

Our Primary Purpose



March 2009

is to stay sober and help other alcoholics to achieve sobriety

Beginners Meetings: Helping Newcomers Gain Sobriety

"I was at a beginners meeting a couple of years ago," says Bob V., of New York City's West End Group, "and the leader actually reached into his knapsack and pulled out a telephone. He put it on the podium in front of him and began explaining the benefits of telephone therapy for newcomers. Then, he reached into the knapsack again and pulled out a Big Book and a Twelve and Twelve, which he stacked up next to the telephone as he described how important it was for beginners to familiarize themselves with A.A.'s literature. Finally, he reached down again and took out a small GI Joe doll. Without saying anything, he set it up next to the telephone and the books. 'This,' he said after a moment, 'is my sponsor.'

"It was a bit over the top, I remember thinking at the time, but it sure did work. I don't think I've been to a beginners meeting since where I didn't think about that presentation. And I even found my own 'sponsor'—a plastic figurine dressed up like a knight with a shield and a sword that one of my kids must have abandoned years ago. He doesn't say much, but he's awfully powerful," says Bob with a chuckle.

While that beginners meeting may have been a bit more theatrical than most, it illuminates a critical element in what makes a beginners meeting effective: keeping it simple. It's often easy for A.A. members, sober a while and caught up in the exhilarating struggle of daily life, to forget what it's like for newcomers to A.A., alcoholics who may, for the most part, have no prior experience or success in staying sober and no context in which to frame the

information they are suddenly hearing. Everybody in A.A. has been there themselves, sober only a few days, perhaps, and uncertain of just what to expect in this thing called recovery. Sometimes, after staying sober a while, A.A.s may forget this, and the particular trials and tribulations of newcomers may get swallowed up in what can seem to be the more pressing matters of individual sobriety and talk of relationships, job woes, and what some might consider "psychobabble."

To focus on A.A.'s primary purpose, and to combat a shift away from the specific concerns of newcomers, many groups hold beginners meetings or beginners workshops, in a variety of formats, aimed at providing newcomers with a safe, informative, and nurturing context for their newfound sobriety.

Bob's group, for example, recognized after a group inventory that more and more newcomers were attending their meetings than in previous years, many "getting lost in the shuffle," and decided in order to better integrate these members into the group and to provide them with the basics necessary to ongoing sobriety, they would set up a beginners workshop in addition to the once-a-week beginners meeting the group had been holding for many years. The workshop was established in line with the Beginners Meeting Kit available from the General Service Office (M-1, \$2.75) and was structured to be as inclusive for newcomers as possible, recognizing, as noted in the brochure "Suggestions for Leading Beginners Meetings," which is included in



the kit along with 12 Conference approved pamphlets, “groups have found that newcomers’ chances of recovery are higher if they can actively take part in A.A. discussions as soon as possible—and that they also need someone with A.A. experience to tell them the essential facts about alcoholism and our program of recovery.”

The group decided on a rotating format that included three A.A. members with varying experience in sobriety— one to have under a year, one to have over a year, and one to have over five years—in order to present a balanced approach. Each person would select a different topic each week, most often drawn from the suggested topics provided in the kit, and would speak on it for five minutes or so. The rest of the meeting, then, would be devoted to the specific concerns and experiences of those newcomers in attendance with under six months of sobriety, utilizing a discussion format that eliminates the potential anxiety of newcomers having to raise their hands to be recognized. The format also allowed for a brief segment in the meeting, following a break in which A.A.’s Seventh Tradition was briefly explained, for any questions from newcomers, constructed on the premise that has been proven time and again in A.A. that “there are no stupid questions.” And, to ensure that the focus stayed on newcomers, an announcement was made before the sharing suggesting that the group would have “no objections” if those in attendance with over six months of sobriety were to pass as the sharing came around to them—a suggestion in the same sense that the Twelve Steps are “suggested only.”

This format has served the group well and is still working at the standing-room-only weekly Beginners Workshop. “It’s one of the best meetings around,” says Bob. “Keeping the focus on newcomers keeps it green for us all.”

Of course, there are many different formats for keeping the focus on newcomers, and A.A. groups have utilized numerous approaches to beginners meetings ranging from small, informal discussions with newcomers doing most of the talking to large sessions with prearranged speakers and participation from experienced A.A.s. Many groups make up newcomer packets of their own that include basic recovery pamphlets and a local meeting list. Some groups also provide temporary sponsorship for newcomers or include pocket phone books, some blank and others listing the numbers of group members with sobriety who welcome calls from newcomers.

As the old Chinese proverb extols, “There are many paths to the mountaintop, but the view is always the same.” And the view, in this case, as articulated in the kit from G.S.O., is clear and unobstructed: “By receiving and giving A.A. help, every one of us becomes a link in a chain around the world. All of us cling to the chain to save our lives, and yet each of us is part of it — depending on all the others to help keep the chain unbroken.”

Effective beginners meetings all have one thing in common—they keep it simple by sticking to the basics, explaining what A.A. is and is not, and offering the invaluable support and hard-won experience of countless A.A. members in how to keep away from one drink, one day at a time.

“Reprinted from *Box 4-5-9* (Vol.55, No 1/ February – March, 2009, page 2) with permission of A.A. World Services, Inc.”

Le parrainage

Notre vie même, parce que nous sommes des ex-buveurs, dépend de notre souci constant des autres et de la façon dont nous pouvons leur venir en aide.

Réf : Réflexions quotidiennes page 356



SPRINGATHON
STEPPING INTO SPRING

Saturday, April 4, 2009
 Travelodge Hotel and Convention Centre,
 1376 Carling Avenue,

Programme

8:00 a.m. <i>Main Lobby</i> <i>Centennial Foyer</i>	Registration Coffee	
9:00 a.m. <i>Centennial</i> <i>Ballroom</i>	"The Journey Begins... Steps 1,2,3"	Chair: Peggy F. Step 1: Colleen B. Step 2: Alex S. Step 3: John B.
9:15 a.m. <i>Carleton</i> <i>Ballroom</i>	"A New Beginning; My New Beginning" Al-Anon	Chair: Paul P Speaker: Heather E.
10:30 a.m. <i>Centennial</i> <i>Ballroom</i>	"The Men Speak... Steps 4,5,6"	Chair: Brice B. Step 4: Walter H. Step 5: Trevor W. Step 6: Garry S.
10:45 a.m. <i>Carleton</i> <i>Ballroom</i>	"From the Bottom; Journey of Hope" Al-Anon	Chair: Phil H. Speaker: Loretta F
12:00 noon	Lunch	
1:00 p.m. <i>Centennial</i> <i>Ballroom</i>	"The Journey Continues... Steps 7,8,9"	Chair: Doug S. Step 7: JoAnn M. Step 8: Elsie M., Belleville Step 9: Albert D.
1:00 p.m. <i>Carleton</i> <i>Ballroom</i>	"The Alateen Connection" Al-Anon/Alateen	Chair: Colette K. Speakers: Anne and Victoria; Marthanne and Margaret

2:30 p.m. <i>Centennial Ballroom</i>	"The Women Speak... Steps 10,11,12"	Chair: Barbara T. Step 10: Shirley B. Step 11: Barbara P., Brockville Step 12; Laurayne H.
2:30 p.m. <i>Carleton Ballroom</i>	"Spiriituality In Al-Anon" Al-Anon	Chair: Maureen L. Speaker: Janet L.
4:00 p.m. <i>Carleton Ballroom</i>	"What Has This Day Given To Me"	Moderator: David T.
7:00 p.m. <i>Centennial Ballroom</i> <i>(doors open at 6:30 p.m.)</i>	Banquet Table identification required	
8:15 p.m. <i>Centennial Ballroom</i>	A. A. Meeting	Chair: Janet A. Speaker: Donna H., Huntley, Montana
9:20 p.m. <i>Centennial Ballroom</i>	Countdown	Michael C.
9:30 p.m. <i>to 1:00 a.m.</i>	Dance	D.J. Dan



Ottawa Area Intergroup of Alcoholics Anonymous
(613) 237-6000; www.ottawaaa.org



Anniversaries

Remember When, Wed. Night, Kanata
One Year, Feb. 23, - Christine B

Vanier Early Birds, 8:00 a.m. Sunday
One Year, March 1, - Paul S
Bob H 17 yrs, Feb 21

Saturday Morning Westboro
One Year, Feb 21, - Sue B

Barrhaven Tuesday Night
Jason B 2 yrs, Gilberte J 9 yrs
Brett A 13 yrs, John B 19 yrs

Share and Care in Bells Corners
Serge S 21 years, Barb S, 34 yrs

Wednesday Night Pinecrest
MaryAnn O'K, 15 yrs, Feb 18

Friday Night Serenity
Brian L. 8 yrs, February 20

Sunday Morning Venture
Brian D, 27 yrs, Feb 18

Tues Night Beaconhill

Joan D Dec 01, 35 Yrs
Darlene K Dec 12, 13 Yrs
Larry D Dec 28, 26 Yrs
Robert H Dec 31, 24 Yrs
Lori S Jan 01, 2 Yrs
Shirley A Jan 03, 40 Yrs
Steven H Jan 26 , 11 Yrs

Monday Night Hull Liberty

One Year, Dec 18, Ian
Elaine B, 34 yrs, Jan 1

Meeting Updates

TIME CHANGE
7:00PM Saturday
Trust in 12 & 12
Women's Group

St. Margaret's Anglican
Montreal Road & Cody

"NEEDS SUPPORT"

NEW MEETING in Rockland
8:00 PM, Thursday
Night Candlelight Open Meeting,
St. Andrew's Church, 739 St. Jean,
(Formerly: Rockland Big Book Action)

DELETE:
"Bellevue Group"
D.R.E.A.M. Centre
1465 Caldwell Ave.
Tuesdays, 12 Noon

Publisher: Ottawa Area Intergroup of Alcoholics Anonymous Inc., 211 Bronson Ave., Suite 108, Ottawa, ON, K1R 6H5, 613-237-6000, www.ottawaaa.org. The content of this newsletter reflects the opinions and experiences of the authors and does not intend to speak for AA as a whole or Ottawa Area Intergroup.

Content or commentary may be submitted at: newsletter08@ottawaaa.org or by fax to: 613-237-6005, or at the Intergroup office, weekdays. 9am to 4pm. Deadline for material is the 25th of the month prior to publishing

Primary Purpose Bulletin Board

Items and Ideas on Area Gatherings for A.A.s
Send event information, flyers, etc. to:
newsletter08@ottawaaa.org

Calendar of Events

Events listed here are presented solely as a service to readers, not as an endorsement by the Ottawa Area Intergroup of Alcoholics Anonymous

March

7 & 21 —Hope in Recovery Group, Sober Dance. McNabb Community Centre. Staurday 7:30 PM meeting, followed by a Sober Dance, admission to dance is \$5.00

8 —Vanier Round-Up Volunteer meeting at 317 Cody Street, see the flyer at: www.ottawaaa.org

14 —Renfrew, ON, St Patrick 's Day Round-up, see the flyer at: www.ottawaaa.org

20-22—Québec, QC, Congrès de Québec: congrsaadeQuébec2009@hotmail.com

20-22 —Toronto, ON, Regional Conf: www.aatoronto.org

March



21 —Ottawa, Saturday Morning Westboro Group, 11 AM, 25th anniversary of the group - Potluck Lunch, All are Welcome.

April

4 —Ottawa, ON, ** Springathon ** Travelodge Hotel and Convention Centre, 1376 Carling Avenue,

17-18-19 —EAGLE 20, Adirondack Young People's Closed AA Conference 2009, for more info e-mail: mbouck1@msn.com

4 & 18 —Hope in Recovery Group, Sober Dance. McNabb Community Centre. Staurday 7:30 PM meeting, followed by a Sober Dance, admission to dance is \$5.00

May

1-2-3 — Niagara falls, ON
44th Annual Blossom Time Convention
www.blossomtimeconvention.com

15-16-17 — Manitoulin Island, Ontario. For more info: rainbowroundup09@yahoo.ca, see the flyer at www.ottawaaa.org

June

12-13-14 — Akron, Ohio, 74th Anniversary of AA
-Birthplace of A.A.
<http://www.akronaa.org/>

SPRINGATHON
STEPPING INTO SPRING



Saturday, April 4, 2009