

ANONYMOUS SOUTHJERSEY

SOUTH JERSEY INTERGROUP

October 2018

Want Sobriety with Your Heart, Not Your Head

Ed Note: On a hot summer afternoon, I had the pleasure of conversing with Joanne, who has been sober since 1983. She is easy to talk to, has a spontaneous smile, as well as an aura of calm serenity about her. A woman of grace and dignity, Joanne is a living example of the AA program.

How did you first learn about A.A.?

My sister knew a Doctor that had some knowledge of AA.

He said 90 meetings in 90 days. I also learned about AA in rehab. I am a mother of 4, who at the time were small children. I drank at home, 24/7. Some days my oldest would come home from school to find me passed out on the sofa. We lost our home due to this disease, and we were living in a motel for a while before I got sober.

My husband, my mother-in-law, and 3 of my 4 children were all put in the car

which drove me to Livingren rehab in Ben Salem, PA. There were not a lot of rehabs around then, and this one had a bed for me. I spent 5 days in detox and 21 days in rehab. Dr. Shearon used to tell us that drunks were just like drug addicts.

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Everything Is Bigger in Texas

Since I never take the easy path to anywhere, I had to stop in Dallas on my way to the Technology Workshop Round Rock. And I am so glad I did! I have a fantastic service oriented sponsor who made sure I got to the Dallas Central Office, an AA Meeting and her homegroup business meeting. And this is just the first day!



After shopping, checking out the archives and chatting with the 3 service volunteers at the Dallas Central Office (aka Dallas Intergroup), Richie and I had an amazing discussion with their office manager, Lincoln. Lincoln enthusiastically told us about how he's been upgrading their technology processes to better handle inventory as well as the website. While I was aware that many Intergroups are using Quickbooks Point of Sale for their literature sales, this was the first time I

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Inside This Issue: ♦ SJI Trivia ♦ Opportunities for Service ♦ Responsibility ♦

A United Message of Recovery

The long form of Tradition One states, in part, that each member of Alcoholics Anonymous is but a small part of a great whole. A.A. must continue to live or most of us will surely die. Hence our common welfare must come first. We are then given eleven other Traditions that show us what we must do in order to accomplish the goal of unity allowing recovery.

We are shown that our membership is open to all who suffer from alcoholism—the only requirement is a desire to stop drinking. Another Tradition tells us that we have but one purpose—to carry the message to the alcoholic who still suffers. Other Traditions relate the things we need to watch for so we don't get diverted from that primary purpose—problems of money, property, prestige, authority, controversy, sensational advertising, and personalities.

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Welcome to the Fourth Dimension

With a mop in one hand and a rag in the other, she blasted off into the world of AA service

I drank at home, the bar, picnics, movies, weddings and divorces. I even drank in the car, both driving and parked. I drank anywhere a drink was available.

So when I was new to AA, the only place I knew that I wasn't going to drink was at my AA meetings. I knew that when I was in the room, I was safe. I even began to find excuses to stay a little late. I cleaned off the tables after a meeting. I washed the coffee cups, ashtrays and coffee pots. I mopped the floor, wiped down the kitchen and dumped the trash. I didn't know I was being of service.

Then I began to show up early, which shortened the time between waking up and going to a noon meeting. It shortened the time that I walked around my house in circles watching the hands move around on the clock until it was time to go to the meeting.

Arriving early, I could help set up, and wipe off the tables I had just wiped off the night before. I made coffee and set out ashtrays. I didn't wonder who had done those things before me or that maybe I was taking someone else's job. I didn't consider anything outside of myself. Everything I did was for me, in order to stay sober. I never gave anyone or anything else a thought.

My home group had a tradition: We didn't speak from the podium until celebrating our first year of sobriety. After I spoke the first time at the podium, a man I had seen the past year came up to me and

said he needed me to do something for him. "It will help you stay sober," he said.

The next Friday, I met him a block away from the county jail. He knew that I knew where the jail was located. So instead of giving me the jail's address, he changed it to an address a block away so I would



show up! As we walked the block, he informed me that we were going to do a jail meeting. He told me the meeting would last about an hour and that when it was over, I would be very grateful for my sobriety.

He was right. After a few more Fridays with him, I was cut loose and took the meetings into the jail with other members, as I could find them, for the next four years. I sat in meetings with lots of inmates. Some were going to another facility for a longer time; some just doing a short stint in county and then would be out. I don't know what effect I had on them, if any.

Just before I was to celebrate my two years, I was outside my noon meeting when a man asked what I did on Sundays. Other than go to meetings, I didn't do much. When we went inside and sat down, he announced that it was time to elect a new GSR. Since I had Sundays free, he put me up for that position. In just 30 seconds, I was railroaded into the fourth dimension.

I know people think the traditional process of "railroading" AA members into becoming trusted servants is wrong, but it was the only way I would have become involved. I didn't have the confidence to stand through the election process. All I had were the memories of a kid who was always chosen last in grade school for the playground games. And I wouldn't have volunteered because I didn't believe that I was qualified to do anything worthwhile. But once I was "chosen," I vowed to give it my best and my ego soared. From that day on, I continued to participate in service work. I know that service alone will not keep me sober, but at times it has kept me from drinking.

When my great aunt was murdered, I wanted to drink. I was angry at God and AA for failing to prevent a relapsed drunk from taking her life. I wanted to drink to take the pain away, to wipe out the feeling of powerlessness. But my ego won. I didn't want to be "fired" from my service position, so I decided to put the drinking off until

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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@aasj.org.

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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

A.A. Trivia



Who was A.A.'s first friend in the field of psychiatry? Hint: he spoke at A.A.'s twentieth anniversary celebration.

Answer to last month's question: How does a group submit an AA event for the Intergroup website calendar?

1. Go to our website aasj.org, click on "EVENTS" then click on the drop down menu "Submit Events." Fill in the form & click on the "SUBMIT EVENT" button at the bottom of the page.
2. OR give the information to any one from Intergroup.
3. OR email the information to anyone from Intergroup.



Step 10

Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong, promptly admitted it.

*Of all the steps we've done so far,
This one, we do each day
In order to keep our recovery strong,
And our demons far away
For although we are better at balance these days
Human weakness, at times, still appears
And as we become more open to truth
And examine our doubts and our fears,
We admit at once when we've been wrong
Becoming honest with all that we see
And in so doing, we're sure to be blessed
With a new day of sobriety*

Joanne

From page 1

I knew AA would take away my drinking, and at this point I didn't want that. I went through steps 1 through 4, but did not do 5 in the rehab.

When I came home, my husband took me to a meeting at the Echelon Mall. We had a hard time finding the meeting, until someone outside yelled "Looking for AA? Right over here!" This meeting eventually moved to the Ministry beside Boscov's. It's not there anymore.

Experiences and people in AA

AA meetings at the time were all smoking meetings, lasting from 8:30 to 10:00. We used cups and saucers for the coffee, which had to be washed (one way to do service). There were about 250 meetings in South Jersey at the time. Now there are more than 400.

When I came in, my husband was still drinking. My mother-in-law, who was living with us, stopped when I did. I did not have a car at this time, so the women at the meetings were very helpful. One woman picked me up every day and took me to a meeting. There I learned that it did not matter what went on at home, my sobriety was my own job. I was

not responsible for anyone else's actions but my own.

I didn't find AA too difficult in the beginning, because I had begun without realizing it to build a support group. Edna, who was away on vacation with her family (something our family never did!) came back, and we started up a friendship. Edna, Peggy, Marge and I would go to

You have to want this program, in your heart not in your head. It took me a while to get to this point, but once I did my whole life changed.

meetings and then Friendly's after. I met Joan on retreat. She had just retired, and we started walking together while we built a friendship. Joan and Edna are still a major part of my life today.

I did not have a sponsor for a while. I asked someone to sponsor me, and she said no and it took a while for me to build up my confidence to ask someone else. In the meantime, I was "in the herd" and being taught what a sober woman would do, how to act with grace and dignity, and how to follow suggestions. We would go to meetings early, sit through the meeting and then go to the diner.

I remember Alex, who used to say "I didn't get here by eating green beans!" There was

George the Barber, whose shop anyone could go to for a meeting. I joined the bowling league. We would put money in every week, and we decided that instead of having a banquet, we would go to a Dude Ranch! We had a lot of fun! That's where I met Stephanie, who is another important woman in my sobriety.

AA changes over the years:

When I came in, there were fewer meetings, the meetings lasted longer, and there was smoking. Retreats were only once a year. There were more step and discussion meetings back then, not a lot of Big Book meetings. We read the Big Book at home.

Meetings were 1 ½ hours long, not something the newer crowds are interested

The people seemed different to me too. People today do not appear to be as committed to their recovery as when I came in. I see more relapses and hear more excuses – Maybe I'll get it next time; and many excuses for not attending meetings. People seemed more willing then to take suggestions, to do what I do if you want what I have. Perhaps they are not desperate enough.

We also went up to people and asked for their phone numbers. There were no lists going

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Service

From page 2

my rotation was over. Then I could just quietly slip away from meetings and my group and drink and make the pain of the moment go away. Somehow by not quitting—by the time my rotation was over—I didn't want to drink any more.

I fell in love with the history of AA some years ago. I was serving on a committee and needed to look up some old information about one of our area committees. While doing the research, I ran across the name of the man who had taken me to that first county jail meeting. What I didn't know until then was that he had been the chairperson of the area corrections committee.

While I continued to read, I found more names of the people I had sat in meetings with who had listened to me whine and held me when I cried and baked me a cake when I celebrated. There were the names of people I had worked on projects with and been part of committees with and I realized I had found my own history. These weren't just impersonal records of events, they were about me.

Over the course of my sobriety I have never quite been able to rotate out of service. I have just kept rotating along. And because of that, I have held a variety of positions at almost every level of AA. I now have the privilege of serving as the Area 39 archivist. I am charged with collecting what happens today—with the members and groups and districts and offices in the area—and preserving it for tomorrow's Fellowship. On my path to this position, I have had a world of experiences and continued to gain knowledge and reach new levels of awareness of the "educational variety." I have met people, made

friends and found a joy and contentment and fulfillment in life that I didn't know even existed when I walked into my first meeting.

During the years of my sobriety, my years of service to the Fellowship and all the people I have met, I only know of one person who stayed sober through my efforts. That would be me. I guess my selfishness has paid off.

Cheri J.
Missouri, USA

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Joanne

From page 4

around like today. Again, if you want what we have do what we do/did.

Service in AA:

I went to an Intergroup meeting early in my sobriety, which went on forever and ever. I never went back! It seemed to me more like a political thing than an AA group. I have and continue to do anything that needs to be done on the home group level. I don't do much above that. I sponsor women, speak when asked, do service in my homegroup. I feel it's important to have a home group and go there every week.

Thoughts:

You have to want this program, in your heart not in your head. It took me a while to get to this point, but once I did my whole life changed. Now, there isn't anything I can't do. That paralyzing fear I came in with is gone. Fear doesn't prohibit me from doing things. I went through a divorce, sold my house, dealt with cancer, and moved to Florida all in sobriety. I met a wonderful man in AA many years ago, who is my rock, and together we found new meetings to attend in Florida. We got into the network and took the steps necessary to continue our sober lives together.

I love this program!





I am responsible.
When anyone, anywhere,
reaches out for help, I want
the hand of AA always to be there.
And for that: I am responsible.

Texas

From page 1

Point of Sale for their literature sales, this was the first time I heard how helpful it could be in so much detail. He went on to explain how his new online meeting list program can produce his paper meeting list booklet. Richie looked like a kid in a candy store! Lincoln finished off our visit by showing us his office and the inventory storage room.

But let's get back to the front office, complete with the entrance way, an archives room & kitchen to the right and a long office with 2 side by side desks in the back. Dallas Central office does sell medallions and some non AA approved literature which they keep on separate shelves away from

Recovery

From page 1

All these guidelines come to us from our founders and past members who experienced firsthand the consequences of what happens when these principles are not respected--the chaos, heartbreak, and confusion that results when the suggestions are not followed.

When Bill wrote *Problems Other Than Alcohol* in 1958, he made clear our singleness of purpose: Sobriety--

the AA literature. All of the literature and merchandise kept in the outer office is beautifully displayed on nice bookshelves. They have a complete bookshelf with foreign AA Big Books and the walls are adorned with pictures from several prior AA World Conferences. There are several pamphlets that are created by the Dallas Intergroup as well as Newcomer Packets that can be purchased by groups.

We read a letter from Bill Wilson to a local AA member as well as the original 6 steps in their Archives Room. The room also boasted a glass case displaying all editions of our Big Book and other literature used by our pioneers. All in all it was amazing to see what happens in another Intergroup Office.

freedom from alcohol--through the teaching and practice of the Twelve Steps is the sole purpose of an A.A. group. Groups have repeatedly tried other activities and they have always failed. It has also been learned that there is no possible way to make nonalcoholics into A.A. members. We have to confine our membership to alcoholics and we have to confine our A.A. groups to a single purpose. If we don't stick to

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So after lunch and a not so quick stop to buy cowboy boots (sorry Linda & Dave), I was able to attend my sponsor's homegroup in Denton along with their hour long business meeting. Her homegroup is in a shopping center and appeared to be very much like the clubs in our area. Unlike

our local clubs that rent to meetings, this facility is used only for meetings (and a lot of them). The homegroup is responsible for all the meetings there and they actively participate in public info efforts, H&I commitments, hosting workshops, Area and Intergroup. Their group collections for the month were comparable to South Jersey Intergroup's. While this can make for a long meeting, it was very effective and well run. It was interesting to visit an Intergroup size meeting for a homegroup. I guess everything really is bigger in Texas!

So while I will never like your football team, thank you Dallas for your hospitality and your eagerness to share your Texas style recovery.

Karen M



October Opportunities For Service

Answering Service: We are in need of volunteers to be placed on the 12-step list to replace the many names that are going to be removed. If you or anyone else you know would like to volunteer to be added to the new list please contact us via answerservice@asj.org.

Newsletter: Please continue to send articles, thoughts, things you heard in the rooms that you would like to share. All contributions are welcomed and appreciated.

Social Events: The Social Events Committee is looking for new members and a co-chair. Come out and make the fun happen! Please e-mail socialevents@asj.org for more info.

Speaking Commitments

Hospitals and Institutions (H&I) is looking for speakers to visit the following facilities:
Please contact Frank or Debbie at handi@asj.org if you are able to take one of these commitments.

Sunday

Inspira Psych Unit – Sept. 2, 4-5pm: 509 N Broad St, Woodbury

Monday

DayTop Young Peoples Community – Sept. 24, 7-8pm: 9 Harding Hwy Rt 40, Pittsgrove

Ancora Psych Hosp – Sept. 24, 7-8pm: 202 Spring Garden Rd Hammonton

Maryville Womens Sept. 3, 8-9pm: 1903 Grant Ave Williamstown Tuesday

Maryville Womens Sept. 18, 8-9pm: 1903 Grant Ave Williamstown

Delaware House – Sept. 4, 11, 2-3pm: 21 Ikea Drive, Westampton

Wednesday

Unity Place I -, Sept. 5, 19, 26, 12:40-1:30pm: 1 Keystone Ave, Cherry Hill

Solstice Counseling Services – Sept. 5, 19, 12-1pm: 300 Birmingham Road, Pemberton

Northbrook Behavioral Health –Sept. 12, 8-9pm: 425 Woodbury-Turnersville Rd Blackwood

Thursday

Ancora Psych Hosp – Sept. 27, 7-8pm: 202 Spring Garden Rd Hammonton

Unity Place II – Sept. 6, 20 2-3 pm: 121 S. White Horse Pike, Hammonton

Daybreak – Sept. 13, 20, 27, 10:30-12:00 noon: 368 White Horse Pike, Atco

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Friday

Jefferson Psych Unit – Sept. 28, 7-8pm: 2201 Chapel Ave W Cherry Hill NJ

Maryville Women’s Williamstown NJ Sep 21 8-9pm: 1903 Grant Ave Williamstown NJ

Maryville Men’s Post House – Sept. 7, 14, 21, 8-9pm: 610 Browns Mills Road, Pemberton

Saturday

Cooper Psych Unit –Sept. 15, 22, 29 10:30-11:30am: 1 Cooper Plaza Camden

Inspira Psych Unit – Sept. 29 4-5pm: 509 N Broad St, Woodbury

Maryville Men’s – Sept. 29 7-8pm: 1903 Grant Ave Williamstown

Recovery

From page 1

these principles, we shall almost surely collapse. And if we collapse, we cannot help anyone.

Our singleness of purpose has really been put to the test with the growth of treatment facilities which lump all addictive disorders together, with the subsequent visits of large numbers of treatment graduates to our groups, and with the mandatory sentencing of drunk driving offenders to A.A. meetings.

Meanwhile, our own A.A. members aren't always aware of our Traditions. Many areas have designed plans to meet these situations. Information meetings have become a good workable solution. Information

meetings are informal discussions and sharing about what A.A. is: what it does and does not do. These information meetings have helped keep our regular A.A. meetings tied to A.A.'s singleness of purpose and to the principles of our other Traditions.

A group conscience will get exactly what it demands, no more or no less. Our experience today still bears out the experience of our founders. Some groups, where the alcoholics became outnumbered and the primary purpose was lost in problems other than alcohol, have had to close their doors.

Frank Z.

