



On the web at aasrq.org

Sara-Mana Intergroup

P.O. Box 3075 1748 Independence Blvd., #B2, Sarasota, FL

God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, courage to change the things I can and the wisdom to know the difference.

APRIL 2015

Central Office (941) 351-4818

Sara-Mana District 4, Area 15

Intergroup: Another Way You Can Help a Suffering Alcoholic

By Harry G.
Intergroup Chair

Early in sobriety I became an intergroup representative for my home group. Intergroup handles the A.A. Helpline, this newsletter, and the Where and When guide to meetings.

The Helpline committee chair said they needed people to fill three hours shifts which could be handled from one's home phone. I volunteered.

I was given a loose leaf folder with instructions and a list of twelve step volunteers to refer calls to. One evening I received a call from a man calling from Arizona. He had gotten a call from a female friend in Sarasota; she needed help. I asked for the woman's address and phone number but the caller could only provide me with her name, a description and her current location: Main Street and Orange Avenue. She had called him from a public phone.

I explained the situation to my wife, she said we should drive down-
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Best Tool: Ask for Help

It's one of the best tools in my AA toolbox - asking for help. Yet, it's one of the heaviest too!

I'm better at asking today but there are still times when I wear myself out physically and emotionally before I'll ask. It is important that I remember that sometimes it's as simple as asking God to help me. It also helps me to remember that by letting someone else help me, they are being rewarded too.
--Ilene I.



2 Key Factors

The man in a bottle is part of a British mental health effort that credits A.A.'s success to 2 key factors:

1. The provision of an environment that allows individuals to receive social support from peers who support individual's efforts towards sobriety.
2. The A.A. culture that increases an individual's confidence that he or she can maintain abstinence in challenging social situations

Central Office

Fund Drive Lags

The 2015 Fund drive was to have ended on April 16 and found the donated total short of our expected target. As of April 6, contributions totaled \$19,714.00, which is \$10,286.00 short of the goal.

We were hopeful that a last minute surge of contributions would come in and help us reach our goal.

We do want to thank all of you who got the word out in support of this year's Fund drive. We especially want to thank you, the Sara-Mana AA community, for your generosity and continued support of the Central Office.
—Central Office Board

Recovery Pod at Jail Can be Woman's Most Rewarding Work

By Jessica L.

Women's Recovery Pod Coordinator

My sobriety date is April 15, 2011 which is also the date of my last arrest.

I had been to jail several times before but what makes my last trip so special is the fact that I have been sober every day since. The difference between all of my other stints in jail compared to my last is very simple: the Recovery Pod.

In the Recovery Pod I learned about Alcoholics Anonymous and what being sober via the 12 steps can do for my life. I was inspired by the women who took time out of their day to carry the message of recovery and hope to me and my fellow inmates. It was in the Recovery Pod that I learned to laugh without the assistance of a drink, etc. - to bond with other women, to know that there were people who cared, and to find out for myself that I was worthy of leading a better life.

It's been almost 4 years now and I am now one of those volunteers who takes meetings into the Sarasota County Jail Recovery Pod. Me, a former inmate, sharing my experience, strength, and hope with the inmates of the Recovery Pod. It is an honor to give back what was so freely given to me.

It is the highlight of my week getting to watch the girls light up with enthusiasm for recovery. Being a volunteer with the Recovery Pod is one of the most rewarding aspects of my life and sobriety today.

The Recovery Pod could use your help. Please visit <http://www.aasrq.org/HL.htm>, fill out the application provided and mail back to the address indicated. Or e-mail scjpod@aasrq.org for more information.

Are You a Grape-Nut?

By Don L.

In my home group's (Primary Porpoise) last elections I stood unopposed to become my group's Grapevine Representative, one of the few service positions in A.A. I had not previously held. I showed up at the January monthly meeting of the district's Grapevine Committee and - abra-ca-dabra - became the District 4 Grapevine Committee Chairperson.

I have been a regular subscriber to *The Grapevine* but was quickly reminded that *The Grapevine* does much more than just publish a monthly magazine. On page 38 of the 2015 A.A. Literature catalog you will see listed books, audio and special items and eBooks including such titles as *Language of The Heart*, *Emotional Sobriety (I and II)*, *Voices Of Long-Term Sobriety*, *A Rabbit Walks Into A Bar* and *Young & Sober*, to name just a few.

Every year we have what are known as "Conference Agenda Items" which are reviewed by our various District 4 committees and I became aware that *The Grapevine* is making a concerted effort to keep up with this digital age's decline in printed matter. There will be discussion of strategies at the upcoming General Service Conference, the results of which we will hear when our South Florida Area 15 Delegate Graham G. reports back to us later this Spring. An item of note that I found interesting was that while only 5% of our English-speaking membership subscribes to *The Grapevine*, 13% of our Spanish-speaking membership subscribes to *La Vina*, the Spanish-language version.

Now about that Grape-Nut headline. About 10 years ago our South Florida Area 15 Grapevine Committee designed a t-shirt. It does a fantastic job of combining the concepts of recovery, unity and service with the premise that "we are not a glum lot" and asks the simple question "I subscribe, do you?"

Get to know *The Grapevine* better and you will see how it is more than just "a meeting in print."

Intergroup's Role in Recovery

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town and try to help. The caller was not hard to find, she was in need of more help than we could offer. After a few hours we got her checked into the hospital.

The Helpline had provided me with an opportunity to give back; it felt good to be useful.

Besides the AA Helpline, the Where and When, and our Newsletter, Intergroup also hosts the Gratitude Dinner held each fall.

Fundamentally, Intergroup exists to aid the groups in their singular purpose of carrying the A.A. message to the alcoholic who still suffers.

I encourage every group to elect a Group Representative and an Alternate Representative. We meet monthly on the third Tuesday of each month.

I have served three separate two year terms as an Intergroup Representative (in three decades). I have benefited greatly each time and over all. I've met some really fine folks from all the groups in our area. It's a privilege to be involved.

One of His Sponsees Tells His Approach

Remembering Gordon

By Joe G.

Sunday, Feb. 22, 2015 was the sad day when I received the news of Gordon Brooks's passing to eternal life. At 97 years of age, he was loved and respected by all who knew him.

He was my Sponsor. I was so fortunate to have him as a sponsor for nearly 20 years. I would go to the Church of the Covenant Speaker meeting on Saturday nights, and there was Gordon, always at a specific table in the rear of the meeting. It was as though he was holding court, studying who would walk through the doors to the meeting.

He was a committed Meeting Maker. He was the Godfather of the Covenant Speakers Meeting. Always there, and always willing to shake the hands of newcomers to the meeting.

After seeing Gordon many times, I asked him to be my sponsor. He said yes, and I felt that I was blessed to have his friendship....and fellowship.

We discovered that we worked in the same area, the industrial and engineered products market. He worked for a company that I called on in Camden, NJ, the Hajoca Corporation.

As we got to know each other, it took some time for me to realize that he was a patient sponsor, and allowed things to flow. He taught me to get involved. His example was a great tool. He was involved in service work for the Fellowship for 50 years.

He called me on my stuff. Once, when I was loafing and not making meetings, he got to me and said "If you don't want my sponsorship, just keep doing what you are doing and you won't have to be a part of the fellowship. Just keep lying on the sofa and avoid being involved."

I really needed his guidance, and realized that he caught me buying into the disease telling me that it's ok to excuse myself from being a fully participating member of A.A. As the Big Book says, "Half measures availed us nothing".

We ate breakfast every Saturday morning after the 7:30 meeting at the Covenant.

How blessed I was to have been sponsored by Gordon. He became a surrogate father to me. He blessed me in so many ways through his understanding and compassion in helping me along the way.

Thank you, Gordon, for all the love and encouragement you showed me.

Tolerance is the Key, Bill Said

"Honesty with ourselves and others gets us sober, but it is tolerance that keeps us that way. In other words, once an alcoholic fully realizes that he can't get well alone, he will somehow find a way to get well and stay well in the company of others."

Bill W., Letter, 1943 As Bill Sees It, p. 312

Is It a “Group” or “Meeting”? Difference Small, but Significant

By Anonymous

I was recently approached by a newer member of the fellowship of A.A. and asked, “What is the difference between an A.A. group and an A.A. meeting?” I thought I had the correct answer, but, having learned here in A.A. that a moment’s breath and some time to collect one’s thoughts is always OK. I said, “I will get back with you tomorrow with the answer.” I am very glad I did wait.

I have been told by others that the main difference between an A.A. Group and a Meeting is that groups have General Service numbers assigned from General Service Organization in New York and meetings do not...but I had heard the contrary, I decided more research was in order.

According to the pamphlet “The A.A. Group” (P-16), the main difference between an AA meeting and an AA group is that “the AA group generally continues to exist outside of prescribed meeting times in order to provide 12th step work.”

There are many groups that exist...to what extent they are “organized” seems to be the difference. Of the many meetings I attend on a weekly basis, very few of the meetings are groups that are organized enough to have more than someone who acts as a treasurer to collect the 7th tradition contributions.

Then there is my home group where we have eight trusted servant positions and regularly scheduled monthly Group Conscience meetings. As the Traditions of AA state “each AA group has the right to be autonomous” there are many varieties of groups that exist (and yes each group has the right to be wrong.). I would suggest getting actively involved in service opportunities provided by your home group you attend and gaining the many rewards that service to others can provide.



They Became Women of Honor and Dignity

By Mitzy P.

In early sobriety my sponsor suggested to me and several of my AA friends that we attend a Women’s weekend retreat. Little did any of us know what a life changing event this would be.

Our Retreat Master was an extraordinary Franciscan Brother named Brother Francis. At our very first gathering he stood at the podium and said, “Repeat after me: ‘I am a woman of honor and dignity.’”

Well as you can imagine in any large assemblage of recovering women, one is likely to find unfit mothers, unfaithful wives, ex-prison inmates, thieves, “ladies of the night” etc. etc. Some could not even say those words. Those who attempted to, spoke softly and timidly.

At the next session he began with again with “Repeat after me: ‘I am a woman of honor and dignity.’” The response was a little better but not good. Through his guidance and help we began to believe that as sober women this powerful statement might become true, realizing that we all had changed our lives. At the final session he heard, “I AM A WOMAN OF HONOR AND DIGNITY” with gusto from everyone in the room. I have never forgotten that experience, how it changed my life, my perception of myself and the wonder of the gift of recovery.

Dear Alkie

“Alkie” is a long-time member of A.A. His comments are based on his own strength, hope, and experience and are not reflections of any official A.A. position or practice.

Q. I’ve been sober for quite a few 24’s but I still have very emotional arguments with my adult daughter. I’m upset afterward and sorry about getting involved in these pointless struggles. Any ideas?

A. Alcoholism is a disease of extremes and excesses. When I remember to PAUSE, a reasonable spirit enters me and takes away my worst extremes. The 10th step tells us about the importance of self-restraint as an antidote to impulsivity. The physician’s oath says ‘first, do no harm’ – good advice to us all.

Q. I’ve heard alcoholism described as the “cruellest of all diseases.” Why is it called that?

A. Because if not put into remission, it will take EVERYTHING from the sufferer before it kills them. All the other end of life diseases like cancer, heart disease, stroke, Alzheimer’s, etc. largely leaves the family intact with sympathy for the victim. Alcoholism, left untreated, takes away self-respect, dignity, physical and mental health, career, financial security, family relations before it leaves the drunk homeless and dying uncared for and uncared about. But cheer up; there is a solution – and we are not a glum lot.

Q. Well it’s April – you know, the fourth month/fourth step thing. My sponsor is pushing me for my fourth step inventory but I’m stuck on the character defect of procrastination. How can I jump start the process?

A. It’s not a work of art and you’re not Shakespeare — so, simplify and just do it. What you really afraid of is facing your worst attributes, which in your heart you already know are there. Take the pressure off yourself – only you and your sponsor should see it and it doesn’t have to be perfect. And it’s fine to list some of your better qualities, too.

ANNIVERSARIES

Groups: email birthdays to newsletter@AAsrq.org and put ANNIVERSARIES in the subject line. Cutoff for the newsletter is the last day of the month. February anniversaries appear in March.

Bay Group March

Bill W. 41 yrs
Jean W. 34
Paul N. 8
Jon K. 2
Wes E. 2

Early Big Book February

John T. 52
Diana 29
Sue Ann 15
Robin 3
Lynn C. 2
Jack Q. 33

Early Bird Group March

Tim L 22 yrs

Friends of the Pelican March

Bob C 35
Norris E 26
Terry H 18
Kathleen W 10
Viola W 9
Chris C 2

Gulf Gate Noon March

Edgar C. 30

Happy Cookie Hour February

Shaun S. 26 yrs.
Peg S. 22
Jerry D. 7
Patrick O. 4
Scotty T. 4
Bart Mc. 3

L'wood Ranch 12&12 March

Marty K. 15

Monday nite men's March

JT 1

Oasis Group March

Mike M. - 48 yrs
Rachel A. - 2

Primary Porpoise March

Tina L 26

Serenity Group March

Bill D. 40
Cathy E. 39
Don S. 37
Susan Z. 18
Dianne C. 13
Tracy W. 8
Steve R. 4
Paul V. 4
Diana S. 1

Sober Living March

Jeff M. 25
Joan Be. 3

St. Armand's March

Bert C. 48
B.J. 26
Janet B. 16
David D. 13
Salena W. 8
Theresa C. 7
Jeff S. 6

Sunrise March

Liz M 20
Fred H 5
Bill s. 2
Joy 1
Max. R 1
Mike Q 1

2 Sections to Avoid at A.A. Meeting

Overheard at a recent AA meeting:
There are two sections one does not want to be sitting at in an A.A. meeting... The first section is the "Denial" Aisle and the other section is the "Shoe Department"
What is the shoe department? It is where those who sit together are the "Slippers, Loafers, and Sneakers!"

Longboat Key Group Resurrected

The Keep It Green Group has been resurrected, and is alive and well. It is now an open speaker and discussion meeting and is held on Saturday at 5:30 p.m. in the Bayfront Park Recreation Center, 4052 Gulf of Mexico Dr., Longboat Key (around back, 2nd floor).

85 Attend Sponsorship Workshop Sessions

By Chris C.

About 85 A.A.s attended the Saturday Sponsorship Workshop March 28, 2015 put on by the Sure Bet group that meets at the Gamble Mansion in Ellenton every Sunday at 1 PM.

The event was separated into three sessions, each lasting a little over an hour with lunch in the middle.

The first session was about Sponsorship and the history of AA with a talk put on by Doug K. from The First 100 home group in Sarasota. He told us

of how sponsorship in general was developed and how AA started to use it in the beginning.

The Second session was a panel of 4 individuals (Marianne J, Jamie H, Paul E, and Jimmy S.) with each of them telling us about the responsibilities of a sponsor, the responsibilities of a sponsee, the AA sponsorship family, and how sponsorship and the singleness of purpose come into play.

After a great lunch and rest time the 3rd session followed which dealt with

sponsorship and dealing with those with special needs and information regarding 2 additional levels of sponsorship as it relates to Service and Spiritual Sponsors in the AA program. Mark your calendars for March 2016, when this event will be held again.

My mother said there must be something wonderful in the AA meeting coffee because it was doing me a world of good. --Mike C.

The main purpose of this newsletter is to inform, connect and entertain.

TO SUBMIT ITEMS TO THE NEWSLETTER: Anniversaries, articles and meeting notices should be sent to newsletter@AAsrq.org. Submit material as attachments or directly in an email. Include your first name, group and type of item being sent. Deadline is the last day of the month. Submissions may be edited for length or content. Opinions expressed herein are those of the writers and not necessarily those of A.A., Sara-Mana Intergroup or the Central Office, located at #B-2, 1748 Independence Blvd., Sarasota, FL 34234. Phone 941.351.4818.

Upcoming Events

- Delegate's Breakfast Saturday, May 30 9 a.m. St. Andrews, Sarasota
- Founders Day Dinner Saturday, June 13, Mennonite Church on Bahia Vista
- Gratitude Dinner, Date, Location TBA
- Central Office Open House Dec. 5