

THE

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OCTOBER 2010

alternative

NEWSLETTER OF THE READING-BERKS INTERGROUP OF ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS

NEWS & notes

COH Roundup Update

The Circle of Hope Roundup is still scheduled for June 3, 4 & 5 (2011) at Penn State/Berks, and early registration is recommended. Registration is \$30. However, only at the fund-raising Dinner/Dance (definite date not yet set) you can get it for \$25. The committee will also meet at 6pm next month before the regular Intergroup meeting.

Did Someone Say Alcathon'?

With New Year's Eve and the annual Alcathon only a few months away, the RBI is in need of a new individual or group to organize and set up for the and evening-long fellowship event.

If you are interested, or if your group would like to take on the event, contact Kenny T., RBI Chairperson, at 610-207-1486 or email to Chairperson@ReadingBerksIntergroup.Org.

Help Support Thursday Women Living Sober

The Thursday morning Women Living Sober Group could use some support in their efforts. The group meets at 10:30 am at the Atonement Parish Center, Penn Ave. in Wyomissing. The group's monthly schedule is as follows:

- 1st Thursday: Living Sober
- 2nd Thursday: Step Meeting
- 3rd Thursday: Big Book
- 4th Thursday: Tradition
- 5th Thursday: As Bill Sees

Volunteers Sought For Nov. EPGSA Convention

Volunteers are needed to assist in a variety of ways at the upcoming Eastern Pennsylvania General Service Convention and Assembly.

The 52nd annual convention will be held Nov. 12 - 14, 2010 at the Lancaster Host Resort & Conference Center in Lancaster, PA.

Because this is an election year at the convention and many delegates will be busy in other capacities, additional volunteers are needed.

The event will include Workshops, Panel Presentations, GSR Orientation, Speaker

Meetings, Spanish/Bi-Lingual Meeting, Open Mike Session, "God As I Understand Him" Meeting, Ask-It-Basket, Dance & Ice Cream Social.

Day Only Registration: \$20 per person (includes all convention activities for the entire weekend, *except* the banquet)

Day Only Registration & Saturday Banquet: \$50 per person (includes all convention activities for the entire weekend *plus* the banquet)

For more information or registration forms, go to www.area59.aa.org.

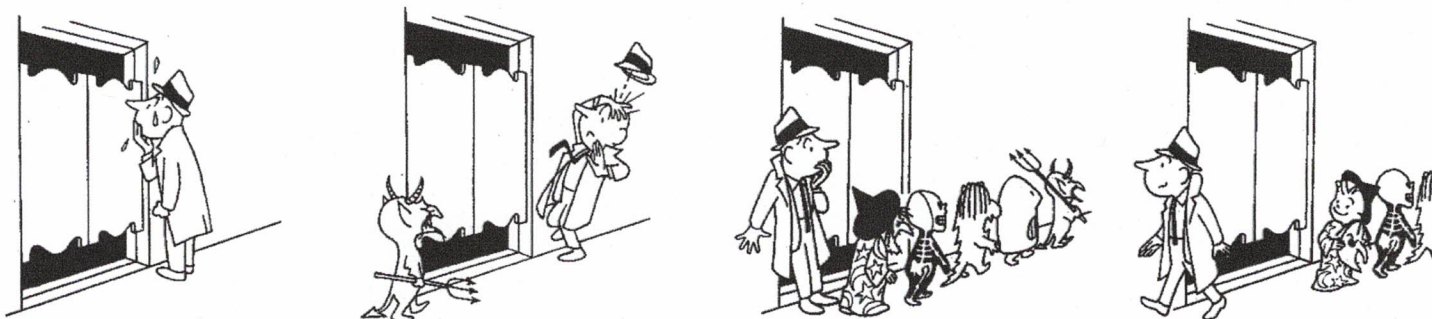
Bridging the Gap - First Contact Needs Volunteers

First Contact program is moving along.. Needs volunteers for the program, especially men in the city. This involves writing to alcohol/drug offenders in prison, and picking them up and taking them to a meeting when they are released. Not a sponsor, not a temporary sponsor. Just an outside contact. This is all done through an outside mailbox; your home address never comes into it. Contact Terry for details.

Dist. 66 Open House Scheduled For Thursday, October 14

The District 66 Open House will be held on Thursday, October 14th. Refreshments will be offered starting at 6:30, with the meeting starting at 7:00pm. Come see what happens at a District meeting! There will be a special presentation of an original skit entitled, "Who's In Charge Here?"

District 66 regularly meets on the second Thursday of every month at: Saint Peter UCC, Dwight & Curtis Avenues in West Lawn. For Info call Jay, District 66 ADCM at 610-376-6343



Next R.B.I. Meeting: Tuesday, Oct. 26 @ 7:30 pm

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commitments INTERGROUP TWELFTH STEP

Caron Adolescent Extended Care - Men Sundays 7 pm

Oct. 3 Caron Alumni
Oct. 10 Shoey Group
Oct. 17 Hilltop Group
Oct. 24 Happy Hour
Oct. 31 Advent Men's Group
Nov. 7 Caron Alumni

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

Oct. 4 New Life Group
Oct. 11 Shoey Group
Oct. 18 New Life Group
Oct. 25 Alpha Group
Nov. 1 Robeson Group

Reading Detox Unit Every Other Tuesday 8 pm

Oct. 5 Oley Group
Oct. 19 Oley Group
Nov. 2 New Millennium Group

Reading Detox Unit Thursdays 8 pm

Oct. 7 New Millennium Group
Oct. 14 Walnut St. Recovery Grp.
Oct. 21 611 Washington St. Grp.
Oct. 28 YASNY
Nov. 4 Time To Start Living

Caron Adolescent Extended Care - Women Sundays 7 pm

Oct. 3 Caron Alumni
Oct. 10 Courage To Change
Oct. 17 YASNY
Oct. 24 Hilltop Group
Oct. 31 Robeson Group
Nov. 7 Caron Alumni

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

Oct. 4 Birdsboro Group
Oct. 11 Sunday Morn. Speakers
Oct. 18 Leesport Group
Oct. 25 Robeson Group
Nov. 1 Walnut St. Recovery Grp.

Caron Foundation Young Adult Female Fridays 8 pm

Oct. 1 Sober @ Six
Oct. 8 Congo Big Book
Oct. 15 Walnut St. recovery Grp.
Oct. 22 Courage To Change
Oct. 29 Sat. Morn. Woman's Grp.
Nov. 6 Sober @ Six

*Note New Time for St. Joe's Monday Meetings. Call 610-378-2000 and ask for Berkshire Pavilion before going.

*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 Alternative is published monthly by the Reading-Berks Intergroup of Alcoholics Anonymous. Serving Districts 33, 66, and 67 of Delegate Area 59—Eastern Pennsylvania. Reach us by mail at P.O. Box 12157, Reading, PA 19612, or you can email us at Alternative@ReadingBerksIntergroup.org

Unwanted Guests

Step Ten Keeps our defects at the door

For some reason, I gave little thought to Step Ten in my sometimes painful journey toward emotional sobriety. Perhaps it was because not many AA meetings seemed to be on this Step, and when it was the topic, I had cotton in my ears.

I was always careful to thank God each day for my sobriety and to ask for his guidance in helping me meet each day's situations in a manner which reflected his will. But my failure in continuing to take a frequent personal inventory, admitting my wrongs, and treating Step Ten as a viable, stabilizing entity had left a gaping hole in my program.

By asking a lot of questions, listening closely at meetings, and expanding my AA reading program, I developed a clearer understanding of what this Step can do for me today if I let it.

First of all, the Step allows me to be exactly what I am—a fallible, error-prone, less-than-perfect human being. In using Step Seven and asking God to remove my shortcomings (as I was able to define them in Step Six), I immediately started building new defects by not following through with Step Ten's suggestions. In addition, the identifiable defects which I asked to be removed were repeated within an alarmingly short period of time.



*Just as my alcoholic ego is never dead and buried,
my defects have a remarkable capacity for rebirth,
and new ones appear as unwanted guests.*

Just as my alcoholic ego is never dead and buried, my defects have a remarkable capacity for rebirth, and new ones appear as unwanted guests. If I'm not alert, they'll make themselves comfortably at home, often without my immediate knowledge.

Steps One through Nine helped me reach a point where I felt pretty good about myself. I wasn't such a bad person after all. It was time for me to start working the program and Step Ten has become solid bedrock for letting it take place. My failure to activate the Step at frequent

intervals during my early months of sobriety inhibited my growth in the program. As someone once said, "When God seems far away, who moved?" Invariably, I was, and am, the one out of sync.

A most gracious lady put it very aptly at a meeting when she summed up the meaning of the AA program by saying, "The program lets me rest." There's great beauty in those five short words. Proper program maintenance, using Step Ten, keeps this beauty flowing in its proper perspective as I prepare to complete my third year of sobriety, a day at a time. It permits me to be gentle with myself.

For me today, the Tenth Step is truly remarkable. When I

keep it up front, it helps me to more easily use the entire Twelve Steps, thereby providing me with the reasonable assurance that progress can be maintained at an acceptable level, provided I use the suggestions contained in this miraculous program.

Bert M.
Madison, Wisconsin

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*the 10th Step... "Continued to take personal inventory and
when we were wrong promptly admitted it."*

Ours Not To Judge

From Stumbling Blocks to Cornerstones of Serenity

The first edition of the book *Alcoholics Anonymous* makes this brief statement about membership: "The only requirement for membership is an honest desire to stop drinking. We are not allied with any particular faith, sect or denomination nor do we oppose anyone. We simply wish to be helpful to those who are afflicted." This expressed our feeling as of 1939, the year our book was published.

Since that day all kinds of experiments with membership have been tried. The number of membership rules which have been made (and mostly broken!) are legion. Two or three years ago the Central Office asked the groups to list their membership rules and send them in. After they arrived we set them all down. They took a great many sheets of paper. A little reflection upon these many rules brought us to an astonishing conclusion. If all of these edicts had been in force everywhere at once it would have been practically impossible for any alcoholic to have ever joined Alcoholics Anonymous. About nine-tenths of our oldest and best members could never have got by!

Who'd Have Lasted?

In some cases we would have been too discouraged by the demands made upon us. Most of the early members of A.A. would have been thrown out because they slipped too much, because their morals were too bad, because they had mental as well as alcoholic difficulties. Or, believe it or not, because they did not come from the so-called better classes of society. We oldsters could have been excluded for our failure to read the book *Alcoholics Anonymous* or the refusal of our sponsor to vouch for us as a candidate. And so on ad infinitum. The way our "worthy" alcoholics have sometime tried to judge the "less worthy" is, as we look back on it, rather comical. Imagine, if you can, one alcoholic judging another!

At one time or another most A.A. Groups go on rule-making benders. Naturally enough, too, as a Group commences to grow rapidly it is confronted with many alarming problems. Panhandlers begin to pan-handle. Members get drunk and sometimes get others drunk with them. Those with mental difficulties throw depressions or break out into paranoid denunciations of fellow members. Gossips gossip, and righteously denounce the local Wolves and Red Riding Hoods. Newcomers argue that they aren't alcoholics at all, but keep coming around anyway. "Slippers" trade on the fair name of A.A., in order to get themselves jobs. Others refuse to accept all the 12 Steps of the Recovery Program. Some go still further, saying that, the "God business" is bunk and quite unnecessary. Under these conditions our conservative program-abiding members get scared. These appalling conditions must be controlled, they think. Else A.A. will surely go to

rack and ruin. They view with alarm for the good of the Movement!

At this point the Group enters the rule and regulation phase. Charters, by-laws and membership rules are excitedly passed and authority is granted committees to filter out undesirables and

whose false righteousness does our Group the deeper spiritual damage.

Ours Not to Judge

Every older A.A. shudders when he remembers the names of persons he once condemned; people he confidently predicted would never sober up; persons he was sure ought to be thrown out of A.A. for the good of the movement. Now that some of these very persons have been sober for years, and may be numbered among his best friends, the old timer thinks to himself "What if everybody had judged these people as I once did? What if A.A. had slammed its door in their faces? Where would they be now?"

That is why we all judge the newcomer less and less. If alcohol is an uncontrollable problem to him and he wishes to do something about it, that is enough for us. We care not whether his case is severe or light, whether his morals are good or bad, whether he has other complications or not. Our A.A. door stands wide open, and if he passes through it and commences to do anything at all about his problem, he is considered a member of Alcoholics Anonymous. He signs nothing, agrees to nothing, promises nothing. We demand nothing. He joins us on his own say so. Nowadays, in most Groups, he doesn't

even have to admit he is an alcoholic. He can join A.A. on the mere suspicion that he may be one, that he may already show the fatal symptoms of our malady.

Of course this is not the universal state of affairs throughout A.A. Membership rules still exist. If a member persists in coming to meetings drunk he may be led outside; we may ask someone to take him away. But in most Groups he can come back next day, if sober. Though he may be thrown out of a club, nobody thinks of throwing him out of A.A. He is a member as long as he says he is. While this broad concept of A.A. membership is not yet unanimous, it does represent the main current of A.A. thought today. We do not wish to deny anyone his chance to recover from alcoholism. We wish to be just as inclusive as we can, never exclusive.

Perhaps this trend signifies something much deeper than a mere change of attitude on the question of membership. Perhaps it means that we are losing all fear of those violent emotional storms which sometimes cross our alcoholic world; perhaps it bespeaks our confidence that every storm will be followed by a calm; a calm which is more understanding, more compassionate, more tolerant than any we ever knew before.

Bill W., August, 1946

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discipline the evil doers. Then the Group Elders, now clothed with authority, commence to get busy. Recalcitrants are cast into the outer darkness, respectable busybodies throw stones at the sinners. As for the so-called sinners, they either insist on staying around, or else they form a new Group of their own. Or maybe they join a more congenial and less intolerant crowd in their neighborhood. The Elders soon discover that the rules and regulations aren't working very well. Most attempts at enforcement generate such waves of dissension and intolerance in the Group that this condition is presently recognized to be worse for the Group life than the very worst that the worst ever did.

After a time fear and intolerance subside. The Group survives unscathed. Everybody has learned a great deal. So it is, that few of us are any longer afraid of what any newcomer can do to our A.A. reputation or effectiveness. Those who slip, those who pan-handle, those who scandalize, those with mental twists, those who rebel at the program, those who trade on the A.A. reputation --all such persons seldom harm an A.A. Group for long. Some of these have become our most respected and best loved. Some have remained to try our patience, sober nevertheless. Others have drifted away. We have begun to regard these ones not as menaces, but rather as our teachers. They oblige us to cultivate patience, tolerance and humility. We finally see that they are only people sicker than the rest of us, that we who condemn them are the Pharisees