

# ANONYMOUS SOUTHJERSEY

**SOUTH JERSEY INTERGROUP**

**JUNE 2015**

## April in June: Surviving the Networking Happy Hour

*I got sober when I was 27. I am 32 now and still learning how to “survive” a variety of experiences and events as a young woman—who no longer drinks—in a world that does.*

A few days ago I returned from a business trip. My job very rarely involves travel and I was excited about the opportunity to attend a conference on the west coast.

I knew my work would expect me to go to the conference networking event (a happy hour of course) but I figured

it would be fairly tame and a good way to meet other conference participants. What I learned quickly was that apparently people really let loose when they travel and are drinking on someone else’s dime!

I will say that I was on good spiritual ground and totally OK being around



drinking while sipping my diet coke. However, had I not been that day, I know that this is the type of event I would need to skip. What started innocently as a few snacks and a soda for me and local beers for several of the folks I met, turned into much more.

The event was sponsored by the conference and apparently they had pre-paid a bar tab. As folks began

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## AA Has Taught Me How To Help People

As a working adult, most of my jobs have been in the helping profession. When I first started out, pre-AA, I thought helping others meant doing for them.

I gradually learned that if they truly cannot do for themselves, because of some kind of physical, mental or emotional impediment, then that is helping them. But if they could do for themselves, and I did it for them, then I not only wasn't helping them, I was hurting them. I was depriving them of the opportunity to do for themselves, or to learn to do for themselves.

AA has brought this home to me most vividly, and has taught, and continues to teach, me this lesson in life. How do we help people/alcoholics? By

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**Inside This Issue:** Grapevine Exclusive: School Daze ♦  
Tradition and Concept 6 ♦ Newsletter Committee  
Needs Volunteers ♦ Announcement and Things To Do

## Have Courage

*Step 6: Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.*

So I was going to be lazy this month and run my Step Six essay from last year. My conscience however, got the best of me. I need to always review my relation to a Step. That relation changes as I change.

Last year I talked about the ‘relatedness’ of Step Six to my Fourth Step defects and as a guide to Steps Seven, Eight and Nine. This year, let’s consider the Step by itself. What exactly is the essence of this Step for *me*?

*(Continued on page 3)*

## Grapevine Exclusive

### School Daze

*A surprise visit to his sons' college became the final test of his own drinking*

On a cold and dreary night in November, I saw how every generation of my family had been decimated by alcoholism—even my own son. That's when I was given the grace to step out of that endless procession of sots that bore my last name.

At my father's wake my older siblings, my aunt, and some of my dad's old friends, told me stories of the scrapes and brushes my dad had with death while he was drinking. Then they told me stories about how Grandpa and Grandma were teetotalers, so at family gatherings the adults drank little in their presence. But after my grandparents went to bed and the children headed for the basement, that's when the party really got lively. There was one bowl of punch for us kids, and another one for the adults that was spiked. I also learned about how all of Grandpa's brothers had had "trouble" with their drinking.

As I matured, I had to work very hard at controlling my drinking. I couldn't afford to get arrested for drunk driving or to embarrass myself in public. I was a doctor, a specialist, and even if I didn't lose my license to practice, a smudge on my reputation could dry up my referrals. Getting drunk in public could ruin my livelihood. So I drank at home.

I even stopped drinking on my own for 12 years. I went to a few AA meetings at first, but I didn't like the secondhand smoke in the meetings back then, and my wife didn't like me being out of the house in the evenings. So I just practiced an extreme level of control on my drinking by not drinking at all ... except for the "occasional alcohol-free beer" and the "accidental" sips of my wife's highball.

After 12 years of controlled drinking, I figured I could do it like a gentleman. On our wedding anniversary, I decided to have a bottle of fine French wine with my wife in a fancy restaurant. The worst thing that could have happened did happen—nothing. I didn't fall down the stairs or get into a fight. I had proven to myself that I could drink like a gentleman.



Yet the obsession returned. Immediately, I began to think about how I could drink safely again. Within two weeks, I was planning my day around my next drink. I would think about what type of wine would go with that night's dinner, which liquor store I should go to that day, so that people at the liquor stores wouldn't suspect all that booze was for me. I started drinking alone again. I was hiding bottles from my wife. I began managing the disposal of the empties, so the neighbors wouldn't see how much I drank.

Then one Friday evening, I got a call from one of my sons. He and his brother were away at the same college. My older son had slugged his brother for trying to take his beer away. He had also pushed a girl down and hurt her ankle when she tried to take the booze away. Even though I had been drinking, I drove 100 miles to that college and looked for my son. Finally, I found him in someone else's dorm room. As I opened the door, blue marijuana smoke billowed into my face. I asked my son if he wanted help.

Slowly, he got up, staggered over to the door and closed it in my face. I remember staring at that oaken door while scenes from every generation

*(Continued on page 6)*

## Tradition Six and Concept VI: Staying True to A.A. by Focusing First on Our Sobriety

“Most alcoholics are bankrupt idealists.” So says Tradition Six. How I can identify with that statement. My thinking, for most of my life, has had very little to do with reality. I was either imagining myself as the performer of great deeds for mankind, or drunk: there was no in-between.

Unless and until I came into A.A. and remained focused on getting and staying sober, there was no success to be had in any other endeavor I tried. I had to be settled around sobriety and the Steps. Involvement in other projects just sapped my energies and usually ended up badly.

Tradition Six embodies this principle on the group level. It tells us that the A.A. group should never “endorse, finance, or lend

the A.A. name to any related facility of outside enterprise, lest problems of money, property, and prestige divert us from our primary purpose.” This tradition

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*Whenever I find myself ‘off the beam’, it’s usually because I am trying to do too many things*

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knows that we are “dreamers” and, unless reined in by this Tradition, are likely to stray into all kinds of outside projects and get lost. Limiting ourselves strictly to the primary purpose of the group—to stay sober and help other alcoholics achieve sobriety—protects us from dissension and inner turmoil.

Concept VI (of the Twelve Concepts for World Service) seeks to

protect the groups and the General Service Conference from going astray by getting involved in outside projects. Concept VI places the “principal responsibility” for the operational management of A.A. as a whole, into the hands of the Trustees. It is with the Trustees that the A.A. Charter reposes the “chief initiative and the active responsibility” for the corporate functioning of A.A.

The authors of the A.A. Charter were wise enough to realize that, without this concentration of authority in a board of directors composed of A.A. Trustees, each part of the organization was likely to develop and pursue its own agenda and involve A.A. in all sorts of projects and “outside enterprises” it had no business being involved in.

I need to stay focused, first and foremost on my sobriety. The group needs to do the same thing, as does A.A. as a whole. Whenever I find myself ‘off the beam’, it’s usually because I am trying to do too many things or because I am involved in projects I have no business being involved in. Tradition Six and Concept VI apply to me as well as to the group and to A.A. as a whole. It helps us all to stay healthy and focused.

Your Editor



## April in June

*Continued from page 1*

leaving, the bartender alerted us that we still had 600 dollars to spend there. Of course my mind went immediately to asking for a dessert menu, while everyone else's went right to shots.

As I sat there (deciding to skip dessert after all) talking with a woman I knew I could learn a lot from for my job, shots arrived and I was now in the position of declining over and over again. While I didn't love the peer-pressure that was all around me and one guy yelling, "Come on, Jersey!" I knew my time there was about through and I was feeling confident in myself happily waving him off and saying, "Not tonight."

Never did I want to drink at this event. And it was wonderful to be on the outside looking in, knowing that all these people were going to have a painful morning and a few were heading out to make questionable decisions, while I was going to be in good shape and still holding my head high in the morning.

But it did make me think long and hard about the fact that business and drinking often go hand in hand. Of course no one probably really noticed that I wasn't drinking (outside of the fact that I wasn't taking shots), but boy did I notice how much they were!

Since I was far from home and in an interesting city with interesting people, I decided to stay at the event to the point where people were drinking more heavily. Had I been home and been obligated to go to something like this through work, I would have made an appearance, made sure my Vice President saw me, and then cut out.

I don't love that in order to be seen as a team player and do well at work I need to go to these events, but I've accepted that as a reality in the corporate world. Though I do have control of how long I stay, how I will escape when I'm done, and remember that I also have the option to pass entirely if I am not feeling up to it a particular day.

*April E.*

## Step Six

*Continued from page 1*

Step Six tells me that my sobriety is a journey; that it truly is a lifetime's work. I may not always like this. I'd like to think of things as having a definite beginning, middle and end. Not so with either Step Six or my sobriety. Getting sober was only the beginning. An important one, but still, just a start.

Step Six 'separates the men from the boys' (or the 'women from the girls') because it takes courage to regularly look at the defects that still dog us and renew our commitment to doing something about them. I have to be prepared, almost daily, and for as long as I am sober (and want to stay sober), to remain ready to ask and have my higher power remove my defects. It takes still more courage to understand that this will be done *on his schedule* and not on mine.

The other part of Step Six that takes courage is accepting the fact that something needs to be done about my defects; no matter how much I may like or depend on some of them to get me by in life. I love standing around the water cooler at work and gossiping (barbed with anger or not). I count this as one of my chief survival modes at work and cannot imagine getting through my workday without this pastime. But I have to give this up! There's no half measures here or with my other defects. One by one, they have to be faced and let go.

Sponsors are good assets here. We can often get depressed and wonder what's wrong with us. Are we slow? Are we cowards? Are we different from others? Our sponsors can reassure us that our journey is shared by all recovering people and we are not strange or alone. They can also tell us when we are procrastinating or when we are running too fast.

So take one day at a time but by all means, keep moving forward. Set aside some time each week for a look at Step Six. Where has there been progress and where have we been lazy (like me this month!). Take a regular look at those defects you may be holding on to and ask your higher power for the strength to move forward. It's time well spent and time that will pay handsome dividends as we grow.

*Masonville Marty*

## 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@aasj.org.

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24-Hour Hotline 1-856-486-4444  
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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

## VAMPIRES are not the only ones who need new blood!

### *Newsletter Committee Needs Volunteers*



Here at South Jersey Intergroup, our traditions and our common sense tell us that it's good to have "new blood" every two years or so.

The same thing goes for this Newsletter. By the end of 2015, it will have been two years for our current Newsletter Chair and Co-Chair and, while they've done a good job and made some improvements here and there, it's time to see what others can do.

So come on and give it a try. It's a great commitment and one you can do from the comfort of your home in front of your laptop. Also, as an added bonus, our production and lay-out team have agreed to stay on. So no worry about the mechanical end of things. Just write and create and shepherd contributions from other creative A.A.'s.

If you're interested in becoming the Newsletter Chair or Co-Chair, drop us a line at [aasj.org](http://aasj.org) or Marty P. at [mperrotta02@comcast.net](mailto:mperrotta02@comcast.net) or at 856-313-9531.

**O**ur defects of character  
are the bars of a cage.

The central point  
is not to study  
the bars, but to  
get out of the  
cage."



Guest House ~ Addiction Treatment for Catholic Clergy

## Helping

*Continued from page 1*

sharing our experience, strength and hope. By listening. And maybe by praying--either for or with--them. We don't get them sober. We can't (thank God--I don't want that kind of power). It's their choice--and their doing.

I remember a time when I did some 12th step work with a woman that didn't "take". After a few weeks, she drank again. A friend of mine at the time insinuated she drank because I hadn't done enough 12th step work with her. Because I trusted her take on things at the time, I felt guilty and responsi-

ble. Fortunately, I had a wonderful sponsor, whom I went to with this. Did I somehow cause her to drink again because I did-



n't do enough? Was I somehow responsible? My wonderful sponsor's answer was: "Patty, if someone wants to get sober, there is nothing you or anyone

can do to stop them. And if someone does not want to get sober, there is nothing you or anyone can to make them. Getting sober is between them and God."

What a relief! And I have gradually learned--and am still learning--that this is true in all matters of life. If someone wants to get out of a difficult situation, or improve their situation, etc. etc., then that is between them and God. I can offer my help--perhaps by sharing my experience, strength and hope in that particular situation, if they want it--or by simply listening. I can offer suggestions if they want them. It's just like doing 12th step work--I share my experience, strength and hope, listen, and offer suggestions if wanted. And then I let it go--to God, of course. Because whatever that person decides, whether it's getting sober, or something else, that is between that person and God.

*Patricia P.*

## School Daze

*continued from page 2*

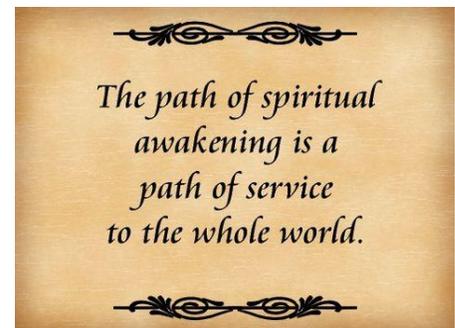
of my family passed before my eyes. We had all suffered from alcoholism--and now it was my own son. It was then that a thought came into my mind from somewhere other than myself: I am going to quit drinking this time, only I'm going to do it the right way. I didn't have a clear concept of what the right way was, but at least I knew it wasn't my way.

Within a few weeks, I found my way into an AA meeting. As I entered that room and started listening to people speak, another thought came into my mind: These are my kind of people. If they can stay sober, so can I. That's when my journey began. By the grace of my Higher Power, my son's journey into sober living began the same day as mine. We have the same sobriety date. That was 14 years ago.

Last week, my son and I went to an AA meeting together. My brother and my sister were there, too.

*—Tom F., Reno, Nev.*

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# Announcements

## Format Change

The Monday night "Language of the Heart" meeting in Mullica Hill is now focusing on the Grapevine publication called "Emotional Sobriety." In this collection of Grapevine stories, sober women and men describe the transformations sobriety can bring as they practice the principles of AA in all aspects of their lives. Come join us Monday's at 7:00 PM, Trinity Methodist Church, 284 Cedar Rd., Mullica Hill, NJ.

## New Publication

*Sober and Out* is the title of a new Grapevine publication (cost \$11). It is a collection of stories by AA members who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgendered (and a few friends) from the pages of AA Grapevine.

## New Beginner Meeting

Washington Township "How Important Is It Group," Thursday's 7:30 PM. St Charles Borromeo School. Johnson & Stagecoach Rds. Open. Joe 856 589 5710.

## New Open Big Book Meeting

Saturdays at 7PM at the Center for Family Services, 108 Summerdale Road, Voorhees, NJ 08043 (upstairs).

## New Women's Meeting

"Sisters Share and Care." Tuesdays 6-7pm. Big Book—Step Study. Zion Lutheran Church, Fairview and Pavilion Aves., Riverside, NJ.

## Meeting in need of support

Friday Nite Live Group. Friday 6-7pm. Holy Trinity Church, 2211 West Landis Ave., Vineland.

## New Meeting Location

Tuesday Night's "A Way Out" group (originally at Transfiguration Church in Collingswood) is now meeting from 8 to 9pm at Logan Memorial Presbyterian Church, Calvin Hall, 18 West Merchant Street, Audobon, NJ.

## New Meeting Time

Beginning June 1, 2015, Willingboro Group Monday Night will meet at 7:00 pm. First Presbyterian Church, Calvin Hall, 494 Beverly-Rancocas Road, Willingboro, NJ. Meeting format and location will remain the same. Come out and support the group!

## New Speakers Meeting

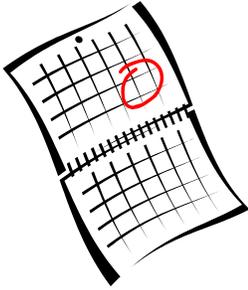
Grace Speakers Group , Thursdays at 8:30pm. Grace Church in Haddonfield, 19 Kings Highway East, Haddonfield, NJ 08033.



# Fellowship Things to Do

June 2015

Also see Announcements on page 6



Thursday, May 21– West Deptford "A New Day" group will celebrate their 3rd anniversary at Southwood Baptist Ch. 11 Griscom Lane West Deptford. Starting at 7:30 AM sharp with a continental breakfast and meeting as usual. For more info call Wayne @ 856-534-0104.

Thursday, May 28 – Washington Twp. The Honesty Room meeting of AA is having its 3rd anniversary. Food at 8pm, two speakers at 8:35pm. Church of the Holy Family, Hurffville Rd, Washington Twp, in the large auditorium across the parking lot from the normal meeting location.

Sunday, May 31 – Pitman anniversary 6:30 - 7:30 pm eating, then two speakers AA & ALAnon at 7:30 pm. St. James Lutheran Church, Columbia/Woodbury-Glassboro Rds light snacks and desserts bring your favorite if you want to share!

Saturday, June 6, 6pm – 11pm Trinity Methodist Church 1985 Pennington Road Trenton, NJ, 08618. Workshop, Potluck Dinner, and Dance. Hosted by Section 1, Area 45. Speakers from District, Intergroup, Area, and GSO describe the different levels of service in AA and their importance. 6:00 Registration. 6:30 – 7:30 Workshop speakers from District, Area, Intergroup and GSO. Food to follow. Any food donations will be greatly appreciated! 8:00 – 11:00 Dance & 50/50. Questions: Section 1 Leader, Ted W. 609-668-3936.

Saturday, June 13 – South Jersey Intergroup will celebrate Founders Day @ Parvin State Park Starting at 10pm to 4pm Picnic is FREE everyone is invited.

Monday, June 15 – The Burlington Big Book Group celebrates their 31<sup>st</sup> Anniversary. Food/Barbecue at 7 pm and speaker at 8. Saint Barnabas Church, 309 East Broad Street, Burlington, NJ 08016 (Parking in school lot). July 2-5, 2015. International Convention of Alcoholics Anonymous in Atlanta, Georgia. Please visit [www.aa.org](http://www.aa.org) for details.

Thur July 30 – Swedesboro 12th anniversary at the Bethesda Methodist Church in Swedesboro. There will be ice cream sundae making at 7:00 and reading and a speaker starting at 7:30.

July 31- August 2 – 22<sup>nd</sup> Annual Pennsylvania State AA Convention in Harrisburg, PA. For information, visit [aapastateconvention.com](http://aapastateconvention.com).

Sunday, August 2 – District 14 Annual Food, Fun, and Fellowship Picnic @ Parvin State Park. More details later. **NEW**

November 5 – 8 – 5<sup>th</sup> Annual Jersey Shore Roundup will be held at the Ocean Place Resort and Spa in Long Branch, NJ. All the rooms have ocean views. Great lineup of speakers The weekend includes the Conference, Friday night ice cream social, Saturday night buffet dinner, Sunday morning buffet breakfast, Saturday night dance with DJ Frank and entertainment with Hilary R. from Dallas TX. [www.jerseyshoreroundup.com](http://www.jerseyshoreroundup.com) Register online. **NEW**