; followed by lunch. That will be followed by Committee Meeting finishing at 2:30-3:00 pm.

Monday, May 27 – Memorial Day Alcathon sponsored by SJIG and hosted by the Palmyra Group. 8 am to 8pm at Epworth United Methodist Church, 5th Street and Morgan Avenue, Palmyra, NJ 08065. Information: JoAnne D at 856-364-8260.

Monday, May 27 – Memorial Day Alcathon sponsored by SJIG, held at the Intergroup Office in Pennsauken. First meeting at 8 am, last starts at 7pm. Volunteers still needed, contact Unity chair Joe at jwtusmc@verizon.net or Unity@assj.org.

June 7th to 9th - Founders Day Trip to Akron, Ohio. Sponsored by 1 Thru 12 Group in Philadelphia. \$325 per person, which includes round trip transportation, accommodations at the Akron City Centre Hotel, registration for the conference, transportation to the grave site and a visit to the NFL Hall of Fame. For more information contact Robert T. at 215-430-3389 or Ed R. at 215-802-8973.

Sat. June 15 – SJIG's social committee is sponsoring a back bay fishing trip at Somers Point, NJ. 1pm - 5pm (34 person capacity) \$30 per person includes rods, tackle, bait, & mate's tip. More info: Mike @ 856-779-1830.

Sat. June 22 – SJIG will sponsor a Founder's Day Picnic at the Subaru Pavilion in Cherry Hill, NJ. 1pm start. Volunteers needed and donations welcomed.

June 28 - 30 - Second Annual Liberty Bell Roundup. The Philadelphia Woodstock of AA. Ramada Inn - Airport, 76 Industrial Hwy, Essington, PA 19029 (Soon to be Clarion) 610-521-9600. Registration: \$35.00 p/p. www.libertybellroundup.com

