

# ANONYMOUS SOUTHJERSEY

**SOUTH JERSEY INTERGROUP**

**February 2016**

## April in February—Changing Traditions

*My name is April E., a young woman who doesn't drink living in a world that does.*

For the past 10 years now, a good friend and I have a yearly tradition of getting together for Groundhog Day. We travel to a different festival each year, blog about it, and consider ourselves Groundhog Day experts.

My friend and I met in grad school and started our tradition there, in the midst of cramming for mid-terms and pulling all-nighters. We

found it funny that we both really loved the novelty of the holiday and quickly took it to the extreme by driving from our school the 8 hours to Punxatauney, PA for our very first festival.



Groundhog Day started as a time for us to get together, drink a little too much, and revel in the craziness that is people up terribly early in the middle of winter to watch a rodent talk (in Groundhogese) about the weather. On our tenth year, we still get together and visit a different festival each year, but our tradition has changed. While we still love getting together and flying or road tripping to a random town to check out their festival and local groundhog (yes, there are

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## Looking Up!

*When he first got to AA, he could only stare at the floor. Now he can almost see peoples' eyes.*

After being arrested again, I was sitting in a holding cell and facing jail time. I knew I needed help, but my idea was to get a good attorney. Fortunately, my attorney of choice was used to dealing with people like me and told me straight out that my problem was not with the law but with the bottle. I tried to turn the conversation back to my legal issues, so he told me the best defense is a good offense. If I went to AA meetings, he said, and had someone at the meetings sign a piece of paper verifying my attendance, it would look good when I went in front of the judge.

So, I went to my first AA meeting. I thought the party, and a life with any fun in it, was over. I sat with my head down, staring at a chip in the green

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**Inside This Issue:** Greetings from new Newsletter Chairs ♦ Fellowship Announcements and Things to Do ♦ As Bill Sees It

## Acceptance

*Step 2: Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.*

In Step One, I admitted my powerlessness to alcohol. That it had me licked, and that I could believe that I fall into a small class of limited drinkers that have a unique effect produced by alcohol. I am of a limited class that this allergy occurs in. I have a body that won't let me stop once I start, and obsession in the mind that continues to take me back to my perceived solution: *King Alcohol*.

In Step 2, I remember accepting the fact that I had a problem, but the idea that I was *insane* was hard to swallow. My

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## Looking Up

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tiled floor. I didn't make eye contact with anyone. When the meeting leader asked if anyone new wanted to share, I didn't say a word. I noticed a man there who was shaking and sweating like I was. He spoke up and said it was his first AA meeting. Everyone in the room clapped and smiled and yelled words of encouragement and I had my first sober resentment.

As some of the newer people shared, I was able to identify with their pain and suffering—the lost jobs, the broken relationships, the sense of feeling like a piece of crap. Then people with more time in the program shared and I had no idea what they were talking about—living one day at a time, life on life's terms, finding a Higher Power.

But I had to admit that they seemed happy. They also wore nice clothes, washed their hair and brushed their teeth. These were habits I had abandoned. They laughed and talked openly about the sort of things I felt were my deepest, darkest secrets. I was very confused and still very angry about my situation in life, but I did feel, for the first time in a long time, some hope. And hope was something else I had abandoned.

At the end of the meeting an older gentleman came up to me, poked me in the chest with his bony finger and said, "Come back tomorrow. There's a meeting here at 7:00

every night." I found someone to sign my attendance paper and headed out.

The next night I returned, and standing at the door was that older gentleman with the dagger finger. He again poked me in the chest and said, "You need to say your name and share when we go around



the room."

He went in and sat down and I followed. When they came around to me, I said my name and admitted that I was an alcoholic. And then I cried for what seemed like an hour but was probably closer to a minute. Even though I didn't say a word while I cried, almost every head in the room bobbed up and down in agreement. By the end of the meeting, I was breathing more calmly and was able to make eye contact with peoples' shoes rather than just the floor.

Again, dagger finger came up and poked me in the same sore spot on my chest and said, "You need to get a group and a sponsor." I told him I'd join his group and that he could be my sponsor if he would

please stop poking me in the chest. He agreed. I got my paper signed and left.

Again, I returned the next night and sat next to my sponsor. I was now able to make eye contact with peoples' knees. When it was my turn to speak, I let everyone know I had three days sober. They all clapped and smiled and yelled words of encouragement. At the end of the meeting, I got my paper signed and left.

I was doing what I needed to do, or at least what my attorney told me I needed to do. I showed up at meetings and got my paper signed. I also got a sponsor and a home group and was working on attending 90 meetings in 90 days, as requested by my sponsor. Day after day I showed up at meetings, where I said my name and stated that I was an alcoholic and mentioned how many days I had been sober. I wasn't getting involved any further than that. I wasn't talking about my feelings to the group or my sponsor. I didn't help set up or clean up or reach out in any way. I showed up as the meeting started and left as soon as it ended. Well, as soon as I could find someone to sign my paper.

My 17th day sober was a Saturday. I went to an afternoon meeting. I got my paper signed and went home. And there I sat. I had an entire Saturday night ahead of me. I was free and clear for the night. I felt like I was in prison. I had nothing to do, no family, no

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## Editorial Policy

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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@asj.org.

### CONTACT INFORMATION FOR SJ INTERGROUP:

South Jersey Intergroup Association, Inc.  
PO Box 2514  
Cherry Hill, NJ 08035  
Office/Literature Sales: 1-856-486-4446  
Email: Info@asj.org  
Website: www.asj.org  
24-Hour Hotline 1-856-486-4444  
Toll Free Hotline: 1-866-920-1212

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

## A greeting from your new Newsletter chair and co-chair of *Anonymous South Jersey*.

Hi! This is April, your new newsletter chair, and Shawn, your co-chair. We are excited to be part of this newsletter and hope you continue to read--or even begin contributing content!

AA has given me so much, and sometimes it takes a gentle nudge from a sponsor to remind me to give back. For the last year I've contributed a monthly column to the newsletter and this commitment was a perfect way to share my experience, strength, and hope. When our previous chair let me know that it was time to pass the torch, I knew this commitment would align perfectly with the way I love to give back.

The newsletter has helped me really focus on my sobriety and think about it in new ways. I'm honored to be working in a more direct way to help this monthly newsletter come to life.

*April E.*

Hello, I'm Shawn, newsletter co-chair. We are so happy you have brought this newsletter into your home and are taking the time to read. That said, what makes this newsletter awesome is the fact that it's filled with real stories from AAs in our area. So please, share with us!

*Shawn*

We would love your articles, poems, stories, musings, thoughts, etc. to help grow this publication. Send your experience, strength, and hope to [newsletter@asj.org](mailto:newsletter@asj.org) for inclusion in an upcoming issue.

Take it from us--it's a great way to give back!



## Step 2

From page 1

sponsor really broke down my behavior, and the peculiar thinking that always preceded that *first drink*.

As I heard his story and began to identify with his behavior, I was better able to understand my warped mental state. Looking back, I find it funny how the usage of the word sanity could so easily offend my sense of false pride. The simple fact is, prolonged use of alcohol on my brain produced an unhealthy mental condition over time. A condition that no longer allowed me to control my cravings, and in turn, brought about insane episodes of unpredictable behavior.

The idea that I could exercise sanity in regards to my drinking was just an illusion. If I took an



honest evaluation of my drinking, and stood it up to the definition of insanity, it would just prove my case further. That I really am physically, spiritually, and *mentally* powerless to this treatable illness called alcoholism. Once this admission was established, what I was told I needed made perfect sense. If I were powerless, then I logically would need power.

But I know what the capital letters in 'Power Greater than Ourselves' meant. It meant GOD, and again the doors of reason closed shut in my mind.

I am so grateful for patient sponsors, for mine just smiled at my rebellion. He explained that we have no take on religion, or what we choose to call this Power. He explained that naming it is unimportant, to call it what I want. But he certainly assured me that I damn sure better find one. I believe that this where the required *willingness and open-mindedness* become pertinent. I believed in

the Fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous. That you guys were successfully staying sober 24-hours at a time, and that I could definitely see the Power in that. This small sliver of belief proved to be the mustard seed of my entire faith, and it worked until my personal understanding evolved to something more.

I'm here to tell the newcomer to stick around, and to not give up before the miracle happens. I'm another successful example of the gift that awaits us if we are *painstaking about this phase of our development*. Those closest to me can attest that my thinking has been straightened out, that I've been restored to sane behavior, and that my perception has changed as a result of being taken through the 12 Suggested Steps of A.A. I truly have *Came. Came to. Came to Believe.*

God Bless,  
Young & Sober  
Michael E.



### **As Bill Sees It:** The Hour of Decision, p. 202

"Not all large decisions can be well made by simply listing the pros and cons of a given situation, helpful and necessary as this process is. We cannot always depend on what seems to us to be logical. When there is doubt about our logic, we wait upon God and listen for the voice of intuition. If, in meditation, that voice is persistent enough, we may well gain sufficient confidence to act upon that, rather than upon logic.

"If, after an exercise of these two disciplines, we are still uncertain, then we should ask for further guidance, and, when possible, defer important decisions for a time. By then, with more knowledge of our situation, logic and intuition may well agree upon a right course.

"But if the decision must be now, let us not evade it through fear. Right or wrong, we can always profit from the experience."

## April in February

From page 1

over 20 groundhogs who prognosticate in North America), we had to substitute some of the drinking with other things. Fortunately, I had a friend who was supportive and didn't decide to nix the tradition when I got sober. But it changed our tradition for both of us and I am glad she decided to stick around.

Niagara Falls first, then hit Toronto on the way home. We've done Florida and parlayed that into a beach and Disney trip. Last year we rented a cabin in West Virginia and checked out the extremely rural areas and a ski resort.

At first it was a little awkward. Our tradition was built on drinking and being part of the craziness at Punxatauney. When we had to change our trip, at first I was nervous that it wouldn't be a good idea for my sobriety. Would I be bitter that I couldn't drink? Would my friend secretly be unhappy?

But with flexibility and a little more planning, we are able to still have an awesome time and I don't feel I'm missing out on any aspect of the holiday (that we've turned it into) because it is now much more exciting than it ever was when we drank.

## Looking Up

From page 2

friends, no place to go. The thought of having a drink hit me hard. I knew I had to do something or I was going to drink. The first thought that came to me came was from the years of doing things my way. I could go to the bar or the race track or the strip club and just have a soda (sure). The second thought that came to me was to call my sponsor. But it was almost 7:00 and I knew he would be at the nightly meeting. I knew I wouldn't be able to reach him on the phone there. It would be ridiculous to go to the meeting, I told myself, to talk to him in person. After all, I already had my paper signed.

In spite of myself, that's what I did. I didn't see my sponsor outside the meeting. I went inside. I still didn't see him but I did see a guy who had been at the afternoon meeting I'd attended earlier that day. I thought, What a mess he must be if he needs two meetings in the same day!

This man called me by name and congratulated me on my 17 days sober. I was taken aback. This guy not only remembered my name but knew how many days I had. Caught in that moment of disorientation, I followed when he said to come on in, the meeting was about to start.

As I sat there waiting for the start of the meeting I was sure I didn't need to be at, I noticed several others who had also been at the afternoon meeting. That feeling of disorientation grew and before I knew it I was sharing to the room that I wanted to drink but instead came to the meeting.

The clapping, smiling and words of encouragement weren't so important to me this time. What was important was how that moment felt so right. I was at a meeting, I was sober, I was alive and I was free.

Steve B.  
Hopewell Junction, N.Y.

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The holidays and beginning of the year are always a tough time because traditions tend to stay the same, even when we do not. But from my experience, I knew I didn't want to miss out on the times with my friend, and instead of throwing the whole tradition away, we

worked together to change it. Groundhog Day no longer even reminds me of drinking. And when I think back to being drunk in the cold early morning of February 2, I'm so glad to not be that girl anymore.

April E.

# Fellowship Announcements and Things to Do

February 2016

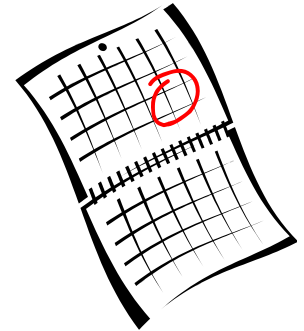
## New Meeting

Starting January 20, Fellowship Men's Meeting, Wednesday at 7:00 pm. Closed meeting with a speaker/discussion format. Zion United Methodist Church, 242 Kings Highway, Clarksboro, 08020.

## Mark Your Calendar!

**Tuesday, January 19** =The Buena How Group is celebrating its 28th Anniversary. A speaker meeting will begin at 7:00 PM (featuring Robbie W.), with food served after the meeting.

Buena HOW Group meets at the Methodist Church at 905 Central Avenue, 4 blocks from Buena Municipal Bldg. For more information, contact Pauline W. (856-462-4330, [jersey\\_girl\\_1210@hotmail.com](mailto:jersey_girl_1210@hotmail.com)).



**Saturday January 30** - Haddon Heights "A Daily Reprieve" will celebrate their 14<sup>th</sup> anniversary with a light breakfast starting at 9 am with speakers to follow. St. Mary's Episcopal Church, 18 White Horse Pike. Haddon Heights

**Saturday, January 30** - Somers Pt. D16/17 Workshop - Spirit of Anonymity NOON- United Methodist Church - Doran & Bethel Rds, Somers Pt., 08244 Speakers: Ben N. (Atl. City Young People), Ed-die J. (The Other Twelve, Runnemedede) Round Table Discussion, Food, Fun, Fellowship.

**Friday-Sunday, June 24-26** - 5<sup>th</sup> Liberty Bell Roundup, Philadelphia Woodstock of AA, Registration: \$40

*If you have any changes or any new items that you feel would benefit our fellowship, please let me know, so we can get it out to the people. Wayne: 856- 534-0104 or [wcp714@verizon.net](mailto:wcp714@verizon.net)*

## Find A Helping Hand

Whenever you're ready to join, AA is there with a hand held out



**Alcoholics Anonymous**  
**South Jersey Intergroup**  
**24/7 Hotline**  
**856-486-4444**