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News and Notes from the General Service Office of A.A.®

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[www.aa.org](http://www.aa.org)



*In this  
Holiday Season  
of gratitude and spiritual  
renewal, your friends at G.S.O.  
wish you peace and sobriety  
in the coming year.*



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## ■ 2012 Regional Forums

Regional Forums strengthen the Fellowship's Three Legacies of Recovery, Unity and Service by providing an opportunity for A.A. group and area representatives, as well as any interested A.A. members in a particular region, to share experience, strength and hope with representatives of the General Service Board and G.S.O. and Grapevine staff members. There is no registration fee for Regional Forums, they are hosted by the General Service Board and coordinated by G.S.O.

These weekend sharing sessions enhance and widen communication, and help spark new ideas in better carrying the message through service work.

Mailings regarding each Regional Forum are sent to area committee members, delegates, D.C.M.s, and central offices and intergroups approximately six months ahead of time. Online registration is also available at [www.aa.org](http://www.aa.org).

The final Regional Forum in 2011 is in the East Central region, November 11-13, at Holiday Inn-Dayton Mall, Miamisburg, Ohio. In 2012 Regional Forums are planned as follows:

- *Western Canada*—June 1-3, The Coast Edmonton Plaza Hotel, Edmonton, Alberta
- *Eastern Canada*—July 6-8, Holiday Inn/Parkway Convention Centre, St. Catherine's, Ontario
- *East Central (Additional)*—August 10-12, Holiday Inn and Convention Center, Mt. Vernon, Illinois
- *Pacific*—September 14-16, Westmark Hotel Fairbanks, Fairbanks, Alaska
- *Southeast*—November 9-11, Marriott Boca Raton, Boca Raton, Florida

## ■ Deadline for A.A. Directories

A.A. Directories provide contact information to help other alcoholics locate a meeting in your town, whether they are new, or traveling from out-of-town locations. When a group agrees to be included in a Directory, this office needs the name and phone number of a contact.

In order to be included in the 2012 Regional Directories group updates made via Fellowship New Vision (FNV) should be completed by May 11, 2012.

Hard copy updates should be received at the G.S.O. Records department no later than May 4, 2012 to be included.

## ■ Holiday Gift Ideas

You may want to make your holiday shopping easier by remembering A.A. friends, sponsors and sponsees with A.A. and Grapevine literature. Some suggestions:

From the Grapevine:

- *The Language of the Heart*, a compilation of Bill W.'s 150 Grapevine articles from 1944 to the late '60s. Hardcover (GV-06, \$13.95); softcover (GV-11, \$12.95); large-print (GV-18, \$14.95).
- *A Rabbit Walks Into a Bar* is a collection of Grapevine cartoons, sure to delight any and every A.A. member (GV-22, \$9.95; 5 or more \$9.50 ea.).
- Grapevine Wall Calendar (MS-08, \$9.00).
- Grapevine Pocket Planner (MS-09, \$4.75).

From A.A.W.S.:

- A special gift is a boxed set of *Alcoholics Anonymous*, 4th edition, and *Experience, Strength & Hope* (B-11; \$13), which contains the 56 stories dropped when new editions of the Big Book were produced. These stories, which had been unavailable for years, are now rejoined in this volume. The boxed set comes with a 16-page booklet on the history of the writing of the Big Book. A single volume of *Experience, Strength & Hope* (B-20) is \$5.00.
- Another item that many might not be aware of is the abridged Big Book on CD (M-81A; \$18.00).

For gifts that last all year: Subscriptions to *Box 4-5-9* (\$6 a year for 10 copies of each issue) and the A.A. Grapevine (\$28.97) have for years been popular gift ideas. For Spanish-speaking A.A.s there is *La Viña* (\$11.97).

For Grapevine material check online at [www.aagrapevine.org](http://www.aagrapevine.org), or write to AA Grapevine, PO Box 16867, North Hollywood, CA 91615-6867.

A.A. World Services literature may be ordered through your local intergroup or central office or from the General Service Office. (Shipping charges may apply.)

Please post *Twelve Tips on Keeping Your Holiday Season Sober and Joyous* (page 10) on your group bulletin board.

## ■ E-Books: Carrying A.A.'s Message in a Digital World

Alcoholics Anonymous has always relied on a simple spiritual message of hope for the suffering alcoholic: that there is a way out. It is a message meant to reach alcoholics of all descriptions, in all times, all places, and through as many channels of communication as possible. In A.A.'s early days, before the Big Book was even written, when a phone call cost just five cents, A.A. members engaged in "nickel therapy," calling newcomers and reaching out to old friends; soon came a multilith manuscript sharing the experience of the first 100 members and eventually a first printing of the Fellowship's basic text, *Alcoholics Anonymous*; in later years, A.A. Loners and travelers carried the Big Book



and Grapevine stories on audiocassette; and, later still, alcoholics in treatment facilities got A.A.'s message on videocassettes and compact discs. Then came home computers, the Internet, and the quantum leap to carrying the message in a digital age.

As noted in the foreword to the Fourth Edition of the Big Book, "While our literature has preserved the integrity of the A.A. message, sweeping changes in society as a whole are reflected in new customs and practices within the Fellowship. Taking advantage of technological advances, for example, A.A. members with computers can participate in meetings online, sharing with fellow alcoholics across the country or around the world. In any meeting, anywhere, A.A.'s share experience, strength, and hope with each other, in order to stay sober and help other alcoholics. Modem-to-modem or face-to-face, A.A.s speak the language of the heart in all its power and simplicity."

In an effort to keep up with these "new customs and practices," a digital e-book format for carrying the A.A. message has been under consideration throughout the Fellowship and by A.A. World Services, Inc. (A.A.W.S.) for several years. So it was with a great deal of excitement that the A.A.W.S. Board announced their approval for the e-book project in December 2010. "One of the major benefits to the Fellowship," says Phyllis H., G.S.O.'s general manager, "will be in having broader access to our A.A. message through an electronic format that is familiar to an ever growing number of our membership. Some have asked if this will 'replace' the print Big Book, and while this may happen in the future, most agree that for now, we will want both — our own paper copy Big Book and an electronic version. The e-books will have full functionality with a searchable feature, highlighted text, a placeholder for notes, and importantly, font change for large print reading. The Big Book and *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*

are but a beginning. We look forward to announcing additional e-book-formatted A.A. literature in 2012."

Information about the e-books project has been circulated widely to Conference members who have received regular updates through A.A.W.S. Highlights and the General Service Board *Quarterly Report*. An overview of the project was recently presented at the 61st General Service Conference, and notice has been posted on G.S.O.'s A.A. Web site about the upcoming availability of e-books.

A priority in these discussions has been that the distribution and sale of e-books be controlled as much as possible by A.A. World Services, Inc., as it is with all of A.A.'s copyrighted literature, thereby ensuring the protection and integrity of the A.A. message.

With this goal in mind, "It was decided to develop a secure infrastructure that would include an A.A.W.S. Online Store," says Phyllis, "through which the 'app' for downloading the books would be provided and from which the books would be sold."

After a lengthy process of Board planning, budgeting and development of the A.A. Online Store that included the back-office technology, the digital rights management system, credit card and accounting system interfaces, creation of the application (app) itself, and conversion of the first two books to the new e-book format, the targeted roll-out date for the e-book versions of the Big Book and "Twelve and Twelve" —available in English, French, and Spanish— is mid-winter 2011. The pricing, set by A.A.W.S in September, will be \$6.00 each for these two publications.

According to Charlie Shell (nonalcoholic), G.S.O.'s information technology consultant who has been working on the e-books project since its inception, the supported devices for the winter roll-out will be the Apple iPhone, iPod Touch, and iPad. "To download and read A.A.W.S. e-books," says Charlie, "the purchaser must first install the free 'A.A. eReader App,' developed by A.A.W.S., from the Apple Appstore. Utilizing A.A. eReader App is the only way our e-books can be downloaded and read on supported devices."

With A.A.'s new e-books, members will have the Fellowship's core literature available literally at their fingertips, saving time, space and money, while adding mobility and ease of use. The searchable text feature will allow readers to find specific passages, phrases or keywords quickly and the e-book format will allow readers to adjust the type size to their liking and to add and delete bookmarks and notes at will to highlight important aspects of the text.

Accessed through G.S.O.'s A.A. Web site, the A.A. Online Store will be open around the clock. Customer service related to the e-books project will be available from the General Service Office by e-mail and telephone for questions related to obtaining and using the A.A. eReader App as well as questions about purchasing e-

books from the A.A. Online Store.

In terms of future developments, an Android version of the A.A. eReader App will be available approximately four weeks after the initial roll-out. “This version of the A.A. eReader App,” says Charlie, “is designed to support Android based SmartPhones that have a standard-sized display and may be downloaded from the Android Market.

“G.S.O and A.A.W.S. will continue to monitor mobile device trends,” Charlie concludes, “to determine possible devices that might be supported in the future.”

As Bill W. noted in an address at the annual dinner of the New York Intergroup Association on October 10, 1970, delivered by his wife, Lois, after his death, “A.A. must and will continue to change with the passing years. We cannot, nor should we, turn back the clock.”

And so, while A.A.’s message of hope and recovery never wavers, just how that message is delivered continues to evolve in today’s digital world.

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## ■ Visiting Stepping Stones

Stepping Stones, the home of A.A. co-founder Bill W. and his wife Lois in Bedford Hills, New York, is visited by legions of A.A. members, friends and historians.

However, because the home is in a densely populated residential area no coach buses are permitted on or near the site.

The Stepping Stones Foundation has requested that groups planning a visit should contact Stepping Stones in advance for an appointment. Information is available by calling (914) 232-4822 or on their Web site [www.stepsstones.org](http://www.stepsstones.org).

Visitors may come by minibus (28 passengers or less) but an appointment is still necessary.

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## ■ Going Forward With Gratitude

The Birthday Plan is a longstanding A.A. method of celebrating sobriety. To mark an A.A. anniversary, many A.A. members contribute one dollar or more for every year of sobriety to the General Service Office. Some A.A.s have been known to have a “penny a day” fund to express gratitude for their sobriety.

The Birthday Plan originated in Oklahoma City in 1954. Ab A., a delegate from Tulsa, came up with the idea while in conversation with fellow member Ted R. As Ab later recalled, the two members thought, “Wouldn’t a lot of A.A.’s be glad to contribute a dollar a year to G.S.O. for each year of A.A. life?” (As a sign of those times, Ab added, “Up to a limit of \$10.00?”)

Ab explained further that, “The idea is that you talk about this in your own group. However the group doesn’t

vote on whether to accept the Plan — that’s an individual, voluntary thing.”

The effects of this idea were immediate. Within a year, contributions to G.S.O. from Oklahoma had nearly doubled and by 1956 the idea had spread around the state. By 1961, the Birthday Plan was recommended at the General Service Conference and today it is a worldwide practice, though still very much an individual, voluntary thing.” It is a solid example of what Bill W. once referred to as the place “where spirituality and money can mix.”

While this method of celebration has continued since Ab’s initial suggestion, it has also been helped along by enthusiastic members. In the 1990s, at the General Service Conference in New York, South Florida delegate John K. talked about “how effective the Birthday Plan used to be.” He returned to his home group, and that summer he and his wife set up a Birthday Plan committee at the quarterly A.A. assembly in Sarasota, Florida. With great flourish, the couple set up a booth with candy, birthday hats, whistles and balloons, along with Birthday Plan envelopes addressed to G.S.O. Envelopes were distributed to 1,500 members in one day.

As John’s wife Joyce explained, “The Birthday Plan gives us an opportunity to express personal gratitude and at the same time support the A.A. support system. A.A. is self-supporting through its own contributions — and that’s us.”

By the same token, November has long been considered to be Gratitude Month in A.A. (In Canada October is Gratitude Month.) Bill W. had thought that his sobriety began in the month of November, though later realized his sober date was December 11th. In the 1940s, the General Service Board began having small Gratitude dinners.

In 1956, at the Sixth General Service Conference, delegates approved a motion to have a Gratitude Week, to coincide with Thanksgiving week, noting, “this action be noted in the annual pre-Thanksgiving appeals to the groups for funds to help support A.A.’s worldwide services.”

This grew into the Gratitude Lunch, a tradition held throughout much of the 1960s at New York’s Roosevelt Hotel for friends of A.A., including members of the media. (Being mindful that many of A.A.’s friends still drank, cocktails were served at the event for our drinking friends.) The event was discontinued in 1968, though the spirit remains intact.

As Bill W. wrote in a letter in 1959, “Gratitude should go forward, rather than backward. In other words, if you carry the message to others, you will be making the best possible repayment for the help given you.”

To request a supply of “Birthday Plan” envelopes, contact G.S.O. at: General Service Office of Alcoholics Anonymous, Grand Central Station, P.O. Box 459, New York, NY 10163; (212) 870-3400. Contributions may also be made online: [www.aa.org](http://www.aa.org).



## ■ First Eastern Arctic A.A. Convention

A call for help came in nearly 18 years ago in Area 90 (NW Quebec) from an Inuit alcoholic in the remote community of Nunavik. Like the spiritual chain reaction described by Bill W., of one alcoholic reaching out to another, this call put into motion a series of events fueling the slow spread of A.A. across the land of the permafrost, ultimately bringing together more than 40 alcoholics, friends and family members at the first Eastern Arctic A.A. Convention for two days of sharing, most of it conducted in Inuktitut, the native language of the Inuits.



*The community of Iqaluit on Iqaluit (formerly Frobisher) Bay.*

The call from Nunavik in 1993 was the spark that propelled Area 90 to get involved in carrying the A.A. message to remote communities in the Eastern Canada region, communities separated by language, culture and geography. Given the nature of the task and the expansive terrain, success was uncertain. But the A.A. spirit once engaged is hard to extinguish and the Responsibility Declaration gave voice to the deepest aspirations of Area 90's Remote Communities Work Group: "When anyone, anywhere, reaches out for help, I want the hand of A.A. always to be there. And for that: I am responsible."

With slow but steady growth over time, groups were started in the northern reaches of Quebec and a service structure established. Translations were made available in Inuktitut of the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions, along with other materials such as *Daily Reflections* and *As Bill Sees It*. A Special Forum was held in the region in 2005, and in a geography where the only mode of travel between villages is by plane, monthly district meetings were established by teleconference, where G.S.R.s from different communities could connect by phone to share their experiences in sobriety and service.

The idea for an A.A. convention was first discussed during one of these monthly calls, and a local committee

of three co-chairs was formed to gather information and develop a plan for the event. Iqaluit, the capital of Nunavut, was selected as the logical host location based on housing accommodations and ease of transportation from most of the communities in Nunavut; and, with District 27 (Nunavik-Nunavut) as an integral part of Area 90's service structure, the idea was proposed to the area committee. The plan was approved and preparations began in earnest.

A meeting venue with accommodations was procured at a local college, discounts were negotiated with the main airline servicing the area, and information was sent out in both Inuktitut and English. All the speakers would be Inuit, with translations into French and English. Phyllis H., G.S.O.'s general manager, was invited as a guest and gratefully accepted. In addition, an invitation was extended to the Premier of Nunavut, who couldn't attend but sent a message of support for the convention, which read, in part, "I would like to congratulate the local Inuksuk Alcoholics Anonymous Group in Iqaluit, with the participation of Al-Anon, for organizing the first Eastern Arctic A.A. Convention. . . We do not often hear of the success of individuals who are recovering from their addiction, and the convention will bring together individuals from different parts of Canada and even the United States to share their experience, strength and hope so that they can be sober for another day. These success stories show that there is help available and this convention will highlight how we can take that crucial step toward sobriety."

The convention began on June 24th with a ceremonial lighting of the Qulliq (an Inuit lamp) and welcoming remarks from the mayor of Iqaluit. The D.C.M. of District 27 and the convention's chairperson also addressed the group, with featured speakers from both A.A. and Al-Anon sharing in their native tongues.



*The Conference room, where the meeting took place, with the banner in Inuktitut, English and French.*



*Inuksuit (Inukshuk, singular) were forms made from unworked stones that were used by the Inuit for communication and survival; they were formed to give directions, warn of danger and various other messages.*

As often happens at A.A. events, when a sobriety countdown was taken toward the end of the convention, four young Inuits identified themselves as potential alcoholics with less than a week of sobriety. They received sobriety chips and were presented with Big Books. In addition, according to Réjean B., a D.C.M. from neighboring Area 87 (SW Quebec) who was in attendance throughout the weekend, a young woman arrived in great distress at the open A.A. meeting that was held on Sunday evening. Some members spoke with her in her native language about recovery and A.A. and she, too, left with an armload of literature. “I didn’t talk much myself,” said Réjean, “but rather listened a lot. I was filled with gratitude. There was a lot of emotion in the air.”

It’s never easy when A.A. events come to an end, yet as members departed for their homes in Montreal, Ontario, western Canada or the U.S., there was a sense of accomplishment, a feeling of fulfillment. From the spark of hope struck in 1993, an A.A. community had grown, a template for future sharing had been set, and another link had been completed in A.A.’s ever-growing chain reaction of recovery.

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## ■ Fifteenth Annual National A.A. Archives Workshop

The National Archives Workshop was held in Helena, Montana, September 22–25, with 144 attendees. The theme this year was “Mining Our Past — Minding Our Future.” The event brings together Area Archivists, as well as the General Service Office Archivist, for a series of presentations, talks and sharing of information on a national level. This was the 15th annual event, sharing methods, procedures and enthusiasm.

The first such weekend was held in Akron, Ohio in

1996, and after the first three years it began to travel around the country. This year was the first time it was held in Montana. It was centered at the Gateway Convention Center, and featured displays from the General Service Office and several Areas. Presenters from as far away as Texas, Pennsylvania and New York gave talks on topics ranging from “Archives on the Internet,” “Preservation of Modern Printed Material,” and “The History of the A.A. Service Structure.”

Friday night saw a presentation by Michelle Mirza (nonalcoholic), G.S.O.’s Archivist who gave a power-point tour of the G.S.O. collection, followed by a “Long-Timer” panel, consisting of four A.A. members with a combined 183 years of sobriety, who shared about what A.A. was like for them in the beginning.

The following day, when a presentation on the history of the A.A. Grapevine suddenly canceled, two members developed a fresh presentation with the topic “Developing a Disaster Plan for Archives.” The final presentation was given by Annah P., executive director of Stepping Stones, concerning the history of Bill and Lois W.’s last home.

Gerry R., Archivist for Area 40, was the chair of the 2011 Workshop. He has been involved in archives service for some twelve years, and has been the Area Archivist for the past six years. He recalls that his original reason for getting into Archive work was exactly counter to this Workshop weekend’s conviviality: “I wanted to work with a lot of dusty books and not deal with other people. That was my intent, and all of a sudden here was a room full of people at a National A.A. Archives Workshop!”

Gerry says that archival work “really raises the level of gratitude. One of my first experiences as Area Archivist was going through material and seeing the names of friends and family and seeing how connected I am to this thing. I still get goose bumps.”

Gerry stresses the importance of “getting stories before they are gone.” He adds, “We come together at these Workshops to share our information. The parallel between the Fellowship and the individual is so important — we have to remember what it was like on an individual level and then take that to the Fellowship. What good would we be doing if we didn’t remember what it was like? It’s the only way we’ll be able to carry this message.”

The 16th Annual A.A. Archives Workshop will be held in Cocoa Beach, Florida, October 4-7, 2012. The theme will be “Pass It On.” For further information, you can contact the planning committee at (386) 214-5446 or [naw2012@yahoo.com](mailto:naw2012@yahoo.com).

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## ■ A.A.’s Growing Presence on the Worldwide Web

G.S.O.’s A.A. Web site, [aa.org](http://aa.org), was launched on December 22, 1995, with the approval of the A.A. World Services. From the beginning, information was presented

in English, Spanish and French, though the earliest incarnation of the Web site was a bare bones public information tool.

In 2008, Daniel Brown, G.S.O.'s nonalcoholic digital media manager and the primary architect of the site's reorganization, emphasized the group effort that resulted in the Web site we know today: "The project was a team effort from the start," he told *Box 4-5-9* at the time, "a collective effort to identify what areas needed to be improved."

One of the most utilized additions to the Web site has been the ability to link to local intergroup meeting lists throughout the U.S. and Canada. The Timeline, which offers an overview of A.A. history, spotlights key dates in the evolution of Alcoholics Anonymous.

The first words you will see when you go to the A.A. Web site are "Welcome to Alcoholics Anonymous." Beneath that welcome are six tabs, each of which contain a wealth of information about our program: "Information on A.A.," "For the Media," "Is A.A. for You?," "For Groups and Members," "Archives and History," and "How to Find A.A. Meetings." Each of those six portals lead to further headings, containing A.A. pamphlets, available literature, and A.A. newsletters, including *Box 4-5-9*, *About A.A.*, and *Markings* (the Archives newsletter).

The Web site can be very useful for learning about A.A.'s history, for finding information regarding how to locate A.A. meetings, for downloading newsletters such as this one, and for finding pamphlets, but it can also be helpful when an A.A. member is elected to a new service position. For instance, should you be elected to become a Public Information chair you can, with two clicks on your computer, be directed to the Public Information Workbook, A.A. Guidelines for the service position, and all relevant Public Information special literature. The same is true for the Corrections C.P.C. and Treatment committees.

The Web site can also answer a number of questions that those unfamiliar with A.A. might have. Under the heading, "Information on A.A." are four further lists — "What A.A. Is and Is Not," "More Information for Professionals," and so forth. The Media are also offered Public Service Announcements (PSAs) and background history.

In the nearly 16 years since *aa.org* began, the Web site has expanded to embrace evolving technology. The Big Book and "Twelve and Twelve" can be read on the site, and in the past year A.A. members have been able to make individual and group contributions online. An electronic subscription option for newsletters is available for members requesting it.

By early December *aa.org* will make available A.A. literature in e-book format. The fourth edition of the Big Book, Alcoholics Anonymous, and *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions* will be available for purchase as an e-book in English, Spanish and French. (See article page 3.)

## ■ G.S.O. Welcomes New Staff Member

Being a newcomer is never easy, but Tracey O. of Brooklyn, N.Y., G.S.O.'s newest staff member, is taking it all in stride. A former journalist and freelance writer, Tracey knows what it's like to be the new kid in town, having lived and worked overseas for many years as a foreign correspondent in Spain and Brazil. Sober now for almost nine years, Tracey stepped into the Corrections assignment at G.S.O. in the middle of August and has been learning on the job ever since.

Involved in service work from early on in her sobriety, first doing literature for her sponsor's home group and later, at 90 days, as chairperson of a meeting at her own home group, Tracey had never done corrections work before. "It's a lot like working with sponsees," she says. "I've just found the right words coming to me. 'Oh, I seem to know this answer,'" she relates. "Or, I know the really good answer, which is 'I'll find out and get back to you on that.'"

"It's a lot more fun than I thought it would be. I mean, obviously on the corrections desk I'm on the front line for a lot of heartbreaking stories, but a lot of heartwarming ones, too."

Loving the idea of rotation that is the bedrock of a staff position at G.S.O., Tracey has the kind of professional experience she hopes will be an asset on every assignment she undertakes. Having covered international events like the World's Fair in Seville, Spain, the peace mission of a United Nations envoy to refugee camps in Algeria, and written news stories, analyses and features on Brazilian crime, culture, politics, economics and social trends, the breadth of experience and exposure that rotation represents is an attractive aspect of her work at G.S.O.

Tracey refers to herself as a "high-functioning drunk," noting, however, of her time coordinating bureau coverage in Rio in the late 1990s, "At some point in Brazil, I passed that invisible line..."

"I had been a daily drinker since college," she says, "and I had a couple of traumatic things happen at that point, partly caused by my drinking. Before long, I started drinking around the clock and often couldn't get to work. I was having horrible withdrawal symptoms, panic attacks and couldn't concentrate. At some point, they seemed to notice," she says. "There was a conversation about whether or not I wanted to continue doing this and the suggestion that I might be happier somewhere else. I wasn't actually fired, but it felt that way."

Some good did come out of it, though, as Tracey notes, "It was my wake-up call." Moving back to the States and living with her uncle in New York City, she says she was ultimately twelfth-stepped by a movie. "I saw the movie *28 Days*, about a woman who goes to rehab. I saw the movie once and thought 'how horrible, I would never do that,' but a month later, after drinking in a bunch of dive



bars, where my hand is shaking and I can't seem to get the drink to my lips, you know, I decided to go."

With her uncle's help, and a moment of grace, she made it to treatment, where she learned about A.A. As her stay in treatment wound down, she started counting days at what became her home group.

A slip followed after a few years of sobriety, though, triggered she says by the reorganization of a "sobering up" job she had taken, a job that had turned out to be more substantial than she thought. "It felt like being fired all over again," she says, and while she called her sponsor on the way to the liquor store, "I called when I knew she wouldn't be there . . . And I didn't mention the liquor store."

Four days later she reached out to her sponsor and began her sobriety again in February 2003. Settling into work as a freelance writer, reporter and editor, Tracey reengaged with the Fellowship and began working the program in earnest. And, doing volunteer work for her college's alumni association, Tracey got back to one of her first loves —singing— and co-founded an alumni chorus that ultimately traveled the world.

Somewhere along the line, she got involved in A.A. service at the area level, as G.S.R., then D.C.M. Then she became the editor of the Southeast New York (SENY) area newsletter, and later became the area's agenda chair. A service sponsor further encouraged her to apply for a position at G.S.O., and, while the process took some time — "I almost forgot I had applied," she says — she was ultimately selected as the most recent staff member at G.S.O.

"Service for me has always been a part of my background," she says, "and I'm incredibly grateful for this opportunity."

## ■ Early Review Propels A.A.'s Big Book

The Big Book, *Alcoholic Anonymous*, has been called a lot of things since it was first published in 1939, including "strange" by the New York Times and "curious" by the *Journal of the American Medical Association* in book reviews appearing in October of that year. Yet, a number of people, many of whom worked directly with alcoholics in their respective professions, also recognized the sea change inherent in A.A.'s approach to alcoholism and offered their support to the group just beginning to find its way.

One such professional was Dr. Harry Emerson Fosdick, a well-known minister of Riverside Church in New York City, who wrote a glowing review of the book and heartily endorsed its methods. His early support was a boom to the Fellowship and lent credibility to the groundbreaking approach outlined in A.A.'s basic text.

A nonalcoholic friend of A.A., Dr. Fosdick had profound faith in the process and procedures of A.A., and realized what a help it could be to members of the clergy and to others who struggled to help and understand the many alcoholics they came into contact with on a day-to-day basis. In his review, published just months after the book's release in 1939, he said, in part, "This extraordinary book deserves the careful attention of anyone interested in the problem of alcoholism. Whether as victims, friends of victims, physicians, clergymen, psychiatrists or social workers . . . this book will give them, as no other treatise known to this reviewer will, an inside view of the problem which the alcoholic faces." (*AA Comes of Age*, p. 322)

## ■ A.A. Membership Survey



These cartons in the Public Information office contain returned questionnaires for the 2011 A.A. Membership Survey. In early July questionnaires were mailed to 746 randomly selected groups in the U.S. and Canada. Over 10,000 were mailed back to the P.I. desk and are currently being checked in and tabulated. The data will be presented to the trustees' Public Information Committee at the January meeting and then passed on to the General Service Conference for approval.

In mid-2012 the pamphlet "A.A. Membership Survey" (P-48; 15¢) and the A.A. Membership Easel Display (M-13; \$22.00) will be available.





Dr. Harry Emerson Fosdick

In his review, Dr. Fosdick made the case for the fledgling group and its roadmap to recovery. "This book represents the pooled experience of one hundred men and women who have been victims of alcoholism — many of them declared hopeless by the experts — and who have won their freedom and recovered their sanity and self-control. Their stories are detailed and circumstantial, packed with

human interest. In America today the disease of alcoholism is increasing. Liquor has been an easy escape from depression. As an English officer in India, reproved for his excessive drinking, lifted his glass and said, 'This is the swiftest road out of India,' so many Americans have been using hard liquor as a means of flight from their troubles until to their dismay they discover that, free to begin, they are not free to stop....

"The book is not in the least sensational. It is notable for its sanity, restraint, and freedom from over-emphasis and fanaticism. It is a sober, careful, tolerant, sympathetic treatment of the alcoholic's problem and of the successful techniques by which its co-authors have won their freedom."

Having expressed his strong support for the Big Book, Dr. Fosdick also acknowledged that working with alcoholics could be a daunting challenge for members of the

clergy and others who see the effects of alcoholism close up. "Every minister who is also a personal counselor has to deal with cases of alcoholism," he wrote later. "For years I have dreaded that. Almost any kind of abnormality I would welcome rather than face a case of alcoholism."

But, "Alcoholics Anonymous . . . is a godsend to us ministers," he wrote in his autobiography, *The Living of These Days*, published in 1956. "How can we understand an alcoholic — his compulsive desire for liquor, the hopeless captivity against which he futilely contends, one determined decision after another to stop drinking ending in collapse? When we talk to an alcoholic, he knows that never having been in his place we cannot understand his plight. But when an ex-alcoholic, who has been in the depths himself and has taken the Twelve Steps to freedom, talks to an alcoholic, amazing results can follow ...."

Bill W. often acknowledged the role played by A.A.'s many early supporters and by the clergy, in particular, in helping to shape the spiritual tenets of Alcoholics Anonymous and increasing its exposure to those in need. He wrote in a September 1957 Grapevine article, "It is with the deepest feeling that I cast up A.A.'s debt to the clergy. Without their works for us, A.A. could never have been born; nearly every principle that we use came from them. Their example, their faith, and their beliefs in some part, we have appropriated and made our own. Almost literally, we A.A.s owe them our lives, our fortunes, and such salvation as each of us has found."

And so, while two words used to describe the Big Book in its very earliest days might indeed have been "strange" and "curious," as noted by Dr. Fosdick, another would have to be "extraordinary."

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## Twelve Tips on Keeping Your Holiday Season Sober and Joyous

Holiday parties without liquid spirits may still seem a dreary prospect to new A.A.s. But many of us have enjoyed the happiest holidays of our lives sober—an idea we would never have dreamed of, wanted, or believed possible when drinking. Here are some tips for having an all-round ball without a drop of alcohol.



**1** *Line up extra A.A. activities for the holiday season.* Arrange to take newcomers to meetings, answer the phones at a clubhouse or central office, speak, help with dishes, or visit the alcoholic ward at a hospital.



**2** *Be host to A.A. friends, especially newcomers.* If you don't have a place where you can throw a formal party, take one person to a diner and spring for the coffee.



**3** *Keep your A.A. telephone list with you all the time.* If a drinking urge or panic comes—postpone everything else until you've called an A.A.



**4** *Find out about the special holiday parties, meetings, or other celebrations*

given by groups in your area, and go. If you're timid, take someone newer than you are.



**5** *Skip any drinking occasion you are nervous about.* Remember how clever you were at excuses when drinking? Now put the talent to good use. No office party is as important as saving your life.



**6** *If you have to go to a drinking party and can't take an A.A. with you, keep some candy handy.*



**7** *Don't think you have to stay late.* Plan in advance an "important date" you have to keep.



**8** *Worship in your own way.*



**9** *Don't sit around brooding.* Catch up on those books, museums, walks, and letters.



**10** *Don't start now getting worked up about all those holiday temptations.* Remember—"one day at a time."



**11** *Enjoy the true beauty of holiday love and joy.* Maybe you cannot give material gifts—but this year, you can give love.



**12** *"Having had a . . ."* No need to spell out the Twelfth Step here, since you already know it.



## Calendar of Events

Events listed here are presented solely as a service to readers, not as an endorsement by the General Service Office. For any additional information, please use the addresses provided.

### December

3-4—Lafayette, Louisiana. LA State Corrections Conf. Info: corrections@alouisiana.org

### January

6-8—Dodge City, Kansas. 42<sup>nd</sup> SW Kansas Conf. Write: Ch., 2011 Campus Dr., Garden City, KS 67846

6-8—North Mankato, Minnesota. Recovery, Unity & Service Conf. Write: Ch., Box 2812, Minneapolis, MN 55402; www.area36.org

6-8—Galveston, Texas. 50<sup>th</sup> SETA Conv. Write: Ch., 3302 Oregon Trl, Bryan, TX 77803; conv-galveston-alt@aa-seta.org

13-15—Saint Augustine, Florida. North FL Area Assembly. Write: Ch., 728 West Ave., Cocoa, FL 33927

13-15—Mahnomon, Minnesota. Tenth Wild Rice Roundup. Write: Ch., Box 203, Mahnomon, MN 56557

13-15—South Padre Island, Texas. Dist. 27 Jamboree. Write: Ch., Box 3833, Brownsville, TX 78523

19-22—Midland, Texas. 42<sup>nd</sup> Mid Winter Conf. Write: Ch., Box 2504, Midland, TX 79701; http://nwta66.org

19-22—Mysore, Karnataka, India. Mysore Internat'l Conv. Info: www.mysoreaaic2012.com

27-29—Springfield, Illinois. The Journey Continues Big Book Study. Write: Ch., Box 10244, Springfield, IL 62791; www.aaspringfield.org

27-29—Hilton Head, South Carolina. Hilton Head Mid-Winter Conf. Write: Ch., Box 6256, Hilton Head Island, SC 29938; www.hiltonheadmidwinterconference.com

27-29—Madison, Wisconsin. WICYCAA. Write: Ch., Box 259441, Madison, WI 53725-9441; www.wicipaa.org

### February

2-5—Cocoa Beach, Florida. Spacecoast Roundup. Write: Ch., 720 E. New Haven Ave., Ste 3., Melbourne, FL 32901; www.aaspacecoast.org

3-5—Greeley, Colorado. 61<sup>st</sup> Greeley Stampede. Write: Ch., Box 336443, Greeley, CA 80633; www.greeleyaastampede.org

3-5—Louisville, Kentucky. 61<sup>st</sup> KY State Conv. Write: Ch., Box 3713, Louisville, KY 40233-7137; 61kystateconvention@gmail.com

3-5—Fredericton, New Brunswick, Canada. 25<sup>th</sup> Mid-Winter Roundup. Write: Ch., 929 Rt. 590, Waterville Carleton Co, NB E7P 1C5

10-12—North Little Rock, Arkansas. 30<sup>th</sup> Winter Holiday Conv. Write: Ch., Box 26135, Little Rock, AR 72221-6135; winterholiday@live.com

10-12—Brawley, California. Imperial Valley Roundup. Write: Ch., 4166 Monroe Ave., #1, San Diego, CA 92116

10-12—Ligonier, Pennsylvania. Ligonier Midwinter Spiritual Roundup. Write: Ch., Box 25, Blairsville, PA 15717; lmsr@hughes.net

16-19—Washington, District of Columbia. 48<sup>th</sup> International Women's Conf. Write: Ch., Box 30521, WDC, 20030-0521; www.internationalwomensconference.org

17-18—Sikeston, Missouri. 31<sup>st</sup> Five Corners Conv. Write: Ch., Box 158, Sikeston, MO 61801

17-19—Virginia Beach, Virginia. 36<sup>th</sup> Oceanfront Conf. Write: Ch., Box 66173, VA Beach, VA 23466-6173

17-19—Dartmouth, Nova Scotia, Canada. 34<sup>th</sup> Mid-Winter Roundup. Write: Ch., Box 31338, Halifax, NS B3K 5K1

24-26—Kansas City, Kansas. 30<sup>th</sup> Sunflower Roundup. Write: Ch., 12924 Reeder St., Overland Park, KS 66213

24-26—Tacoma, Washington. Second Blending of Time Conf. Write: Ch., 526 S. 303<sup>rd</sup> St., Federal Way, WA 98003; www.theblendingoftime.org

24-26—Pattaya, Thailand. Thailand Roundup. Write: Ch., Box 1551, Bangkok 10112, Thailand; www.aathailand.org

### March

2-4—Cocoa Beach, Florida. Serenity Wknd Spring Women's Conf. Write: Ch., 8025 Gillette Ct., Orlando, FL 32836; www.serenitywomensconference.com

2-4—Albany, New York. 21<sup>st</sup> NERAASA. Write: Ch., Box 6328, Albany, NY 12206; www.neraasa.org

2-4—Bellevue, Washington. PRAASA. Write: Ch., Box 704, Bothell, WA 98041; www.praasa.org

14-17—Yuma, Arizona. Seventh Seniors In Sobriety International Conf. Write: Ch., Box 25659, Yuma, AZ 85367; www.seniorsinsobriety.org

15-18—Greenville, South Carolina. 65<sup>th</sup> SC State Conv. Write: Ch., Box 31337, Greenville, SC 29608; www.area62.org

16-18—Perrysburg, Ohio. 30<sup>th</sup> Area 55 Gen. Service Mini-Conf. Write: Ch., Box 401, Toledo, OH 43697-0401; area55chair.alternatedelegate@gmail.com

24-26—Aurora, Colorado. Area 10 Assembly. Write: Ch., Box 2644, Parker, CO 80134; www.coloradoaa.org

30-1—Saint Augustine, Florida. Fifth Internat'l Big Book Study Conv. Write: Box 830564, Ocala, FL 34483-0564; www.bbssconvention.com

30-1—Saint Augustine, Florida. North FL Area Assembly. Write: Ch., 728 West Ave., Cocoa, FL 33927

30-1—North Conway, New Hampshire. 46<sup>th</sup> Area 43 Conv. Write: Ch., 1330 Hooksett Rd., Hooksett, NH 03106; www.nhaa.net

## Planning a Future Event?

To be included in the Box 4-5-9 Calendar, information must be received at G.S.O. four months prior to the event. We list events of two or more days.

For your convenience and ours — please type or print the information to be listed on the Bulletin Board page, and mail to Editor: Box 459, Grand Central Station, New York, NY 10163 or literature@aa.org

Date of event: from \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_, 20\_\_\_\_\_

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Planning Committee address: \_\_\_\_\_ P.O. BOX (OR NUMBER AND STREET) \_\_\_\_\_

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Web site or E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_ (NO PERSONAL E-MAIL ADDRESSES)

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