

Our Primary Purpose

Stories, news and information from our fellowship in the National Capital Region

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Feelin the love Alkathon and Eastathon help AAs help each other through holiday season challenges

Andy R will always honour the Alkathon for one of the most significant moments of his recovery journey. And yet, almost three decades later, he still remembers how easily it might not have happened, given his fear of stepping into a big room full of people he didn't know.

"I used to feel pretty lonely, and find it difficult to fill my time around the holidays, during those early days of my sobriety. And yet I was still really scared to go to an event like the Alkathon. The thought of walking into a place full of strangers made me very anxious."

Somehow Andy summoned the courage to attend his first Alkathon. And, all these years later, he's truly happy he did because on that day he met someone who would have a huge impact on his sobriety.

"You could definitely call it a turning point. I heard this man speak and I found myself approaching



The Alkathon Committee sends a big shout out to all of the volunteers for their incredible service!

him right away to have coffee and chat. I asked him, on the spot, if he would be my sponsor."

Twenty-nine years later the relationship endures. And so does Andy's affection for the Alkathon.

"The moment I step foot into the Alkathon I feel I'm with my brothers and sisters. I just love the spirit in this room."

See **Alkathon**, Page 7

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Editorial – New year, same old questions

Happy New Year everyone! Now for the \$64,000 question...what is 2020 going to bring us? We don't know. Better still, we don't even know what we don't know. And who's to say we should even be trying to find out.



Are you familiar with the four stages of learning?

- Stage 1: unconscious incompetence. We're simply not aware of what it is we're not aware of.
- Stage 2: conscious incompetence. We're starting to get a sense of what it is we don't know.
- Stage 3: conscious competence. We're learning to make better decisions, better choices.
- Stage 4: unconscious competence. We're doing the right thing without even thinking about it.

We can use these four stages of enlightenment as a lens for measuring our progress: by the hour, or the day, or the week, the month, the year or even longer.

But is that what we should be doing? Is this how we should be spending our most precious resource – the time we have left on this planet – trying to measure our progress???

It seems no matter what part of our lives we're examining these days...it's all about the metrics. It's all about measuring progress, or success. But do we do this at our peril?

What kind of personal growth is 2020 going to bring? Is this a question we really need to answer? We're

hung up on having answers. How many times a day do we “go to google” to find an answer. Often, we already know what the answer is, but we just need to re-confirm it and pleasure our neurotic obsession with answers, more data, the full story, or the complete picture.

In this digital age, we seemingly can't feel comfortable with just the questions. Gotta have answers. And, most importantly, gotta have them NOW!!

But wouldn't it be refreshing to gamble a little bit, and trust that in recovery, there are some questions better left unanswered. Do we even need to know what some of these questions are?

We could spend every living minute, of every hour, of every day trying to figure out what those seminal questions might be? And then invest more time trying to meticulously answer them, like it's some kind of cosmic IQ test?

We think not. Wouldn't it be better to sit down and help another suffering alcoholic?

So, think about it...go ahead and fill your boots with questions about what the next 365 days will bring. And then let's check back in a few weeks...let's say before we trot out the Valentine's Day chocolate...and see how we're doing.

It might just make more sense to spend a little extra effort on Step 11 or 12. See if we can live in the moment, and roll with some of the questions or uncertainty in our lives. Maybe try helping someone else whose needs are greater than ours.

We don't control the outcome. It's life on life's terms. “Turning it over” can be scary. But it could also be just what we need to make our recovery journey a little more interesting, and a little less predictable.

What's 2020 going to bring? Who really cares? No one, except that needy ego of ours.

Just bring it on, whatever IT is going to be.

Ottawa Spring Conference
“THUS WE GROW”



Big Book **Pages 162-163**

Saturday, May 2, 2020
Hellenic Meeting and Reception Centre
1315 Prince of Wales Drive

Admission: \$10 in Advance, \$15 at the Door Banquet (incl. Admission) \$55		Info: spring@ottawaaa.org or Cindy E-M (613) 291-2464
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Planning has begun and Committee members and Volunteers are needed!

Meetings will be held at 10:00 a.m. on Sunday mornings at the Bronson Centre, Room 108 on the following dates:

January 12th and 26th, February 9th and 23rd, March 15th and 29th, April 5th, 19th and 26th

See you there!

Telephone Answering Service and 12-Step Call Responders

Please call our TAS line at **613-237-6000** if you need help, or would like to help. To find an open shift please consult the TAS calendar at ottawaaa.org or contact tas@ottawaaa.org



Volunteers are needed to join our 12-Step Call Responders team.

Basic requirements:

- 2 years sobriety
- willing to call someone who is looking for support or information about AA
- willing to meet with someone or take them to a meeting

If you're interested in learning more about how to help the still suffering alcoholic by responding to 12-Step calls, please contact: tas@ottawaaa.org

Feeling safe in the rooms of AA-it takes a plan

Area 83 Past Delegate leads online workshop



The clear message coming out of a recent workshop was that home groups need to be talking about “safety in the rooms”, even if no one has yet to report any unhealthy behavior in their meetings. Action plans for dealing with predatory behavior need to be put in place ahead of time so members know how to respond effectively when something does go wrong.

Kim S, Past Delegate, has been around the rooms of AA for 30 years and knows what it’s like to be vulnerable.

“I was bullied in service. I endured unwanted touching. I know what that’s like.”

Memories never faded and have motivated her to become an advocate for safety in the rooms, as an Area Delegate and now Past Delegate.

“There’s simply no place for predatory behavior in AA. Everyone must be able to feel totally safe when they step through the doors.”

Back in November, Kim hosted an online workshop for AA members from across Area 83. More than 30 logged into the session which began with a presentation, and then opened up into a question and answer discussion forum.

“There’s no evidence to suggest that the rooms of AA are any less safe today than they have been in the past. But people are becoming more aware of this issue,” said Kim.

The problem, she explained, is that often times people don’t want to tell anyone they’ve been mistreated.

When someone feels like a victim, they just don’t

want attention. And so, there’s a reluctance to speak up.

Kim was asked for advice on how to awaken this elephant in the room, and to get safety on the home group agenda. One workshop participant pointed out a situation where the chair of their business meeting – a member with longstanding sobriety, and a strong service record – was actually the offender who was harassing other members.

“It’s not easy to deal with these situations. And sometimes the best way is to just ask that ‘safety in the rooms’ be put on the agenda as new business for the next meeting. Or, a member can ask someone from the Area, or District, to come and do a presentation.”

Another key item raised in the workshop was that when trouble arises individuals should not try to respond alone, and that a group action plan be put in place as a preventative measure.

“No one member should find themselves in a position where they are confronting someone alone, and possibly putting themselves in danger,” said Kim.

What constitutes predatory behavior can be much more than sexual harassment. It’s behavior like: borrowing money; selling goods for personal gain; offering investment schemes; or theft of group funds.

Safety in the rooms of AA...it’s something we all have a stake in. Let’s take preventative measures now and not wait until problem behavior occurs.

Christmas Eve at the Bronson Centre



Meetings bind us together and share our message of hope. Thank you to all of the groups that volunteered to help with the Alkathon.

Time	Misc. Hall	Discussion Meeting Room 109	Prayer Meetings Room 213	All-Areas open to all Room 110
12:00 noon	Lunch	Prayer Meal (12:30 - 1:00 pm)	Uplift (1:00 - 2:00 pm)	
1:00 pm				
2:00 pm	Prayer Meetings (2:00 - 3:00 pm)	Morning Glory (3:00 - 4:00 pm)	Prayer (3:00 - 3:30 pm)	Formerly We Can Make It AFG (3:00 - 3:30 pm)
3:00 pm				
4:00 pm		W.O.P.E. (4:00 - 5:00 pm)	Share and Care (6:30 - 8:00 pm)	Alison Q and A (4:00 - 4:30 pm)
5:00 pm				
6:00 pm	Dinner (starting at 5:00 pm)	Women in Step (6:00 - 7:00 pm)	Chis (8:00 - 9:00 pm)	Royal Ottawa AFG (8:00 - 9:00 pm)
7:00 pm				
8:00 pm	Speaker Peggy F (8:00 - 8:30 pm)			Ottawa and Pincrest AFGs (8:00 - 9:00 pm)
9:00 pm		Whitland Slap (8:30 - 9:00 pm)	Veritas (9:00 - 10:00 p.m.)	
10:00 pm			West End (10:30 - 11:30 pm)	
11:00 pm		Sunday Night 12 Slap (11:00 - 12:00 am)		
12:00 Midnight	Secular Sobriety (12:00 - 1:00 am)			
1:00 am		Webboro (1:00 - 2:00 am)		
2:00 am				
3:00 am		New Day (3:00 - 4:00 am)		
4:00 am				
5:00 am		Back to Basics (4:00 - 5:00 am)		
6:00 am		Early Birds (6:00 - 6:30 am)		
7:00 am				
8:00 am		Awakening (7:30 - 8:00 am)		
9:00 am		Breakfast (8:00 - 9:00 am)		
10:00 am		Step by Step (9:00 - 10:00 am)		
11:00 am		Attitude of Gratitude (10:00 - 11:00 am)		

Alkathon Meeting Schedule for December 24 & 25
Bronson Centre
211 Bronson St
Ottawa, ON
24 hours of meetings



Christmas Day on Montreal Road




Eastathon-2019
Christmas Day - New Year's Day
265 Montreal Rd

(both days start at 1pm after the Happy Nooners and run till 10pm)
Turkey and Ham dinner served at 3pm
East End Group meeting at 6pm

Live Music · Good Food · Fellowship
Potluck...pls bring dessert and finger foods if possible

7th Tradition to help plan our dinner.
Gratefully appreciated in advance ...
Please contact: Nicole
M. 613 745-4699
Helene P. 613 853-0373



Alkathon, from Page 1

The most important people in the room

Lise M wasn't sure what to expect when she arrived at the Bronson Centre for her first Alkathon. But it didn't take long for this newcomer, an Al Anon member, about to celebrate one year, to feel the connection.

A friend from south of the border who's been sober for 30 years, and volunteers at AA holiday events in her native Connecticut, encouraged Lise to seek out something similar in her own backyard.

"It's funny, but until my friend shared about her 'seasonal' service, I hadn't put two and two together and realized what a real challenge this time of year can be for a lot of people."

The last twelve months have helped Lise make some sense of a lifetime spent interacting with family members battling alcoholism. And the Alkathon opened her eyes even more to the different ways our wider family supports each other.

"I can see myself coming back next year, for sure."

The magic of service

If you said yes to a ladle of gravy on your turkey, you can thank Christine R. She was the gravy maker, and one of the dedicated volunteers helping to serve the meal on Christmas Eve.

"Nothing speaks to the true sense of community more than breaking bread with your fellows. Being there to provide sustenance to members of our AA community is such a privilege."

And, bearing witness to others extending the hand of charity.

"I watched today as someone encouraged a person they didn't know to come forward and enjoy some food. I was so touched by that simple act of humanity."

Little miracles

Derrick H recalled, early in his sobriety, being asked to help run a 3 a.m. meeting at the Alkathon.

"I set my alarm for 2 o'clock, and when I arrived only half a dozen were there to attend the meeting. But I just knew that's exactly what I needed to be doing to stay sober."

Inspired by that first experience, the Alkathon has become a special part of Derrick's annual holiday season. And he was honored to be chairing the 7 p.m. Christmas Eve meeting on behalf of his home group, Oasis.

"We decided not to pick a speaker ahead of time, and let the meeting unfold spontaneously. In the end, a member with 22 months of sobriety was the one to share. It was perfect, just the message we needed to hear."

And so another Alkathon is in the books, and all those little miracles get packed away...encouragement for next year!

One door closes another opens

Just as the Alkathon finishes, the Eastathon begins. And this year, for the first time, it took place on Montreal road, just around the corner from its former location, on Cody avenue.

Pierre B, the mover, has fond memories of the event's founder.

"We owe a great debt to Paul, or Mr. Saturday night as we called him, a former priest. He used to open his home on McArthur avenue, providing temporary shelter to men in early sobriety. More people started dropping by his place on Christmas and New Year's Eve. After a few years, the groups at Cody Street began hosting a more formal event with food and song."

Here's to Paul smiling down on his friends in Vanier.

How it works...

how your voice gets from Ottawa to New York City

Seventy years ago, Bill W turned the care and maintenance of AA over to the fellowship. Prior to that, the day to day minutia of the organization was left up to Bill, Dr. Bob and a few non-alcoholic trustees.

With the alarming news that Dr. Bob was gravely ill with cancer, and facing his own mortality, Bill realized the need for some succession planning, if the fellowship was to survive and thrive. The General Service Board was established to facilitate a smooth hand off of administrative and governance responsibilities from the founders to the wider membership.

Guided by the traditions, and later the 12 Concepts for World Service, AA has grown so much in its methods of reaching the still suffering alcoholic. And, through the 12 Steps, the principles of AA have managed to keep our important message of recovery consistent and primary to all other matters.

Every spring, 93 delegates representing all the Areas throughout the US and Canada get together with General Service Office (GSO) staff and trustees for a week-long business meeting to discuss the business of AA. It's called the General Service Conference (GSC).

In April 1951, a meeting of 37 delegates, trustees and staff met for the first time to decide if they would accept full responsibility (present and future) for the General Services of Alcoholics Anonymous – our *Third Legacy*. Having accepted the responsibility, 69 years later the

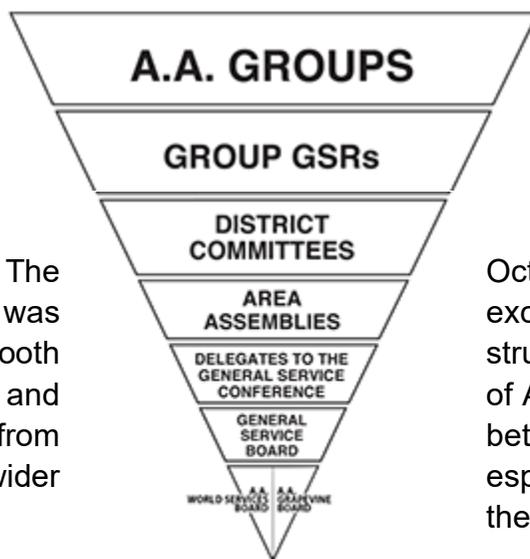
GSC is still the epic business meeting for AA in North America.

Over the course of the year, our Delegate has the opportunity to meet with the Area Committee (3-4 times) including District Committee Members and Area Subcommittee Chairs, to discuss AA matters for Area 83, Eastern Ontario International. There are also two Assemblies, in March and October, where information is exchanged up and down the service structure. While the general service of AA is active all year long, the time between February and March is especially busy with preparations for the GSC in April.

In mid-February the Delegate receives the agenda for the GSC, and at that point the mad rush begins. The Delegate (and Alternate Delegate) will participate in the Ontario Delegate's Committee meeting, which is much like boot camp for all Ontario Delegates to prepare them for the GSC in New York.

This year, Area 83 will be hosting this event at the Holiday Inn near Toronto's Pearson International Airport (see announcement next page) on February 28-March 1. All are welcome and encouraged to attend.

Delegates are elected for a two-year term and there are four delegate areas in Ontario, (83, 84, 85, 86). Elected on alternating years, Area 84 and 86, are gearing up to attend the GSC for the first time. Our delegate will be representing Eastern Ontario International, which extends from Oakville to Cornwall, and Pembroke south



to upper New York State. This is a big deal and being informed and prepared will make all the difference to the Delegate.

After the Ontario Delegate’s Committee meeting, Area 83 is rolling out a new initiative: a Pre-Conference Agenda Sharing Session will take place, online in March.

This will be an opportunity to learn more about specific agenda topics that will be discussed at the 70th GSC. Summaries of the exchanges will be shared with the Delegate so that they understand the agenda topics as they pertain to members all across Area 83.

Finally, Area 83 has designated the Saturday Service Information Day of the Spring Assembly (in March, in Kingston) as a Preconference Assembly.

The workshops will strive to create dialogue among the fellowship about the agenda topics for the GSC.

Much effort has been made over the years to create a good venue for communication in Area 83 regarding the GSC agenda topics, regrettably the results have been mediocre. Perhaps what our real challenge has been is that maybe most in AA don’t realize that when Bill turned over governance of the fellowship, he was turning it over to all of us. Every one of us can play a part in the GSC process; we hope to see and hear from you in one of the many upcoming General Service events. For a list of these events, dates and venues, go to Area83aa.org.

Amy L



Holiday Inn Toronto Airport East
600 Dixon Road, Toronto, ON M9W 1J1

To Make Reservations to stay at the hotel:

Telephone: 1-800-491-4656 | **Reservation Code:** “ODC” + Required Dates
or **Online** at www.hitorontoairport.ca

The function of the Ontario Delegates’ Committee is to provide, where and when required, a blended voice for the four Delegate Areas in Ontario. In addition, this forum provides an orientation for the four Alternate Delegates to the General Service Conference. The ODC serves as a platform of discussion for the Delegates on matters and issues concerning the upcoming General Service Conference. It is hoped that all AA members will be encouraged to attend as observers and participate during Sharing Sessions on the Agenda or when the floor is opened by the Chairperson.

We extend a special invitation to you and hope to see you there. Sincerely,

Rob

Area 83 Eastern Ontario International & 2020 ODC hosting committee ODC2020@Area83aa.org

From the AA archives...

Crossroads Group **50 Years in 2020!!**

Bells Corners United Church – 3955 Old Richmond Road - Mondays @ 7:00 PM – Closed Discussion

Founding members Ambrose H, Eddie H, Dillon H, Frank K, Bob K, Jack L and Ernie O started the Group in January 1970. Six of the founders were members of the Triangle Group and the 7th did not have a home group. All lived in Ottawa's West End and wanted to start up a meeting that would be located closer to home.

Over the years, Crossroads has spawned several spin-off Groups: Kanata (Monday), Parkwood Hills, Queensway-Carleton and Share & Care.

Crossroads used to be an open speaker format. In 2018, it changed to a closed discussion meeting with an open speaker meeting being held the last Monday of the month. The readings used are the "Serenity Prayer, How it Works, The Steps and The Traditions and The Lord's Prayer. Initially, there were 8 members at the first meeting



and within two years, attendance grew to 80-90. That has since dropped to approximately 20 with 10 members. Most are over 40 years of age with a mixture of 80% male and 20% female.

Pinecrest Group

Our Lady of Fatima Church – 153 Woodroffe Avenue - Mondays @ 8:00 PM – Open Speaker



The group was founded by Peter L, along with a handful of members, on Tuesday, October 19, 1976 at the Britannia United Church. It held its first open speaker meeting, and Peter L's 13th anniversary.

The group quickly became the regular meeting for a bus load of inmates from Landry Crossing Correctional Institute located at CFB Petawawa. The institution closed in 1977.

The meeting was changed to the All Saints Church at 1061 Pinecrest. As there was already a meeting on Tuesday nights (Heritage) at this location, the meeting night was changed to Wednesday. In 2013 we moved to Our Lady of Fatima Church on Woodroffe & Byron St; for 6 years we continue to gain in numbers. The Pinecrest Group is now 43 years old, and this October, Peter celebrated 56 years of continuous sobriety.

For many years until recently, the activity at the business meeting level was always small (5-10 members) even though the meeting was very well attended.

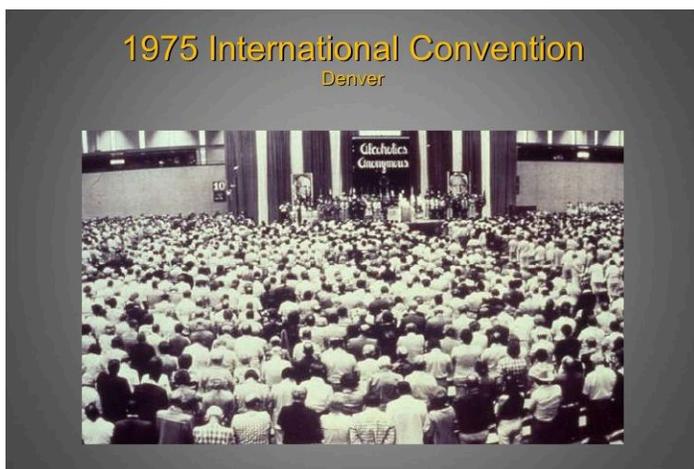
The current membership stands at approximately 30 with an average of 15 members attending business meetings. The male/female ratio at both the regular meeting and the business meeting still heavily favours the males by a ratio of 3 to 1, but it is changing.

The Pinecrest group has a very good mix of sobriety; lots of newcomers with less than five years, and plenty of old timers with over 25 years.

On the road to Detroit 2020: Denver 1975

Alcoholics Anonymous was celebrating 40 years as its sixth international convention was held in Denver, from July 4-6, 1975. The theme was "Let It Begin With Me". An estimated 19,500 members were in attendance, but something was missing.

It was the first international convention for which neither Dr. Bob, nor Bill W, was present; both had passed away. To remind everyone they were still there in spirit, the platform of Currigan Hall was decorated with their portraits; a 30-foot replica of the Big Book was positioned between them. Other notable giants of early AA history had also passed away, but Lois W was present and quite active during the weekend's festivities.



Another reminder of Bill was the sale of his biography, by Robert Thomsen, published by Harper & Row. It was sold out by noon Friday. Further distribution by G.S.O. was subsequently forbidden by conference action.

The host Committee had 800 volunteers working at the airport and in hotel lobbies, driving cars to meet invited guests, and attending registration tables at Currigan Hall – where 10,000 arrivals were handled in a single day.

The opening session on Friday night began with the first-ever flag ceremony, which has since become a tradition at every convention. As the name of each country was called over the public address system, spotlights shone on its flag. And as its anthem played, its flag was carried down the aisle and onto the stage. AAs from 29 countries paraded their flags. When they arrived on stage, each flag bearer stepped up to the

microphone and repeated the conference theme, "Let It Begin With Me", in his or her native language.

An entrepreneur who had heard of the enormous amount of coffee consumed at AA conventions, rigged the world's largest coffee maker on a balcony at the convention hall, with a capacity of half a million cups a day. The coffee was brewed in huge tanks and piped to a bank of dozens of spigots. Here, AAs helped themselves after paying a quarter-a-cup to enter the area. It worked fine and was the talk of the convention, but the coffee itself was judged pretty bad. Better coffee was available, for free, at innumerable hospitality rooms.

Alkathon-style meetings ran each day. One such meeting, the 'drum and dance' was presented by native American AA groups. Ernest Kurtz reported that between each talk, "the huge drum spoke in tribute to the Higher Power that the leader chose to call the Great Spirit, and AAs in the regalia of many tribes went onto the arena floor to dance...but not alone. They reached out their hands, and soon white and black AAs were on the floor with them."

Friday and Saturday were full of workshops, luncheon gatherings and panel discussions. Because of unexpected numbers, convention center rooms were packed so tightly that sessions were repeatedly halted by police and fire officials until aisles could be partially cleared of standees. Spanish-speaking AAs were delighted with workshops in their language.

More than 320 speakers took part in the weekend. Among those, on Friday night, were Bill C of Boston, a past Trustee; and Cec C, of Saskatchewan, a future Trustee. The Spiritual Meeting Sunday morning, chaired by Al S (author of The Responsibility Declaration), featured Rev. Yev C of Long Island; Chuck C (A New Pair of Glasses) of Laguna Beach, California; and a marvellous talk by Lois W, who may have received the most tumultuous reception of her ovation-filled lifetime.

Mike B

Sources:

- Grateful to Have Been There©, by Nell Wing
- Sarah P., G.S.O. staff presentation 1984 Gen. Service Conference
- Not God©, by Ernest Kurtz

SERVICE CALENDAR

No matter how much sobriety you have, you can help and be part of the greater whole. All AA members are welcome to attend any of the following committees:

OTTAWA INTERGROUP MONTHLY MEETING..... Second Wednesday (7:00 pm)
(Bronson Centre, 211 Bronson Avenue - Mac Hall)

DISTRICT 54 MEETING..... First Thursday (7:30 pm)
(Overbrook Community Centre, 33 Quill Street)

DISTRICT 58 MEETING..... First Monday (7:00 pm)
(Bronson Centre, 211 Bronson Avenue - Room 213)

DISTRICT 62 MEETING..... Second Monday (7:30 pm)
(All Saints Church, 347 Richmond Road - rear entrance)

CORRECTIONS FACILITIES AND TREATMENT..... Fourth Tuesday (6:30 pm)
(Bronson Centre, 211 Bronson Avenue - Room 108)

PUBLIC INFORMATION/ COOPERATION WITH PROFESSIONALS... Third Monday (6:30 pm)
(Bronson Centre, 211 Bronson Avenue - Room 108)

OTTAWA ARCHIVES..... Third Wednesday (7:00 pm)
(Bronson Centre, 211 Bronson Avenue - Room 108)

Is your AA Group's meeting information correct on ottawaaa.org? Please send all updates as well as temporary closures to Ottawa Intergroup at info@ottawaaa.org.

Do you have a question for the Intergroup board? Please email us with your question and you can also request an invitation to meet with us at our monthly board meeting. Send your email to chair@ottawaaa.org.

If your group needs insurance, please contact Ottawa Intergroup at info@ottawaaa.org to discuss.

"Our Primary Purpose" publishes articles reflecting the full diversity of experience and opinion found within the Fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous. In determining content, the editor relies on the principles of the Twelve Traditions. "Our Primary Purpose" values the shared experience of individual AA members working the AA program and applying the principles of the Twelve Steps. Seeking neither to gloss over difficult issues, nor to present such issues in a harmful or contentious manner, "Our Primary Purpose" tries to embody the widest possible view of the AA Fellowship.

The editor of "Our Primary Purpose" reserves the right to accept or reject material for publication, based on the AA traditions. Note: this policy is consistent with that of the AA Grapevine.

Articles are not intended to be statements of AA policy, nor does publication of any article constitute endorsement by either Alcoholics Anonymous or Ottawa Area Intergroup. Submissions are always welcome.