



Carry the Message September, 2007

The Huron Valley Area Intergroup Newsletter

Serving the Recovery Community since 1979

Upcoming Events

September 9, 2007 (normally 1st Sunday):

CMIA Area 32 Meeting

Houghton Lake Playhouse

1707 W. Houghton Lake Dr. (M-55)

Prudenville, MI

Doors Open at 9:00 am for Coffee and doughnuts. Info: www.cmia32.or

September 15, 2007 (3rd Saturday): 4 PM HVAI Board meeting

SOS building, south of the HVAI Office
Ypsilanti

September 17, 2007 (3rd Monday): 7 PM District 4 Meeting

Ann Arbor Community Center
625 N. Main Street, Ann Arbor

September 14, 2007: Workshop on Sponsorship presented by Wally P.

Dawn Farm Barn \$5. includes desert
6633 Stony Creek Rd., Ypsilanti
Contact Linda at the HVAI office (734-482-0707) for ticket information

September 15, 2007: Back-To-Basics Workshop presented by Wally P.

Dawn Farm Barn \$20 includes lunch
6633 Stony Creek Rd, Ypsilanti
Contact Bruce F. 734-718-3270 for ticket information

September 16, 2007: Workshop on Sponsorship presented by Wally P.

Westland Mall
Westland, Michigan
Contact Bruce F. 734-718-3270 for ticket information

September 20, 2007 (3rd Thursday): 6:30 p.m.

District 8 Meeting

St. Paul's Episcopal Church
200 St. Paul Street, Brighton

Area Meeting Updates

Portage Lake New meeting:

Wednesdays at 8:00 p.m.
Christian House of Prayer
9949 McGregor Rd.

Open, Discussion

Ann Arbor meeting starting:

Mondays at 7:30 p.m.
Seeking location

Young Peoples, Discussion

Contact Sean O. for information
734.837.7187

Ann Arbor meetings moving:

Saturdays at 1 p.m. New Beginnings

Closed, Discussion

Sundays now at 2 p.m. Second Chance

Closed, Discussion

Both from Rachel Upjohn Center at UM
to Calvary Presbyterian Church, 2727
Fernwood, corner of Norwood between
Platt & Carpenter

Ypsilanti meeting new website:

Saturdays at 8:30 p.m.
Saturday Nite at St. Joe's
download open talks here:
<http://web.mac.com/markola/iWeb/satnightstjoe/Welcome.html>

The spiritual life is not a theory. We
have to live it.

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Thank You for your recent
contributions to the HVAI!

Ann Arbor Stadium Big Book Group

Ann Arbor Beginner's & No Smoking
Group

Ypsilanti Thurs. Night Steps Group

Belleville Thurs Step Groups

Ann Arbor Wed. Open AA Study Group

Dexter We Are Not Saints Group

Chelsea Hospital Group

Chelsea 2nd Chance Group

Pinckney Solutions Group

Ann Arbor First Things First Group

Ypsilanti Attitude Adjustment Group

*ANONYMOUS

Send Your Voluntary 7th Tradition
Contributions To:

Huron Valley Area Intergroup
31 South Huron Street
Ypsilanti, MI 48197

District 4
Washtenaw County Treasurer
Box 971502
Ypsilanti, MI 48197

Central Michigan Intra-Area 32
C.M.I.A. Area 32 Treasurer
P. O. Box 283
Saline, MI 48176

AA World Service
Grand Central Station
P.O. Box 459 New York, NY 10164-0423

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Intergroup/Central Offices

A.A.'s Front Line

reprinted from Box 459, newsletter of the
General Service Office of A.A. Vol. 53,
No. 4

Back in 1946 when only a handful of intergroup/central offices were fully operative — including those in California, Colorado, Illinois, Maryland, New York, and Ohio — A.A. cofounder Bill W. observed in the June issue of the Grapevine, “Heaven has surely reserved a special place for every one of them.” Even as he was writing, service centers were opening in Massachusetts, Michigan, Mississippi, Wisconsin, and — Canada’s first — Alberta.

Both Bill and his fellow A.A. cofounder Dr. Bob early saw that “to save whole areas from turmoil, small offices had to be set up, telephones installed, and a few full-time secretaries hired...If they weren’t, the man coming in the door couldn’t get a break.” (*Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*, p. 161) The early service centers were plagued by a lack of money, space, help, and an abundance of conflicting opinion, but still they persevered.

So when representatives from many of the 500 intergroup/central offices across the U.S. and Canada — together with trustees of A.A.’s General Service Board and directors and staff of A.A. World Services and the Grapevine — gather from October 4–9, 2007 at the 21st Annual Central Office/Intergroup/A.A. World Services Seminar at the Crowne Plaza hotel in Oklahoma City to share the spirit and substance of service, they will be mindful that the effectiveness of their own operations owes much to the trials, tribulations and collective sharing of their predecessors. As Jan D., Formerly manager of the Edmonton, Alberta, Cen-

tral Service Office, has pointed out, “Nothing in A.A. today is original. Everything we know and do to help the suffering alcoholic find sobriety came from our predecessors, whether the Oxford Group or intergroup/central office workers who came before and shared freely of their spiritual experiences and common sense gained the hard way.”

Many, if not most, service offices in A.A.’s early days, such as those in Chicago and Los Angeles, grew out of a phone number, listed as belonging to A.A., that plugged into a member’s home. Some — in New York City, Newark, New Jersey, and Toronto, Ontario, to name a few — were outgrowths of clubhouses that had been hubs for A.A. activities. Sometimes the clubs served as distribution points for A.A. literature, then began providing other services as well. Over time the service operations became entities separate from the clubhouses. Today clubhouses are not affiliated with A.A. In a surprising number of other localities, notably in the Upper Midwest and Canada, intergroups or central service committees were in existence (several still are) long before there were actual offices.

In the beginning, there was the Central Committee in Cleveland, Ohio, where by October 1939 — little more than four years after Bill and Dr. Bob had their historical first meeting — a group of seven was meeting once a month, among other things to coordinate efforts regarding hospitalizations and sponsorship. Dr. Bob was not only a supporter but an active participant, according to fellow Akron member Dan K. “Doc used to play an important part in the Central Committee.” Dan reported, and the going could get rough: “During the meeting, sometimes, the words would fly like you were in a barroom.” One time, he related, “Dr. Bob stood up, hushed the crowd and said, ‘Gentlemen, please. We’re still members of Alcoholics Anonymous. Let’s carry the principles of A.A. into these business

meetings. You are servants of your group, here to take the ideas formulated by the committee. Let one man talk at a time, and let us conduct this business meeting as a service to the Lord and a service to our fellow members...’ After that there were no more brawls when Dr. Bob was around.” (*Dr. Bob and the Good Old-timers*, p. 288-89).

Columbus, Ohio, followed almost immediately with a service center, today called the Fellowship Intergroup, which started up in 1943. In nearby Akron, the birthplace of A.A., an Intergroup office was opened in April 1954. Its first newsletter, published that same year, commemorated by hand, signaled the dedication of the struggling little office that, with minimal financial support, was willing to go to any lengths to carry A.A.’s message of sobriety

Bill W. acknowledged in *Alcoholics Anonymous Comes of Age* (p. 23) that “A.A.’s first organized service center” sprang up in Chicago, where an A.A. named Sylvia utilized her \$700 monthly alimony checks (a very large sum at a time when Bill and Lois were living on \$55 a week) to rent an apartment in the suburb of Evanston, also the locale of the area’s first A.A. meeting in 1939. So busy was the phone that Sylvia’s nonalcoholic personal secretary Grace Cultice rapidly evolved into an A.A. girl Friday.

By 1941, following publication of the Jack Alexander article about A.A., in the *Saturday Evening Post*, Sylvia’s place “became something of a Chicago Grand Central.” Bill W. later affirmed (*ibid.*), “and something had to be done.” So the A.A.s rented a one-room office in the Loop; there, Bill wrote, “Grace was installed to direct the stream of applicants for Twelfth Step attention, hospitalization, or other help.”

New York’s first local service center operated informally for years out of a clubhouse on Manhattan’s West 24th Street. The first local Central Committee was es-

established in 1942, but the Intergroup wasn't officially established until June 1946, when there were 22 groups in the metropolitan area. "Because of ongoing conflicts at the club, Intergroup moved into a storeroom on West 75th Street in November," reported archivist Wally P., now of Tucson, Arizona, "and that's when order started to grow out of chaos." In the beginning, only 50 percent of the groups subscribed to intergroup and helped defray its expenses. But by 1951 every group in the district was fulfilling a group pledge to help maintain the office.

Minutes of a meeting of delegates to the Intergroup Association of New York in January 1950 recorded an anecdote told by Bill W. He said that "a woman came into the program stating, 'My name is Toodles and I'm down to my last \$3 million.' Toodles found sobriety but then died suddenly of diabetes and left \$10,000 to A.A." The Alcoholic Foundation (renamed the General Service Board of A.A. in 1954) had earlier passed a resolution that no money could be received from individuals or outside services (unlike today, when an annual contribution up to \$3000 may be made by an A.A. member, who also may leave a onetime bequest in the same amount). However, since the money had been left to Intergroup, Bill felt that "it's your money to do with as you see fit."

The Los Angeles Central Office started in 1944. "In those days A.A. wasn't easy to find — and we kept it that way," an old-timer, sober since 1940, remembered later. "A carefully selected group of priests, judges, and policemen knew about A.A.; our phone number wasn't listed and could be gotten only from information. That way we knew that any newcomer who found us had generally made enough of an effort to guarantee the sincerity of his desire for sobriety." And in Newark, where the Big Book had been put together in the offices of Hank P., for a time Bill W.'s business partner and sponsee, Hank served as the first full-time paid secretary of the New Jersey Intergroup office from 1944-

49.

In Charleston, West Virginia, the term, "intergroup" was first used in 1953. The association evolved directly from the state's first treatment center, founded in 1944. Named the Alcan Center, Inc., it was fondly referred to by locals as "the jitter joint."

By the time the first General Service Conference was held in April 1951, at least 16 intergroup/central offices were serving local groups. Since they predated the formation of the General Service structure and performed a different function, they were not a part of the A.A. structure (except in Chicago, where the Area Service Office and Area Committee are essentially one). Sometimes over the years there was overlapping of services, especially when both entities were performing similar services, but eventually, thanks to shared experience and improved communication, in many places intergroups and General Service have come to work hand-in-glove.

Since intergroup/central offices are established and supported by local groups, they have no authority of their own. Each intergroup/central offices is unique, reflecting the needs and wishes of its own community, and is responsible to the groups it serves. Typical, each participating group has an intergroup representative. These reps met periodically to elect a steering committee, or board of directors, responsible for administering the office. They also keep their groups informed. A continuing flow of communication is vital, because the groups are completely responsible for the financial support of the office that services them, and local group members provide the volunteers to do the necessary Twelfth Step work.

Unity is the glue that holds the intergroup/central offices and general services together, but it is communication that jumpstarts mutual cooperation and har-

mony — vital both in reaching suffering alcoholics and in being attuned to the needs of those who are recovering in A.A.. Many local intergroups produce their own flyers or information pieces. Also, the General Service Office publishes Guidelines and other service material that share the accumulated experience of intergroups and central offices in the United States—Canada and world-wide. These define an intergroup as an A.A. service office that involves *partnership among groups* in a community — just as A.A. groups themselves are partnerships of individuals. It is established to carry out functions which are best handled by a centralized office... . It exists to aid the groups in their common purpose of carrying the Alcoholics Anonymous message to the alcoholic who still suffers.

"How Do You Pray"

Many times while I was drinking, I asked God to help me — and ended up calling Him all the curse names I could think of and saying, "If You're so almighty, why did You let me end up drunk and in all this trouble again?"

One day, I was sitting on the side of my bed, feeling all alone, with a shotgun shell in my hand, ready to load. "If there is a God," I cried out, "give me the courage to pull the trigger."

A voice, soft and very clear, spoke: "Get rid of that shell." I threw the shell out the door.

In a moment of calm, I dropped to my knees, and that voice spoke again: "Call Alcoholics Anonymous."

It startled me. I looked around, wondering where the voice came from, and I said out loud, "Oh God!" I jumped up and ran to the phone. As I grabbed for it, I knocked it to the floor. I sat down beside it and, with a shaking hank, dialed the operator and yelled for her to call A.A.

“I will connect you with information,” she said.

“I’m shaking too damned bad to dial any numbers. You go to hell!”

I can’t explain why I didn’t hang up. I just sat there on the floor, with the receiver to my ear. The next thing I heard was “Good afternoon. Alcoholics Anonymous. May we help you?”

After I had been sober in A.A. four months, my wife and I got back together. I had always said it was her fault that I drank so much — all those crying kids and her complaining would cause anyone to drink. But after we had been back together for three months, I realized how wonderful a wife and mother she was. For the first time, I knew what real love was, instead of just using her.

Then it happened. I had always been afraid to love. For me, to love meant to lose. I believed that was God’s way of punishing me for all the sins I had committed. My wife became very ill and was rushed to the hospital. She had cancer, a doctor finally told me. She might not pull through the operation, he said, and if she did, it would be only a matter of hours before she passed away.

I turned and ran down the hall. All I could think of was to get a bottle. I knew that if I got out the door, that’s just what I would do. But a Power greater than myself caused me to stop and cry out, “My God, nurse! Call A.A.!”

I ran into the men’s room and stayed there, crying, begging God to take me instead of her. Again the fear took over, and in self-pity I said, “Is this what I get for trying to work those damned Steps?”

I looked up, and the room was full of men, standing there looking at me. It seemed to me that they all stuck out their hands and said their names at the same time. “We’re from A.A.”

“Cry it all out,” one of them said, “You’ll feel better. And we understand.”

I asked them, “Why is God doing this to me? I’ve tried so hard, and that poor woman —”

One of them stopped me and said, “How do you pray?” I said that I asked God not to take her, but to take me. He then said, “Why don’t you ask that God give you the strength and courage to accept His will? Say, “Thy will, not mine, be done.”

Yes, that was the first time in my life that I prayed for His will to be done. As I look back, I see that I had always asked God to do things my way.

I was sitting in the lobby with the A.A. men when two surgeons came up to me. One of them asked, “Can we talk to you in private?”

I heard myself answer, “Whatever you have to say, you can say it in front of them. They are my people.”

The first doctor then spoke. “We have done all we can for her. She is still alive, and that is all we can say.”

One of the A.A.’s put his arm around me and said to me. “Now why don’t you turn her over to the greatest Surgeon of them all?” Ask Him to give you the courage to accept.” We all linked hands and joined in the Serenity Prayer.

How much time passed, I don’t recall. The next thing I heard was a nurse speaking my name. She said softly, “You can see your wife now, but only for a couple of minutes.”

As I ran up to the room, I thanked God for giving me this chance to let my wife know that I did love her and was sorry for my past. I was expecting to see a dying woman. To my surprise, my wife had a smile on her face and tears of joy in her eyes. She tried to reach out her arms, and in a weak voice she said, “You didn’t leave me alone and go get drunk.”

That was three years and four months ago. Today, we are still together. She works her program, Al-Anon, and I work mine, both of us living in today, one day at a time.

God answered my prayers, through the people of A.A.

reprinted from:

Came to Believe, p. 22

District 4 Finances

Editor’s Note: note the change in time period to conform to bank statement.

July 1, 2007 — July 31, 2007

Beginning Balance: \$845.58

Income:
7th Tradition, July meeting 20.00
Group contributions 219.90

Subtotal: \$1075.48

Expenses:
Rent: 20.00
Corrections literature 100.00
District 4 CMIA Host 244.94
District Expenses 26.00
Sign Language Interpreter 20.00
Website 25.00

Total Expenses \$435.94

Closing Balance: \$639.54

Solvent Treasury: 250.00
Petty Cash: 25.00

Total Assets: \$914.54

Thanks to the following groups for your contributions to District 4:

Fruits of Recovery
Saturday Night at St. Joe’s
Sisters in Serenity
Spiritual Solution
Stadium 12 and 12
Starting Over
Survivors
Tuesday Night at the Barn
Work the Steps

Your contribution to HVAI supports: The local AA Service Center, the Help Line, the Web and Printed Meeting Directories, a source for Conference-Approved Literature and Anniversary Tokens, AA Outreach to the area Professionals, Treatment Facilities, local Correctional Facilities and the General Public.