

**QUEENS INTERGROUP OF ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS
NEWSLETTER**

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OFFICE HOURS: TUESDAYS & THURSDAYS 7PM TO 9PM SATURDAYS 10AM TO 2PM

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2020 2ND QUARTER/(APRIL/MAY/JUNE) NEWSLETTER



VIRTUAL MEETINGS

I would be very remiss in writing a newsletter and not including an article about the emergence of the AA meetings on Zoom. With all the meeting closures as a result of the COVID-19 Outbreak, including my Homegroup – Elm Heights, the Members of Elm Heights were confronted with a racking dilemma. How will the Group stay sober and carry the Message to the still sick and suffering alcoholic? One of our members-Juan S. set up a teleconference by phone, which we used the first couple of weeks in March. It was around that time that some innovative AA's were hosting AA meetings with their personal Zoom accounts. There were and are 4 plans offered by Zoom. Basic, Pro, Business, and Enterprise. With the Basic Plan, the advantage was that it was free. The downside was the 40-minute limit on group meetings. With the Pro Plan, the advantage was a 24-hour limit, the downside was that it was \$14.99 per Month. The aforementioned plans can host up to 100 participants. Larger Groups may be better served by opting for the Business or Enterprise Plan, which can host 300 and 500 participants, respectively.

In an e-mail dated March 24, 2020 from New York Intergroup, which included information regarding AA activity in our area, NY Intergroup in a bold move, created a new AA Zoom Room link. Let me tell you Ladies & Gentleman, this was truly a game changer! Using the link provided by NY Intergroup, my home group, Elm Heights registered with Zoom to host our weekly Wednesday & Friday meetings. If your group wants to register with NY Intergroup via Zoom you can go to: www.nyintergroup.org/remote-meetings/join-the-nyig-zoom-meeting-room/

They set this up so that anyone can host their own meeting without having to sign up and pay for Zoom. Each "room" can host up to 500 meetings per hour. Groups may decide to opt for a password for their meeting to increase security. Contributions to NY Intergroup can be made via Credit Card, PayPal, or Venmo: @nyintergroup

If you go to NY Intergroup Remote AA Meetings website (www.nyintergroup.org/remote-meetings/), you can find a remote meeting, list a meeting or update an existing meeting by clicking on the top right corner of the page and then scroll down. NY Intergroup is paying the Enterprise License on a monthly basis and in keeping with the 7th tradition which states, "Every AA Group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions", so if you or your group would like to contribute to NY Intergroup, you can find the link to the contributions page in the same menu.

Upcoming Events

**SENY Area 49
Post Conference Virtual
Assembly
June 13, 2020
9:00AM -3:00PM
Go: events.aaseny.org
For Details!**

**Queens Virtual Speaker
Exchange
June 27, 2020
9:00 AM**

**To Participate send an
email to
webmaster@queensaa.org**

**Group Rep Meeting in
September: Date to be
Announced!**

Website for anyone seeking help:
www.findtreatment.gov
Current information available on
rehab/treatment centers still open

Contributions to
Queens Intergroup
Can be made Virtually!

PayPal or Zelle
(Must have an account)
treasurer@queensaa.org

Although many members are using the Zoom Technology, many of the old-timers have been left in the dust. Many were accustomed to attending conventional meetings. It wouldn't be a bad idea to reach out to some of these members and see how they are doing.

Some FAQ's About the Big Book

Where did the Big Book get its nickname? When Alcoholic Anonymous was published, the founding members wanted purchasers to be sure they were getting their money's worth. So, they instructed the printer to run the job on the thickest paper he had "The original volume proved to be so bulky that it became known as the 'Big Book,'" Bill W said.

Who wrote the "To Wives" Chapter? Bill W. wrote that chapter. According to his wife, Lois, she wanted to write it, but Bill "insisted" on doing it himself. "I was mad", she said, adding, not "so much mad as hurt". The reason he gave for wanting to write the chapter himself, said Lois, was that "he thought it should be the same style as the rest of the book". ('Pass It On,' page 200)

Where did the custom that some groups still follow a reading from chapter 5 at the beginning of meetings get started? A man by the name of Mort J. sobered up in 1939 solely from reading the big book. He moved to Los Angeles in 1940, at his own expense rented a meeting room in the Cecil Hotel. He "insisted on reading from chapter 5 of the AA book at the start of every session," according to Alcoholics Anonymous Comes of Age (page 93). The practice took root on the West coast and spread from there.

How much has the price of the Big Book risen since 1939? The original price of the Big Book was \$3.50; the hardcover Fourth Edition is now \$9.50 and is available in 71 languages, including the original English, and arrange of formats including softcover, large print, audio (on cassette or CD), Brail, DVD (for ASL), and portable abridged versions.

Courtesy of Box 459, Spring 2020

Something to Consider

Even though the QIAA office is closed right now, there are still expenses, such as rent, utilities, etc., which QIAA is responsible to pay. It was decided by the steering committee that it was important to setup an online contributions account. If you or your group would like to contribute, you may now do so via PayPal and Zelle by sending the payments to treasurer@queensaa.org (**Be advised**, you must have a PayPal or Zelle Account).

Here is a story from my longtime AA friend Jimmy R. whom I've known for 25 years. I greatly appreciate the time he took to write and share his AA experience with us.

Hi, my name is Jimmy and I am an alcoholic.

My story with alcoholism and finding Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) is one of a son that was lost, but was found again, plucked out of the mire by a family of people who could relate to my struggle and a relationship with my Higher Power, who I choose to call God. Now, my daily sobriety comes from applying the practices taught by AA to all aspects of my life and I seek to help other alcoholics in doing the same.

My lifelong ally is AA and my connection with God. Even though I will always consider myself an alcoholic, my story ends with 30 years of sobriety and a full life as a loving father. Sadly, I know many people who were not so lucky. When dealing with alcoholism, the journey is never easy, but my experience has taught me that doing it alone is never an option that you are forced to take.

I grew up in the Queens Borough in Long Island City, New York. Back then, I was the only white kid on the block, earning me the affectionate, if unoriginal, nickname "white boy." Drinking was part of the culture in my neighborhood. At a certain point, someone's older brother hands you your first drink, and down the line, you hand someone else's little brother their first drink. It was the way of things.

In AA, they talk about the "invisible line" into alcoholism that you can cross without even realizing it. I crossed the line at some point when blacking out, waking up with broken bones, and being rushed to the ER to get my stomach pumped became my new normal.

My drinking career was a vicious cycle of lying, cheating, stealing, and hurting myself and others. When the daily obsession to drink led me to literally sell the leather jacket off my back, sneakers from my feet, and gold chain from around my neck, I knew my life had become unmanageable.

Those years were sprinkled with "wake-up calls" followed by failed attempts at sobriety. My first attempt to sober up was to relocate, thinking outside influences were the source of my compulsion. I tried moving in with my dad in New Hampshire and was drunk again after two days. When I attended an outpatient program from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., I found myself drunk by 6 p.m. I also tried joining a Christian-based program with the same results.

In the end, I found my first step toward true recovery in the emergency room during my third visit in less than a month. My attending doctor told me about Danny, one of his patients in a coma after overdosing, whose visitors were the staff from a therapeutic community called Outreach House. The doctor recommended I attend the 20-month program at Outreach House. At 18 years old, out of options and resolved not to end up like Danny, I accepted the doctor's invitation.

I vividly remember sitting in Outreach House without a drink, shaking and baking. The first feelings I ever felt without alcohol in my body were guilt, shame, and remorse. My mind was flooded with thoughts of how much pain, suffering, and misery I caused my loved ones and myself. I could not sit in my own skin. After 60 days, the pain of not being able to live with myself without a drink was so great, I decided I was going to leave Outreach House for the only thing I knew would help: a drink.

On my way out, I stopped to inform my counselor, Dave that I was leaving. When he asked why and I explained what I was going through, I found a kindred soul in Dave. Dave's compassionate mentorship in that hour delivered strength and hope from someone who understood me as one alcoholic to another. I ended up staying, and the real healing began.

It was at Outreach House that I was first introduced to Alcoholics Anonymous. AA members Dan and Loraine took on the institutional commitment at Outreach House, delivering the AA program and discussing the 12 steps every Sunday. If it were not for Dan and Loraine, I simply would not be sober today. Dan and Loraine, if you happen to be reading this, I am indebted to you both. Your service many years ago paid off. You helped save my life.

Outreach House got me sober, AA keeps me sober. Even though the last place I wanted to go after nearly 2 years in rehab was an AA meeting, I did not want to throw away my progress. I made the Broadway-Steinway meeting in Astoria, Queens two days after I left Outreach House. I was reunited with a childhood friend, Steve, who was seven years sober at the time. Steve hugged me and said, "I'm your sponsor, this is your home group and we are going to get you a commitment tonight." Steve packaged it perfectly for me. That night the bridge from rehab to reality was built right before my very eyes. I know today, that was God working in my life.

Steve stayed true to his word. He picked me up every night for AA meetings, introduced me to his AA network, and showed me sobriety can be fun. Steve eventually had too much fun, picked up a drink, and put it down 15 years later. When Steve came back to AA, he asked me to sponsor him. Today, I sponsor Steve. Our role reversal makes us even more grateful to each other and God for keeping us sober, one day at a time.

As I look back today on my 30-year journey in AA, I can vividly see where God parachuted people into my life. For me, any challenge in my life today has one solution: invite God into it, help another alcoholic, and make a meeting. When I practice this principle, no matter what it is that I am going through, peace and serenity eventually always breakthrough.

When you join AA, they hand you a copy of *Alcoholics Anonymous*, also called "the Big Book" that becomes a staple of your sobriety journey. My sponsor Bill M., constantly reminds me who is in charge and the fact that the Big Book has over 400 references related to "no human power" and "we can't do this alone." These references in the Big Book remind us that it is okay to struggle because we are not expected to recover by ourselves or without support.

There were many threats to my sobriety that I fought off through the power of my faith in my AA family, my network of supporters, and my belief that God was continuing to work in my life. Despite my progress, I was not immune to heartache and pain.

Nearly 20 years ago, my brother, Shawn, died of an overdose at just 21 years old. I will never forget the true spiritual experience of seeing a parade of AA people marching into the funeral home during Shawn's wake offering me their support and comfort.

Fifteen years ago, my father was brutally murdered with a sledgehammer, a crime that took authorities two years to finally make an arrest. My constant source of support during that turbulent time was my AA family.

Alcoholism is a disease, not a weakness of character. My disease wants me dead but will settle for me being sober, miserable, and living in fear. I reject that by relying on the good experiences that remind me to appreciate this life and fight for my sobriety.

The most amazing gift God gave me was making me a dad. When the doctor handed Sean to me for the first time, my hands were visibly shaking. I remember holding my son in my hands, sober for years, and a voice inside my head saying "Look at you, your hands are shaking, you can't even hold your own son. What kind of father are you going to be?" The insidious nature of my disease still works in my life alongside even the brightest moments. But by the time my wife, Rosa, was released from the hospital, I overcame the doubts and could spin Sean on one finger!

Three years later, Rosa and I noticed Sean was not responding to his name, making eye contact, or speaking. The night Sean was diagnosed with autism, I got on my knees, tears rolling down my face, and made a deal with God. I told God I would continue to help other alcoholics in AA get sober if he would surround Sean with the support he needed to improve. God and I shook hands on that deal. Sean is now 11 years old with a team of saints assembled to support his tremendous progress.

There are simply not enough words in the dictionary or colors in the rainbow to express how grateful I am to Alcoholics Anonymous, the 12 steps, members of AA, and my relationship with my Higher Power. From AA room to AA Zoom, I can honestly say I love Alcoholics Anonymous for teaching me to apply their principles to every area in my life.

There is a section of the Big Book titled "The Promises" that speaks to the promise of progress through painstaking effort, investing in our fellows, and using our experiences to help others. Those promises are present in my life through my experiences with AA in one hand and God in the other. I have experienced levels of happiness, freedom, and joy that I simply cannot find at the bottom of a bottle. My friend Joey C from the AA group at Broadway-Steinway always said, "We can't keep it in our pocket, we must give it away." Today, I empty my pocket and heart to any newcomer reading this. The bottom line is this: the program works if you work it, it will not if you do not. What you put into it is what you will get out of it. Half measures avail us nothing. A life beyond my wildest dreams, has been delivered. My dearest friend, Patrick Hosey, sober for over 27 years, passed away a few months ago from colon and liver cancer at just 52 years old. As Patrick spoke at his AA anniversary this past December, his family watching on, knowing the doctors gave him just a few months to live, Patrick talked about how his experience in AA has been that of a "magic carpet ride." Pat, thanks for asking me to "hop on" and take that magic carpet ride with you. This is in memory of you.

Here are some Ham on Wry jokes from previous AA Grapevines:

Heard at Meetings:

"I always wanted to control everything. But as an Alcoholic I realize I am uniquely unqualified to rule the world".

To a woman whose last drink was a swig of vanilla, an old timer said: "Don't bake and go to Meetings."

"I think Alcoholism is contagious, I caught it after going to a few AA Meetings" - From June 2000 Grapevine

An alcoholic wakes up in jail. He asks the first police officer he sees, "Why am I here?"

"For drinking," replies the officer.

"Great," says the man, "when do we start?" - upjoke.com

A girl working with her sponsor asked "Where can I read about my sex problems?"

Sponsor said, "That's covered on page 69."

Later at home the page number got jumbled as she tried to remember and she turned to page 96 for her sex problems:

"Do not be discouraged if your prospect does not respond at once. Search out another alcoholic and try again. You are sure to find someone desperate enough to accept with eagerness what you offer. We find it a waste of time to keep chasing a man who cannot or will not work with you".

Special thanks to Joann M., John Francis B., Deborah (Treasurer), my sponsee Atif C., and The Entire QIAA Steering Committee. If you have any articles that you would like to submit ("Limit to 2000 words or 2 pages " for future article submissions), you may email me at shearseddie@gmail.com