

alternative

NEWSLETTER OF THE READING/BERKS INTERGROUP OF ALCOHOLICS

NEWS & notes

New Group Reps

A warm RBI welcome was extended to the following new Intergroup Representatives at December's meeting:

Adam-611 Washington St.; Beth-New Millennium; Howie-8:15 Atonement; Mike (alt)-8:15 Atonement; Fred-Books & People; Brad-Just For Today; Chris-Springview

Group Anniversary Events Planned

Two area groups are planning anniversary celebrations this month.

The 611 Washington St. Group will be hosting an anniversary luncheon on Monday, January 17 from 11:30 am to 1 pm. The event will feature a speaker, and of course food and fellowship. Just a reminder—please use Reed St. entrance to the meeting.

The Books and People Group, located at the First Church of God, Hampden Blvd. and Perry St., Reading, will be hosting their 19th Anniversary fete on Monday, January 31 at 6:30 pm. Speaker followed by food and fellowship.

Treasurer's Report

From Dec. 28 Intergroup meeting

Beginning Balance	Ending Balance
Prudent Reserve	
\$2,400	\$2,400
General Fund	
\$627.44	\$274.37
Activities Fund	
\$344.38	\$454.38
Petty Cash	
\$132.70	\$160.70

Group Contributions—December

Time To Start Living	\$100 (AF)*
611 Washington St.	\$10 (AF)*

(GF) = General Fund (AF) = Activities Fund

Group Participation Vital To Intergroup Functions

By Beth B.
Reading/Berks Intergroup Chairperson

Happy New Year to you and all your loved ones.

I thank you for allowing me to be of service as your new Reading/Berks Intergroup Chairperson. I look forward to serving the AA community.

I would like to take a minute to stress the importance of Intergroup and making sure your home group is represented at our monthly meetings. Many decisions are made for the Reading/Berks area at the Intergroup level. If your group is not represented, you do not have a part in this process. We want to make sure that all groups are heard and that is why it is so important that all groups participate.

Intergroup also heads up many of the recovery activities for our area. Picnics, holiday parties and the speaker conference are all put together by Intergroup. We are always in need of fresh ideas and volunteers to keep all the "fun stuff" happening. Your participation is key to making these functions happen.

Intergroup is funded by contributions made by your home group. Contributions made to the general fund pay for things like our AA Hotline, printing and distributing the *Alternative*, our listings in the phone book and safe storage for our Archive material. These contributions also cover the insurance we need to have activities throughout the year. We are very low in funds in the general account as we are not receiving contributions.

This means we will have to dig into our prudent reserve which we have not done in many years. If your homegroup would like to make a contribution to the general fund to help keep AA running in Berks County, please mark your check with "general fund". If you would like to donate to the activities fund you must also note that on your check.

Remember, service is one of the three legacies of AA - get involved!!

Ticket Sales Brisk For Winter Dinner Dance

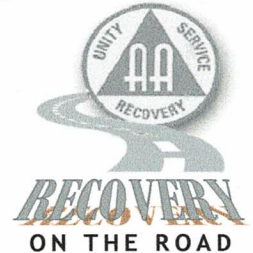
Ticket sales are as brisk as the weather for the upcoming Circle of Hope Roundup Committee's Annual Winter Dinner Dance.

Benefiting the committee's annual speaker conference, the dinner dance will be held Sunday, Jan. 29 at the Recovery Community Center, 1300 Hilltop Rd., Leesport from 6 to 11 pm.

Guest AA speaker for the evening will be Randy J. from York, PA, and music for the evening's festivities will be provided by Your Choice Music Entertainment.

In the event of bad weather, a snow date has been set for Feb. 26.

Individual tickets are priced at \$20 and a table of eight can be reserved for only \$150. Groups



NYC Meeting Proves To Be Snappy Affair

On a recent visit to New York City I had the opportunity to attend a Sunday morning meeting of the Mustard Seed Group on E. 37th St in Manhattan.

Held in the basement of a typical NYC brownstone, the meeting was well attended by AAs from California, Chicago, and a few from Pennsylvania. The hour was kicked off by one of the most dramatic readings of "How It Works" ever witnessed by this traveler. (It was New York City after all).

Also of note was when lauding personal anniversaries, meeting goers offered a rousing snapping of fingers in lieu of clapping of hands.

— Angelo B.

Send us your stories! If your traveling and make a meeting, send your story to Alternative@ReadingBerksIntergroup.Org.



www.CircleOfHopeRoundup.com

are encouraged to sponsor a table or tables for their members.

Tickets can be purchased from any Circle of Hope Roundup committee member as well as many home group representatives. Dance goers will get the additional benefit of being able to purchase tickets for this summer's

speakers conference for only \$25 (\$5 off the regular price). And because the speakers conference is limited to 300 people, buying tickets early is encouraged.

The Circle of Hope Roundup Speaker Conference is scheduled for June 3-5, 2011 at Penn State/Berks and will feature a number of notable speakers as well as open AA meetings throughout the day.

Next R.B.I. Meeting: Tuesday, Jan. 25 @ 7:30 pm

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commitments

INTERGROUP TWELFTH STEP

Caron Adolescent Extended Care - Men Sundays 7 pm

Jan. 2 Oley Group
Jan. 9 Leesport Group
Jan. 16 Walnut St. Group
Jan. 23 Happy Hour Group
Jan. 30 Hilltop Group
Feb. 6 Shillington Lifeline

Caron Adolescent Extended Care - Women Sundays 7 pm

Jan. 2 Courage To Change
Jan. 9 Congo Group
Jan. 16 New Life Group
Jan. 23 Happy Hour Group
Jan. 30 Women Living Sober
Feb. 6 Oley Group

Wernersville State Hosp. See Guard in Building 34 Mondays 7 pm

Jan. 3 Sun. AM Speakers Group
Jan. 10 Alpha Group
Jan. 17 Congo Group
Jan. 24 Alpha Group
Jan. 31 Shoey Group
Feb. 7 8:15 AM Group

St. Joe's Hospital MH Unit 3rd Floor Reed & Walnut Sts. Mondays 7:30 pm*

Jan. 3 Walnut St. Group
Jan. 10 8:15 AM Group
Jan. 17 Leesport Group
Jan. 24 Shoey Group
Jan. 31 Alpha Group
Feb. 7 611 Washing St. Group

Reading Detox Unit Every Other Tuesday 8 pm

Jan. 4 Wyomissing Group
Jan. 18 Hilltop Group
Feb. 1 Happy Hour Group

Caron Foundation Young Adult Female Fridays 8 pm

Jan. 7 Women Living Sober
Jan. 14 Hilltop Group
Jan. 21 Women Living Sober
Jan. 28 Sun. AM Speakers Group
Feb. 4 New Millennium Group

Reading Detox Unit Thursdays 8 pm

Jan. 6 Happy Hour Group
Jan. 13 New Life Group
Jan. 20 Women Living Sober
Jan. 27 New Millennium Group
Feb. 3 Congo Group

*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!!*

If you take a commitment for your group, make sure the person agreeing to go has a substitute if they can't make it. If you would like to go to the St. Joe's meeting, contact the hospital first to see if there are any alcoholics there: 610-378-2000. *When sending group members to commitments, it's great to double up! Send a newer and an older member, and everyone will benefit!! PLEASE make sure that someone honors the commitment that you take for your group.*

These may be the only meetings that the patients may have. Remember, "You Are Responsible", when you commit your time. PLEASE don't let these commitments go unattended. If you cannot make your commitment please notify Steve at 610-750-4019.

*The first of a new series of articles explaining
The Twelve Traditions . . .*

Tradition One

*Our common welfare should come first;
personal recovery depends upon AA unity.*

By Bill W.

The magnificent unity of Alcoholics Anonymous is the most cherished quality our society has. Our lives, the lives of all to come, depend squarely upon it. We stay whole, or AA dies. Without unity, the great heart of AA would cease to beat, our world arteries would no longer carry the life-giving grace of God, his gift to us would be spent aimlessly. Back again in their caves, alcoholics would reproach us and say, "What a great thing AA might have been!"

"Does this mean," some will anxiously ask, "that in AA the individual doesn't count for much? Is he to be dominated by his group and swallowed up in it?"

We may certainly answer this question with a loud "No!" We believe there isn't a fellowship on earth which lavishes more devoted care upon its individual members; surely there is none which more jealously

guards the individual's right to think, talk, and act as he wishes. No AA can compel another to do anything; nobody can be punished or expelled. Our Twelve Steps to recovery are suggestions; the Twelve Traditions which guarantee AA's unity contain not a single "Don't." They repeatedly say "We ought. . ." but never "You must!"

To many minds all this liberty for the individual spells sheer anarchy. Every newcomer, every friend who looks at AA for the first time is vastly puzzled. They see liberty verging on license, yet they recognize at once that AA has an irresistible strength of purpose and action, "How," they ask, "can such a crowd of anarchists function at all? How can they possibly place their common welfare first? What, in Heaven's name, holds them together?"

Those who look well soon have the key to this strange paradox. The AA member has to conform to the principles of recovery. His life actually depends upon obedience to spiritual principles. If he deviates too far, the penalty is sure and swift; he sickens and dies. At first he goes along because he must, but later he discovers a way of life he really wants to live. Moreover, he finds he cannot keep this priceless gift unless he gives it away. Neither he nor anybody else can survive unless he carries the AA message. Realization dawns that he is but a small part of a great

whole; that no personal sacrifice is too great for preservation of the fellowship. He learns that the clamor of desires and ambitions within him must be silenced whenever these could damage the group. The moment this Twelfth Step work forms a group, another discovery is made--that most individuals cannot recover unless there is a group. It becomes plain that the group must survive or the individual will not.

So at the outset, how best to live and work together as groups became the prime question. In the world about us we saw personalities destroying whole peoples. The struggle for wealth, power, and prestige was tearing humanity apart as never before. If strong people were stalemated in the search for peace and harmony, what was to become of our erratic band of alcoholics? As we had once struggled and prayed for individual recovery, just so

earnestly did we commence to quest for the principles through which AA itself might survive. On thousands of anvils of heartbreaking experience, the structure of our society was hammered out.

Countless times, in as many cities and hamlets, we re-enacted the story of Eddie Rickenbacker and his courageous company. Like us, they had suddenly found themselves saved from death, but still floating upon a perilous sea. How well they saw that their common welfare came first. None might become selfish of water or bread. Each needed to consider the others and in abiding faith they knew that they must find their real strength. And this they did find, in measure to transcend all the defects of their frail craft, every test of uncertainty, pain, fear, and despair, and even the death of one.

Thus has it been with AA. By faith and by works we have been able to build upon the lessons of an incredible experience. These live today in the Twelve Traditions of Alcoholics Anonymous, which--God willing--shall sustain us in unity for so long as he may need us.

April 1952

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A New Year's Message *It Works!*

NOTHING is so brittle as a New Year's resolution, unless it be a glass crutch.

Most New Year's resolutions shatter within a few days. Then their broken pieces lie around, as sharp as needles, remindful of failure until the skin, or the conscience, has again become calloused. What, in fact, is so rare as an unbroken New Year's resolution in June?

Yet, we in particular, were among the most prolific New Year's resolution makers. We turned them out on a mass production scale. All through the year we stored up our awareness of personal deficiencies and faults, planning to correct them all in one vast wash of resolutions. Do it all at once, we said, with splendid optimism. Easy does it, in reverse.

Of course, it probably is better to have one day or a few days of high resolution than none at all, but how much more practical if the purpose behind the New Year's resolution is built into daily life. How much easier it is to correct the deficiencies and the faults one by one as we go along day by day, than to try to level a mountain in one stroke.

The kindness and the realism of the A.A. approach to the task of self-improvement offer more hope of success than the high resolution sworn to once a year. At least they have offered more hope and yielded more success for many.

There are, to be sure, other ways, and, of course, some New Year's resolutions do endure. But the inventory that is taken more often than annually and the resolution that is formed at the beginning and the close of each 24 hours have worked convincingly for many and will continue to work for many more.

The new hope that comes from this overwhelming evidence of a new approach to an old and deadly trouble is the offer of the New Year, of each New Year. "It works!" is the electrifying promise that we can give to others.

If there has to be a resolution today, let it be that we will offer those two words fraught with the ringing message that has been proven over and over. "It works!" They offer a new year to any who are still burdened with the past. They bring a new year whenever and wherever they are accepted. Today is the day, any day and every day, to try the new way. Today, "It works!" Tomorrow, "It works!"

Through the 13 years of A.A., people have been doubting those words at first, testing them skeptically, and finally coming to believe them. Perhaps the message they speak makes the best resolution of all.

The A.A. who knows that "it works" needs no ceremony to remind him. His day of high resolution came the moment he took the 1st Step. His New Year began then and continues as long as he follows the new way that others have blazed. His New Year's resolutions are forged and strengthened day by day. Where the glass crutch was brittle and shattered easily, he now has at hand a staff stronger than steel. He has faith built upon proof that, "It works."

T.D.Y.

January 1949

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With Heart and Mind

IN A PROGRAM WHICH WE ARE ENJOINED to practice "Just For Today," the subjects of New Year's resolutions is at best a risky one. "Forget the past," we say, "never mind the future, tomorrow might never come."

But I make no apologies for succumbing to that delightful pastime of resolving to be a better man in 1957 than I was in 1956, because there is lots of room for improvement.

Even if I forget the resolutions before the day is over, the making of them, which involves self-inventory, is good for me. I can never resolve to do something better without in the same breath admitting that what I have been doing has not been good enough; I can never resolve to do something new, without admitting it was something I should have been doing before.

But when I came to AA I gave up resolving to stop abusing alcohol, because I learned that drinking was out of my control. I resolved instead to act upon the suggestion of my sponsors to practice to the best of my ability the Twelve Suggested Steps of recovery, believing, after some initial incredulity, that in this simple outline of experience lay the road to sobriety.

And the Steps have never let me down. They have been just as good for me from day to day as I have let them be.

Since coming to AA, my New Year's resolutions have followed a simple pattern—usually in two parts, both equally important to my sobriety.

One part always is concerned with carrying the message. No claim to originality is made, because I have long since found that there is really nothing new in AA, merely a different way of saying something said many times before.

We attend group meetings and conferences over the years, read the books and literature, the Grapevine, Headquarters Bulletin, the General Service Conference proceedings, Trustees' Reports and anything else available, and pick up ideas here and there which get tucked away in our subconscious memory, to emerge in God's good time with a new freshness when we awaken to a realization that we have been enriched by them.

So the first part of my New Year's resolution is based on a retaking of my daily inventory. What has been done, or left undone, during the past year? When have I been wrong and failed to admit it? What new amends are there to make which, if not made, might disturb my peace of mind in the ensuing year? What new thoughts have been born, or reborn, during the year which, if meditated upon, will improve my conscious contact with God as I understand Him?

Conscious contact. With the help of my AA friends I have developed a growing understanding of a Higher Power and what He is doing for me, but just what is a "conscious contact" with Him? This is something I have never quite been able to define, so I have resolved to work on it in 1957.

In the past I have been content to say that my conscience, sharpened by sobriety in AA and prayer, is my guide, but I find meditation a stimulating exercise and so I shall try to find a more definite explanation of this elusive "conscious contact."

In everyday life we can make contact by the simple process of touch. But I do not know how to touch God. In business life we can make con-

tact by letter or telephone, but what is God's address or telephone number?

I had been in AA nearly a year before I made any really serious effort to tackle the Eleventh Step. When I need a laugh, I think back on some of my early attempts to practice this Step and particularly my attempts to tell others how it should be done. I guess I was looking for a knowledge of what I thought God's will ought to be for me.

Then one day disaster struck. At least that is



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how it looked at the time. "What good is AA?" I asked myself, and decided to head for a drink.

I'd show them. In my agitation I walked over to the nearest window and stared out into space. After a few minutes I became aware that I was looking at a panoramic view of mountains and ocean, and it entered my thick head that I was looking at a beautiful manifestation of God's handiwork.

It had been there all along, but I had never really seen it before. Beside these mountains I began to feel my insignificance. My favorite sentence in the Big Book came to mind: "As we go through the day we pause when agitated or doubtful, and ask for the right thought or action." I paused, and asked. The thought came that I should discuss my problem with my sponsors. They provided a shoulder to cry on, and pretty soon the problem was no longer too big to face. My mental "slip" was over. I did not need or want the drink.

But a new horizon had been opened up for me. I couldn't touch God, or write Him or phone Him, but with the eyes He had given me I could see evidence of His handiwork on all sides. I could hear the wind and the waves. I could lie in the thick green grass and smell the fragrance of the flowers. What a change from the smoke-filled

rooms, the downcast eyes seeing only the cold pavements and the glass-ringed table tops.

It was a beginning.

Then I read an article somewhere which talked about spiritual things in terms I could understand. It spoke of honesty, humility, sincerity, open-mindedness and many other spiritual qualities as something we could not see or touch, measure by the pound or yard, buy or sell, and yet we all know what they are and can recognize them in others; and we find they have a strange power when we remember to practice them ourselves.

It was a step further along the road to understanding. I now know that material things, including the many manifestations of God's bounty, can be seen or heard or touched. Contact can be made with many of these in a physical sense. I am beginning to perceive too that contact can indeed be made in a spiritual sense and yet in a way that we can understand.

In addition to our five God-given senses of touch, taste, sight, hearing and smell, we have been given minds and hearts, long since lost in an alcoholic fog, but now regained with the help of AA.

As I enter 1957 I resolve to seek through prayer and meditation to improve my conscious contact with God as I understand Him, praying only for a knowledge of His will for me and for the power to carry it out. I resolve to bring to my meditations an open mind and an understanding heart. Of course, I shall try not to forget that there are also eleven other steps.

The second part of my New Year's resolution is the same as it has been for the past seven years. I have a great respect for those fortunate members who always have a string of "babies" in tow. The only time I ever tried to help more than one at a time they both got drunk. When I see from the Group Handbook and Directory that AA's reported membership during the past several years is increasing by less than five percent each year, it suggests that on an average only one member in every twenty is really working at carrying the message. If every member could carry the message successfully just once this coming year, more than one hundred thousand alcoholics would find recovery in 1957 and our membership would double as it did on an average in each of the first fifteen years or so of AA's existence. In the interests of our continued sobriety dare we risk anything less?

So the second part of my resolution is that I will try to carry the message of AA to at least one alcoholic during 1957 and pray that I might introduce at least one new member to the AA way of life; and, equally important, try to keep one member within the fellowship who might otherwise drift away. Some day I might be able to do better. You never can tell unless you try.

Art L., Toronto
January 1957