

ALTERNATIVE

"INTER-GROUP NEWSLETTER FOR THE READING AREA" August, 1996

..FIRST
THINGS
FIRST.

BUT FOR
THE GRACE
OF GOD.

A Short Course in Human Relations

The SIX Most Important Words:
"I ADMIT I MADE A MISTAKE"

The FIVE Most Important Words:
"YOU DID A GOOD JOB"

The FOUR Most Important Words:
"WHAT IS YOUR OPINION?"

The THREE Most Important Words:
"WOULD YOU PLEASE"

The TWO Most Important Words:
"THANK YOU"

The ONE Most Important Word:
"WE"

The LEAST Most Important Word:
"I"

EASY
DOES
... IT ...

THINK....
THINK
....THINK

LIVE
AND LET
LIVE..

HOW WE BEHAVE IN PUBLIC MIRRORS AA AS A WHOLE

AA is the sum of all its two million parts—us. Which means that the message of sobriety we carry is only as strong and attractive as we are. If our friends in the community perceive us positively, they will recommend us to the sick alcoholic. Conversely, if we project an unpleasant impression, that same alcoholic may fall through the cracks of public distaste, distrust and outright enmity.

For nearly 60 years the Fellowship has enjoyed ever-deepening acceptance and confidence at the public level. But lately, in some areas of the U.S./Canada, the egregious conduct of some members threatens to disrupt this essential harmony. Two cases in point:

In one state last September, a church pastor wrote a letter stating that "I have found it necessary to ask the AA group to leave." The reasons as set forth by the pastor were: "(1) Church members have been told by members of the AA group 'not to attend the programs offered by the church'; (2) Language used on the premises is unacceptable, and when brought to the attention of members of the AA group, the church members were told, 'We pay rent so we can do anything we want to'; (3) Members of the group have been asked repeatedly not to park on the grass or in the driveway, and we find they still park where they are not supposed to." In conclusion the pastor noted, "The work of AA is supported by the ___ church and me personally, and it is with regret that I must ask you to leave." Copies of his letter were sent not only to the resident AA group and the General Service Office, but to two officers of the church—possibly setting in motion a negative ripple effect for the whole of AA.

On the West coast, a similar situation prevails, but on a broader scale: For about 25 years, area groups have held an annual picnic that was well attended and enjoyed by the membership. The event enjoyed smooth sailing into the 1980s, but about ten years ago problems began to surface, and last June they reached an impasse, according to Jean P., who for 20 years has

served as manager of a local central service office. In an open memorandum headed "How Our Behavior Affects AA as a Whole—a Loving Appraisal," Jean wrote, "Again our behavior is affecting us at the public level. Our last picnic was so bad, the neighbors around the area petitioned against our using the facilities again."

Jean then listed the more blatant violations of the facility's rules, including: trashing the grounds and restrooms and failure to clean up; lax supervision of children, leading to an incident in which some of them tossed heavy water-filled balloons into a man's face; neglecting to put out smoldering coals left at the base of a tree; violating the "no pets" clause in the contract; rude, raucous behavior; and

"Are AAs more unruly and inconsiderate than they used to be, or are there just more of us?"

parking a number of motorcycles not in designated parking areas but on the picnic grounds.

These and other reports raise some pressing questions: Are AAs more unruly and inconsiderate than they used to be, or are there just more of us? Is there anything we can do collectively to reverse what appears to be a dismaying trend? If so, what? Says Jean: "There is no question but that part of the difficulties are due to sheer volume. For example, attendance at our annual picnic has more than doubled in size, from about 650 to 1,500 people, including more young people and children than we had early on."

As AA co-founder Bill W. wrote (in the Third Legacy Manual, p. 136), "To reach more alcoholics, understanding of AA and public good will towards AA must go on growing everywhere..... Toward this end and, as Babs G. of East Hampton puts it, "pull up our socks and improve

our bad manners," here are some suggested topics, born of AA experience, that lend themselves to a group inventory or sharing session:

- Do our group's officers communicate often and openly with the "landlord"? As renters of the premises, do we fulfill our financial obligations in a timely fashion? Do we observe the house rules with courtesy and consideration? . When we schedule dances, picnics or other special events, are the rules of the establishment posted and understood by individual members well beforehand? Is ample security provided for?

- Have we connected Tradition Eleven's principle of "attraction rather than promotion" with the willingness of our nonalcoholic friends to refer alcoholics to us? Do we understand that we as members bear responsibility for their impression of AA?

- Finally, do we realize that whenever we function as AAs at the public level, we *are* AA? Do we see that anonymity does not conceal bad manners?

As active alcoholics, most of us were too sick to think about our effect on others; all our energy was focused on the now and the next drink. As an AA contributor to the booklet *Came to Believe* explains (p. 118-120): "I was spiritually bankrupt long before AA entered my life.... I got sober in AA, and ... began to have *concern* for others.... I began to feel for others, to be able, for very brief moments, to put myself in their shoes.... I was not the center of the universe.... None of us can ever fathom... the uncharted regions of the universe. But we can live on earth and love one another. We can let in the beginnings of concern, *compassion, consideration*, and watch ourselves grow."

If you have experience to share on the subject of this article, your input would be welcome.

Reprinted from Box 459

WOMEN'S PRISON: Volunteers needed to attend meetings on Monday evenings. Please call Liaison Chris H. at 371-0102.

NEW MEETING: "Time to Start Living"; Fridays at 6:30 p.m., Good Shepherd Church, Rte 61 & Tuckerton Rds., Temple. Contacts: Terri or Scott 921-2789.

1ST ANNIVERSARY: Women Do Recover, 647 Walnut St., Sunday, August 18, 2:00 to 3:30 pm.

2ND ANNIVERSARY: Gibraltar Group. Friday, August 16 at 8:00 p.m. Speakers, food and fun.

FLEETWOOD ANNIVERSARY: Sunday, August 18, 2:00 to 8:00 p.m, Fleetwood Park. Softball and Cookout. Open Speaker's Meeting at St. Paul's Church.

RAAAC DANCE: Saturday, August 10, Penn State/Berks Campus, 9:30 p.m. to 1:30 a.m. \$5.00. Come early for Speaker's Meeting at 7:30 p.m.

TRIP TO STEPPING STONES, N.Y. (Bill W. Home): Sponsored by Recovery Riders Group. Saturday, September 14. For more information contact Jim P. 562-7939 or Marty B. 373-6316.

FOUND AT JULY 7 PICNIC: Woman's change purse. Call Emily B. at 779-6918.

=====INSTITUTIONAL COMMITMENTS FOR AUGUST=====

ST. JOSEPH'S
Sundays at 8 PM

4- Another Chance
11- Robesonia
18- Young People
25- Leesport

WERNERSVILLE
Tuesdays at 7 PM

6- Another Chance
13- Come As You Are
20- Robesonia
27- Phoenix

CHIT CHAT
Thursdays at 8 PM

1- Walnut St.
8- Turning Point
15- Take The Light
22- Leesport
29- Robesonia

(If you cannot meet your commitment, please arrange for a back-up
and call Stan S. at 375-1441)

Courage to Change

+++INTERGROUP COUNTS ON YOUR CONTRIBUTIONS+++

MANY THANKS FOR CONTRIBUTIONS RECEIVED FROM THE FOLLOWING DURING THE PAST MONTH: Caron DUI; Men's TLC; Toma Lo Con Carma; Walnut Street; Wilshire;

OTHER COMING EVENTS: See Your GSR for More Information:

August 18 - 4th Mini Conference - York

September 5-8 - 39th Annual Int'l Conference of Young People in A.A.
Anaheim, CA

October 27 - District #33 Workshop

November 8 - EPGSA Convention,

ALL MEMBERS ARE WELCOME TO ATTEND INTERGROUP AND DISTRICT MEETINGS. SEE YOUR MEETING SCHEDULE FOR TIME AND PLACE.

Chair: Jack V.	375-1672	Alternate Chair: Bob B.	376-6007
Secretary: Chris M.	775-2120	Treasurer: Harry S.	562-0924
Hotline: Carolyn G.	929-0598	Schedules: Irish G.	670-5066
Alternative: Mary R.	478-8442	Books & Lit.: Bob B.	376-6007
Women's Prison: Chris H.	371-0102	Men's Prison: Steve S.	678-0644
Archives: Harry S.	562-0924	Institutions: Stan S.	375-1441
Unity: Nancy B.	678-6039	CPCPI: Lesley K.	856-1365
Spanish Liaison: Jose S.	372-3857	District Liaison Tim M.	927-0403
Luis M.	478-8128; Miguel R.	208-0806	

371-4781

