



Sara-Mana Intergroup

P.O. Box 3075 1748 Independence Blvd., #B2, Sarasota, FL 34234

On the web at aasrq.org

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.

December 2012

Central Office (941-351-4818)

Sara-Mana District 4, Area 15

The Group—where it all begins

This is part I of II on the A.A. group, how to start one, interacting with an intergroup and GSO. Look for part II in the January issue.

As A.A. Tradition (the long form of Tradition Three) would have it, "Any two or three alcoholics gathered together for sobriety may call themselves an A.A. group, provided that, as a group, they have no other affiliation."

However, as A.A. members would have it, group life requires so much more than themselves and two or three other warm bodies. Thus, the Conference-approved pamphlet "The A.A. Group...Where it all Begins" has 41 pages of shared experience, not counting the Twelve Steps, Twelve Traditions (short and long form) and Twelve Concepts.

So how do you go about starting a new A.A. group? If you are reading this article, chances are you are already in an established group. But the time may come when you look around and decide that another group may serve your A.A. community well.

You may have heard the saying that all you need to start a new group is a coffee pot and a resentment. According to information on page 17 of "The A.A. Group," there is no resentment required, although you may wish to acquire a coffeepot.

More importantly, though, is to establish that there is a need for a new group in your neighborhood; get the cooperation of other A.A. members; find a space to rent for a meeting; and acquire some A.A. literature, meeting lists and other supplies.

See The Group on page 2

Beginner's blog for the holidays

By Diane R.

Christmas, Hanukkah, Kwanzaa, and New Year's Eve are days away. For a newcomer to A.A. and sobriety, as well as everyone in recovery, these days can be especially difficult.

The number one thing to remember is you do **not** have to drink and to stay away from that **first** drink. It is very important to plan to be with other A.A.ers and to attend meetings and group events during this time of year. Decide

ahead of time what people, places, things and situations you may need to avoid that can trigger urges to slip. Remember, no alcoholic can drink safely.

Choose to bring another A.A.er or your sponsor with you if you need to attend a tough activity. Arrive early and leave early to commitments you must go to where there is alcohol. Refer to the articles for beginners in the October and November newsletters for suggestions to stay on track. They discuss using H-A-L-T and H-O-W to keep you in check daily.

"It is not ok to say you are ok when you are not ok. OK?!!!" is a saying we may have heard or read. But it is most important during this time of year. New sobriety brings floods of feelings never felt when we were drinking. Go to meetings and share them with the security that you are among those just like you, and they are there to help you through. We are there for each other and that is what A.A. is all about.

This time of year can bring a lot of STRIFE (conflict or struggles) along with the happy festivities. With the change of one letter – turn strife into STRIVE! Strive in the next days and weeks to keep sobriety on top of your personal wish list, and the season surely can be merry and bright. Happy, Healthy Holidays!

OUR GRATITUDE DINNER

By Pat P.

What do our sobriety, sunshine, a second chance with our health and sanity, new friendships and the taste of fried chicken have in common? They were just a few of the many gifts that appeared on the individual Gratitude Lists lining the tables at this year's amazingly fun Gratitude Dinner.

The gathering, held on November 15th at the Sarasota Municipal Auditorium, was attended by over 550 A.A.s. Our one-of-a-kind Grateful Eddie shared his experience, strength and hope with the enthusiastic crowd while an old-fashioned Thanksgiving feast was enjoyed by all.

A very special thank you to the dozens of volunteers that helped sell tickets, set up the tables, decorate, serve the scrumptious food and clean up afterwards. We are grateful that you made this memorable evening possible!! Thank you A.A.!

Grapevine Quote

The best way to appreciate A.A. is the same way you appreciate a stained glass window: Look at it from the inside.

The Group from page one

Once the group is off to a good start (say at least two or three months), it is helpful to announce its presence to neighboring groups, to your local intergroup/central office (or whoever puts together the meeting lists), and to your General Service Office. Announcing the group to your General Service Office usually involves filling out the Alcoholics Anonymous New Group Form, which can be picked up at the central office or downloaded from G.S.O.'s A.A. Web site www.aa.org. It is helpful not to send in the group form until after "the group is off to a good start (say at least two or three months)." While new groups are understandably eager to get themselves listed at G.S.O., follow-up phone calls sometimes indicate that these forms come from A.A. members—and others—who think they need prior permission from G.S.O. to start a new group. Of course, this is not according to A.A.'s Third Tradition. Problem or not, the office will hold on to your New Group Form for 30 days while the General Service structure in your area has a chance to contact your group and welcome you if that is their practice.

Just let go of it

By Jane P.

When you let go of things, they let go of you.

When you harbor resentment, anger or bitterness, the person you end up harming the most is yourself. Negative emotions have a way of creating negative energy that destroys positive emotions, like generosity, love and joy. Although the unhappy situation may be long gone, you may be allowing it to hold you back by holding on to the feelings it evoked.

Today, vow to start "cleaning out" that inner vault of negativism. Try to forgive those who've caused you previous pain, and if you can't forgive, at least learn to forget.

Break free! Let go! Move forward with optimism. It's the best way to find happiness.

YOU need to know this

NEW YEAR'S EVE DANCE, Monday, Dec. 31 at Faith Church, 12th & Beneva in Sarasota. Speaker meeting at 7:30 p.m. with dance to follow at 9. Contributions \$5 at the door. Refreshments to be provided. Please bring covered dish to share. D.J. and party favors included. Come help us ring in 2013.



Chairperson Needed for Special Needs Committee. District 4 needs a chairperson for the Special Needs Committee for the next rotation of 2013-2015. Qualifications include at least 3 years of sobriety and some experience working on a district committee. For more information on duties involved email special-needs@aa.org or Tony@aa.org.

STRIKE UP THE BAND! No? PLUG IN YOUR BOOM BOX! No? THEN DOWNLOAD THIS: The *Sara-Mana Intergroup Newsletter* is available electronically. The easiest way to receive the local A.A. news is to give your email address to your Intergroup Representative. Or to your General Service Representative. Or email your request directly to secretary@aa.org.

MOTHERS & INFANTS program needs women with one year of sobriety to take meetings to them once/month. Contact ldross@comcast.net or call 941.320.8389.

FACILITATOR is needed by the Public Information/Cooperation with Professional Community Committee. Some computer experience, ability to take the minutes at meetings, send out agenda and minutes to committee monthly. Please consider this important role. Contact the chair at picpc@aa.org

Young-minded A.A.s needed to inform **SARASOTA AND MANATEE MIDDLE SCHOOL** staff and students about Alcoholics Anonymous. Requires one year of sobriety, full name, date of birth and age. Call 941.351.4818 or e-mail: picpc@aa.org

Contact **CLERGY and CHURCHES** to provide information and support from local A.A.s. Please e-mail: picpc@aa.org

SERENITY PLACE AT DOCTOR'S HOSPITAL is a 16-bed voluntary psychiatric unit specializing in anxiety/depression type crises in adults aged 40+ years. Often, patients enter for alcohol withdrawal, alcoholic relapse or depression/anxiety issues in sobriety. An A.A. meeting has been in place there for 7 seven months. If this interests you as a service opportunity, the A.A. meeting there is Thursday at 2:00 p.m. Contact Cynthia L. 228-7031.

3 for December

Step 12

Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to alcoholics, and to practice these principles in all our affairs.

Tradition 12

Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our traditions, ever reminding us to place principles before personalities..

Concept 12

The Conference shall observe the spirit of A.A. tradition, taking care that it nev-

er becomes the seat of perilous wealth or power; that sufficient operating funds and reserve be its prudent financial principle; that it place none of its members in a position of unqualified authority over others; that it reach all important decisions by discussion, vote, and, whenever possible, by substantial unanimity; that its actions never be personally punitive nor an incitement to public controversy; that it never perform acts of government, and that, like the Society it serves, it will always remain democratic in thought and action.

God never gave up on me

By Cheryl M.

I grew up in an abusive household, started drinking at nine and hit bottom at 27. Doctors gave me a 50% chance that my liver may go down. If not, I had six months to live. I tried to kill myself with alcohol, but didn't want to die, so prayed to a God I thought was unforgiving.

My liver went down and I stayed sober for many years, was an asset to society, married in the program and had two children. Life was good!

Then I stopped going to meetings and didn't call my sponsor anymore. I focused on taking care of my family, forgetting where I came from. I was better and took control!

The day came when I could no longer handle life on life's terms. I didn't know what that meant then, but do now. I drank again, went into a blackout and to the hospital; right where I left off 20 years earlier. I had taken my disease back in full force. I couldn't take care of myself or my family and went in and out of mental facilities, as I had previously.

I tried going to meetings again, but couldn't grasp the concept and finally ended up at a detox facility, then back to a recovery program. I was beat down, felt I couldn't go any lower and cried for weeks. My mind was so foggy, I couldn't even think.

A sponsor guided me through the steps. She sat with me weekly. I commenced the program and was allowed to stay until I found a job and moved on my own. I was not going back to live with my family.

Today, I go to meetings daily, work my steps, sponsor others and am my home group GSR. My higher power helps me through the day. I work the first three steps, pray and meditate daily. I look at how I may be useful to others who need help; it was freely given to me, so I freely give. Thanks to the program of A.A., I am an asset to society once again. God never gave up on me even though I gave up on myself, and for that I am grateful.

And now a word from our sponsors

By Pat P.

Here are some favorite words of advice from sponsors. Why not add to the collection by sending us your own pearls of wisdom? They may be published in an upcoming newsletter! Put "and now a word from our sponsors" in the subject line and send to newsletter@aaqr.org.

- Alcohol gave me wings, but took away my sky.
- We are more than our mistakes.
- Don't fall in love with your story.
- Triangles don't work.
- Slow and steady wins the race.
- Just under-react. You can always pitch a fit later.
- At a meeting, someone starts a fire and it warms all of us.

Serenity Room Group in Bradenton

has scheduled a Christmas day dinner served from 11:30 a.m.-2 p.m. The group is also having an Alkathon on Christmas Eve: all regular meetings, plus additional meetings at 8 and 10 p.m., plus midnight. Christmas day will be regularly scheduled meetings. An Alkathon New Year's Eve will be held with all regular meetings, plus additional meetings at 8 and 10 p.m. and at midnight. New Year's Day will be regularly scheduled meetings.



Dear Alkie

- ♦ Dear Alkie: You say you believe that God will keep you safe from alcohol, so why do you still go to meetings?
- ♦ **Alkie:** Belief or faith in God doesn't do me any good unless I remember I have it, which is why I come to meetings.
- ♦ Dear Alkie: It's hard to believe you were ever really alcoholic--you seem so....normal.
- ♦ **Alkie:** A.A. allowed me to pass for normal until I became normal
- ♦ Dear Alkie: Alcohol has caused me to lose everything! Can A.A. help?
- ♦ **Alkie:** If alcohol is the solvent that removed everything from your life, A.A. is the glue that puts your life back together again.
- ♦ Dear Alkie: Do you hang out with other people in A.A.?
- ♦ **Alkie:** Of course. United we stand; divided we stagger.
- ♦ Dear Alkie: I know I need to go to A.A., but I'm a mess and afraid of how I'll be treated.
- ♦ **Alkie:** A.A. is where we are treated like ladies and gentlemen before we become ladies and gentlemen.
- ♦ Dear Alkie: Why did you first come to A.A.?
- ♦ **Alkie:** I came to A.A. because I had no place else to go; and today there's no place else I'd rather be.
- ♦ Dear Alkie: I need a second chance at life. Can A.A. help?
- ♦ **Alkie:** A.A. doesn't give you a second chance at life; it gives you a second life, one that you can't even imagine.
- ♦ Dear Alkie: Do you A.A.'s really tell each other what you did while you were drinking?
- ♦ **Alkie:** I'd rather be in A.A. meetings telling you I'm crazy, than be out there trying to convince others that I'm not!

ANNIVERSARIES

Groups: email birthdays to newsletter@asrq.org and put ANNIVERSARIES in the subject line. Cutoff for the newsletter is the last day of the month. Do not send anniversaries for future months: i.e. November anniversaries appear in December.

63RD AVENUE

Benjamin B. 28 years

BAY GROUP

September

Greg M. 18 years
Rhonda G. 7 years
Joe M. 2 years

October

Tony T. 31 years
Joe D. 19 years
Britton 4 years
Claude H. 4 years
Jonathan 3 years
November
Dolores H. 40 years
Susan F. 7 years

BEE RIDGE EAST

November

Mary M. 25 years
Walt M. 24 years
Bob R. 5 years

DONUT HOUR

November

Kathy F. 26 years
Michael R. 23 years
John S. 10 years
Betty T. 7 years
John R. 3 years
Darin A. 3 years
Michael M. 2 years
Eric N. 2 years
Nani M. 1 year
Michael 1 year

EARLY BIG BOOK

November

Patty D. 41 years
Anne M. 28 years
Carl P. 7 years
Holly 1 year

FRIENDS OF THE PELICAN

November

Walter P. 6 years
Tom M. 3 years

HAPPY COOKIE HOUR

November

Jimmy J. 28 years
Susan O. 10 years
Camilla L. 1 year

KEEP IT SIMPLE

October

Jim H. 31 years
Lester 2 years
November
Jim M. 32 years
Brian 14 years
Ed S. 2 years
John Paul 1 year

LAKWOOD RANCH 12&12

November

Patty D. 41 years
Jim M. 32 years
Group anniversary 5 years
Joyce C. 3 years

LUNCH BUNCH

October

Camilla L. 1 year
November
Janine 37 years
Robert H. 36 years
Shirley 30 years
John H. 28 years
Michael M. 1 year

NEW WOMEN

November

Joan P. 36 years
Terri S. 24 years
Deborah D. 23 years

NORTH RIVER MONDAY

NITE

November

Bonnie D. 28 years

OAK STREET STEP

November

Jim G. 33 years

Sue S. 33 years
Cynthia L. 23 years
Howard K. 10 years
Nadine S. 7 years
Philip W. 6 years
Marita R. 3 years
Shelly L. 3 years

PRIMARY PORPOISE

November

Don L. 29 years
SERENITY
November
Frank A. 32 years
Terry S. 24 years
Mike R. 3 years
Corrine T. 2 years

SOBER LIVING

November

Gordon B. 46 years

UNDER THE RAINBOW

November

Cheri L. 6 years
Dee S. 2 years

WOMEN OF HOPE

October

Ruth R. 30 years

HELPLINE TOTALS NOVEMBER 2012

Call count.....324

BREAKDOWN:

Meeting time/location....178

In lieu of 12 step call.....9

Actual 12 step calls.....16

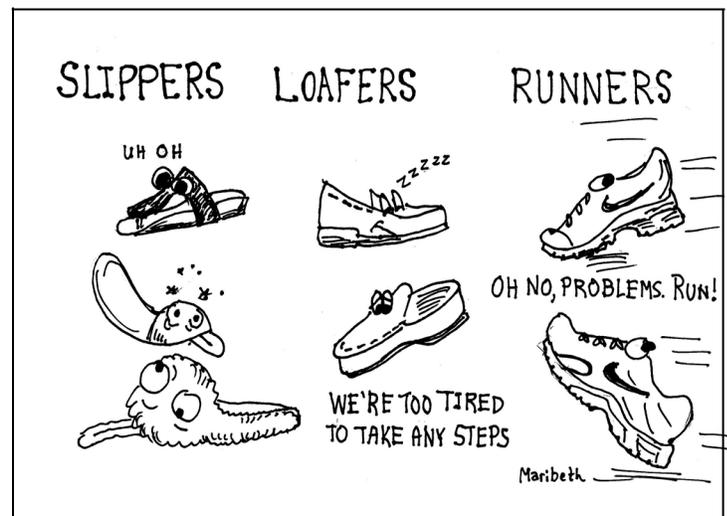
AI-Anon Call.....6

Special Needs.....0

Miscellaneous.....115

Helpline currently has one shift available, Saturdays 12-3 p.m. Members willing to take and go on 12 step calls always welcome. Please contact "q" at Central Office (941) 351-4818

Jeanette 17 years
Terese V. 7 years
Cecelia M. 4 years
Janet 1 year
November
Ruth F. 39 years
Allison B. 13 years
Joyce C. 3 years



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@asrq.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.