

Our Primary Purpose

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

Your opinion counts:
influencing the wider
AA agenda

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Get engaged in service:
Spring conference

prep is
underway
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The march to Detroit
2020 continues: a
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Finding what you need in recovery Newly formed AA groups bring greater diversity to local fellowship

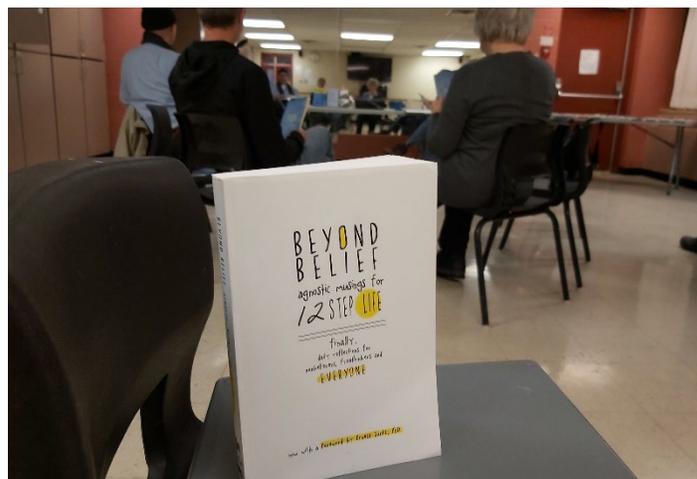
There are over 100 home groups spread across the National Capital Region; some have been around for decades. Sandy Hill Thursday night, for example, celebrates 60 years later this month. Others are just getting started, like the three we are going to examine in this story.

Meetings, like the recovering alcoholics who attend them, are all unique. Their defining characteristics mirror the people who walk through their doors, and who share their stories.

Meetings have a shelf life. They begin, they grow, they move, and sometimes they die. Most have one thing in common: an AA member, or group of members, had a vision of how they could help the suffering alcoholic. Presto, a new group is born.

The growth of secular AA

In December, Ottawa's second secular group opened in Carlingwood Park, off Merivale Road. It's called Beyond Belief, a closed discussion group, on Thursday night, located in the Alexander Community Centre, 960 Silver street.



Inspired by the title of a book of daily reflections, Ottawa's second secular meeting is helping to make our local AA community ever more inclusive.

Its founder, Michel D, introduced the secular format to our local Ottawa Area Intergroup four years ago, when he started Secular Sobriety – a Tuesday night discussion group at the Sandy Hill Community Centre.

“Patience is your friend when you start a new group. It takes time, no matter what the format, to

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preceding publication date

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Editorial – Putting the oxygen mask on ourselves first – Easier said than done

It truly is an apt metaphor...if the cabin pressure in our lives drops, then we surely need to get that oxygen mask over our nose and mouth pretty fast, or we're definitely not going to be in any shape to help those around us.



How often ... especially as parents or sponsors ... do we rush to help others; pre-empting the need to help ourselves first.

Without that much-needed oxygen to the brain, our thinking gets cloudy, and our codependent instincts take over. We want to grab the controls, and do for others what they could, should, and must do for themselves.

We, as a fellowship, have a very clear mission and mandate – to help the still suffering alcoholic. And we do that in oh so many ways. But we also look for short cuts.

How often do we hear that little voice inside our heads, as we interact with the struggling newcomer before or after a meeting. “You need help!” that little voice is saying. We want to blurt it out, and take the newcomer by the hand, lead them to a quiet corner, and spell out a prescription for recovery.

“Don’t drink, go to meetings, find a homegroup, get a sponsor, start doing the steps, get involved in service.”

Gee, if only one could do all that in a day. We could help everyone, and be done in time for supper.

Let’s take a deep breath, and acknowledge the fact that “asking for help” is a learned activity, one that can take months if not years. In fact, we never really stop learning how to be vulnerable, set aside our ego, and seek guidance.

But how can we expect the newcomer to do it if we are not doing it ourselves? We have to lead by example.

Self-care is not easy. It usually involves creating a new habit, and then trying – sometimes desperately – to keep doing it, day after day, week after week, month after month. Finally, it becomes part of who we are.

Take exercise. Experts say we should be doing at least 30 minutes of activity, that gets our heart rate up, four or five times a week. But not all at once. Maybe two or three times a week to start.

Yes, we’re alcoholics, but we don’t need to climb Mount Everest, at least not right away. How about a brisk walk to a nearby meeting?

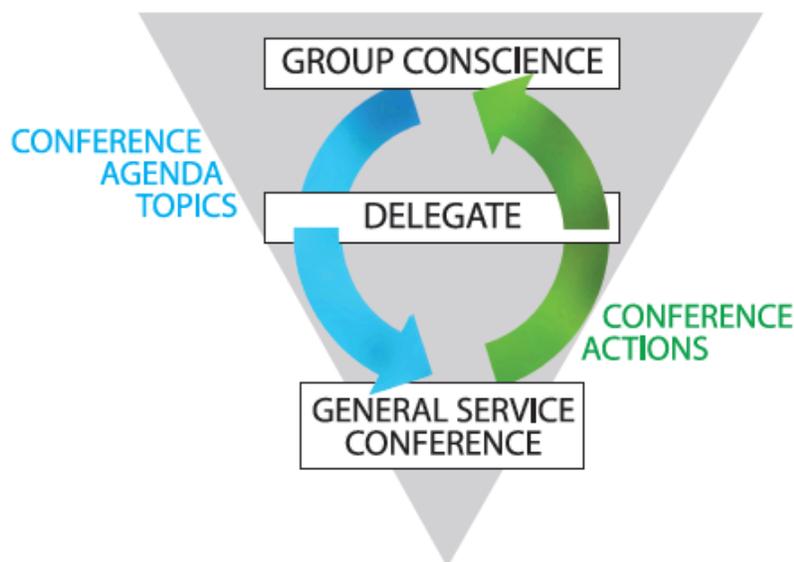
And one final thought. How many of us are telling our sponsees to pick up the phone and call us, but are WE picking up the phone to call our own sponsor?

Giving advice can be so much easier than asking for it.

Your Delegate needs to hear from YOU!

AA groups today hold ultimate responsibility and final authority for AA World Services.

Bill W, Concept I



AA as a whole relies on the GENERAL SERVICE CONFERENCE to maintain the unity and strength of our fellowship through this feedback loop.

It is vital that good two-way communication exists between the GROUPS and the GENERAL SERVICE CONFERENCE – this happens through your DELEGATE.

Be a part of the process!

Go to Area83aa.org and click on: Pre-Conference Sharing Sessions

How you can get involved in the General Service Conference process

The General Service Conference has 13 standing committees that consider Agenda topics that have been compiled over the past year. As voting members of the Conference, Delegates bring to its deliberations the experiences and viewpoints of their own Areas. This is your AA, and the Delegate wants to hear from you.

All members of Area 83 are invited to participate in discussions on Agenda items coming forward at the 70th General Service Conference. Discussions will take place on Zoom (a free video conferencing app). Your district will be invited to participate in-depth on one of the nine committees as shown below in the second and third weeks of March.

In late February, Agenda topics with background information will become available and emailed to members via your DCM and GSR. This information will also be available at Area83aa.org

Meeting Date	General Service Conference Agenda Committee	District Participation
Sun Mar 8, 7pm	Literature Pt 1	6, 50 & 42
Mon Mar 9, 7pm	Grapevine	36 & 82
Tues Mar 10, 7pm	Corrections	28, 02 & 86
Wed Mar 11, 7pm	Literature Pt 2	16, 10 & 74
Thurs Mar 12, 7pm	Cooperation with the Professional Community	66, 48 & 54
Sun Mar 15, 7pm	Treatment and Accessibility	34, 12 & 18
Mon Mar 16, 7pm	Public Information	58, 70 & 26
Tues Mar 17, 7pm	Agenda Trustees International Conventions/Regional forums Policy and Admissions Archives Report and Charter	14 & 30
Wed Mar 18, 7pm	Finance	62, 78 & 22

**For link to online sharing sessions
go to Area83aa.org and click on:
Password: Area83zoom**

**Pre-Conference
Sharing Sessions**



New Meetings, from Page 1

attract a core group of members who are willing to commit to coming back on a regular basis.”

For Michel, the challenge had its own unique twist because the “secular” concept was new to Ottawa. It took the better part of a year for his first meeting to build a solid membership base.

“Word of mouth is what draws new people to your meeting. Your hope is that they will tell their fellow members what the experience was like, and encourage them to give it a try.”

Both secular meetings read from the AA book, *Living Sober*, a practical guide to a well-rounded, normal life without alcohol. The new Thursday meeting, based on the success of the Tuesday gathering, and a growing interest in secular AA, is getting traction right away.

“There’s no barrier to entry. Coming to a secular meeting is definitely not about being an agnostic or an atheist, but more about having an open mind and building a fellowship that’s diverse and welcoming to all – believers and non-believers.”

Bringing life to our AA pledge

For Risa D, being the founder of an AA meeting is perhaps her ultimate act of service, and the true manifestation of her hopes and dreams for what our fellowship can do to help the still suffering alcoholic.

“The notion that someone as naturally flawed as I am can feel empowered enough to create a home group, and build a sanctuary for fellow alcoholics, is truly remarkable and transformative.”

Risa’s recovery journey was rocky from the get-go. She made an ‘open speaker’ meeting her home group, allowing her to slide in and out without any meaningful sharing.

She had difficulty finding a sponsor, and ultimately asked a man to help guide her through the 12 steps. She got quite close to his wife as well, and, with their support, her program quickly strengthened. She became a sponsor herself, and began to feel the spiritual dividend that comes from helping others.



The group’s name was inspired by the Lynyrd Skynyrd song *Free Bird*, and by the power of sponsorship

Still, there were setbacks. Following a relapse, Risa reached out to her former sponsor, only to discover that he himself had gone out after 30 years, and subsequently taken his own life.

“I was devastated by the loss, someone who had helped me so much. I was also reminded of how we had often talked about the kind of meeting we liked to go to.”

Risa always had strong opinions about what made a good meeting; that it needed to truly reflect the underlying principles of AA, and most of all, that it be welcoming to the newcomer.

“I was tired of going to meetings where people were given license to gossip and stew in their tales of woe.”

After regaining her right spiritual condition, Risa decided the best kind of contribution she could make was to start her own meeting. As a tribute to her first sponsor, she named the group “Freebirds,” inspired by his favorite Lynyrd Skynyrd song.

It’s an Orleans-based, closed discussion meeting. Get your week off to an early start: Monday, 7:30 a.m. Then again, Wednesday and Saturday at the same time. It takes place at the Queenswood Heights Community Centre, 1485 Duford Street.

“I know in my heart this is the best thing I can be doing to help my fellow suffering alcoholics.”

Necessity breeds creation

Mike M admits there was never any divine inspiration pushing him to start a meeting. It was more a case of necessity and basic time management.

“I simply needed a meeting close enough that I could get to within my lunch hour, give or take a few minutes.”

Mike’s home group was on the weekend, and so during the week he wanted at least one other meeting, while setting aside time for sponsees.

“I always knew I needed at least one additional meeting, mid-week, to keep me anchored and on track.”

The Podium/Hill group was the closest meeting to his office. And, during months when he was riding his bike to work he found he could get there and back on time. But in winter, and on foot, he wasn’t quite able to squeeze it in.

“It was only a matter of a few extra minutes each way, but just enough to push me for a different solution.”

That solution was to start a meeting, and so he did. It was around the corner from his office, hardly a five-minute walk, door to door.

The Wednesday noon, men’s discussion group, named the Power Hour, was born.

“It’s pretty simple. We do what we have to do to stay sober.”

The Power Hour is in the basement of First Baptist Church, 140 Laurier Avenue West, corner of Elgin Street.



Great location for the downtown office crowd catching a meeting over the lunch hour

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.

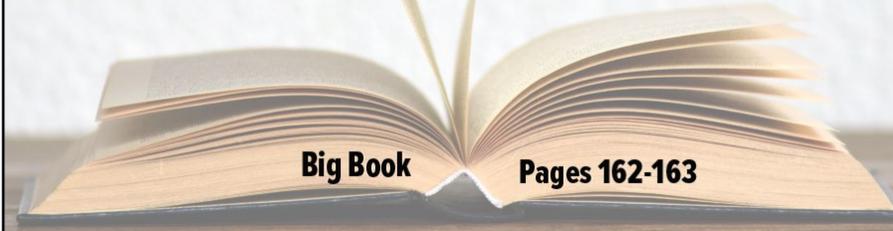
Basic requirements:

- 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

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



"Some day we hope that every alcoholic who journeys will find a Fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous at his destination."

"Thus we grow. And so can you, though you be but one man with this book in your hand. We believe and hope it contains all you will need to begin."

Alcoholics Anonymous pages 162-163, A Vision For You

This is the theme of the May 2, 2020, Spring Conference, and I have the honour and privilege of being the Chairperson. I am filled with gratitude and fear, excitement and uncertainty, as I take on this service position. I have no doubt that the committee and fellowship will help me to put on a fantastic conference that follows in the footsteps of the many who have gone before.

I came into Alcoholics Anonymous in 1996 where an amazing fellowship welcomed me with open arms. Members took me under their wings and helped me to become an active member of an ever-repeating network of sober members of AA. Being of service to the group, to AA as a whole and to others, was the message that was demonstrated to me. I was introduced to people who had the Big Book in their hands and they said, "come with us."

I hope this conference embodies that theme. It is my wish that the responsibility declaration that is read in so many meetings stays true. "...when anyone, anywhere, reaches out for help, I want the hand of AA always to be there; and for that, I am responsible."

I look forward to meeting so many new people along the way. I am excited to see how it unfolds, and I hope that you will join me in volunteering and attending the event.

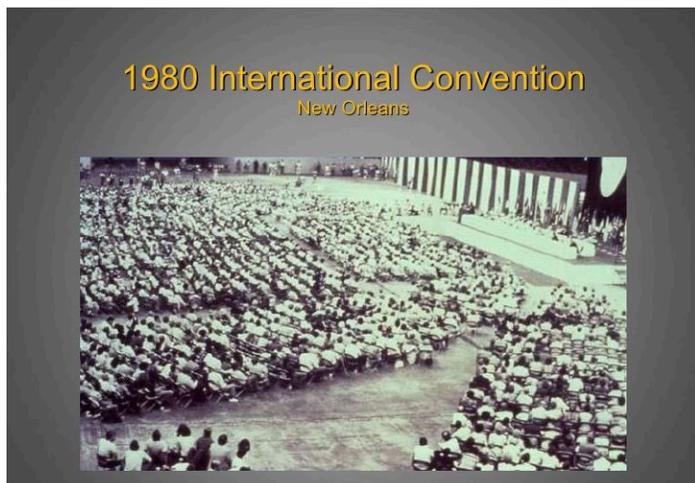
In loving Service,

Cindy E-M, Chair – 2020 Ottawa Spring Conference

Planning is underway 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:

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

On the road to Detroit 2020: New Orleans 1980



The seventh AA International Convention was held in New Orleans, Louisiana, from July 3 – 6, 1980. The theme was, 'The Joy of Living' and AA was celebrating its 45th anniversary. There was an estimated 22,500 attendees and the 'Big Meetings' were held in the Superdome.

New Orleans is known for Mardi-Gras and Bourbon Street, but when AAs arrived they held a mock Mardi-Gras parade and turned it into an ice-cream and coffee street. There were signs in the windows of the jazz establishments welcoming AAs.

On Friday night, at the opening session, there was a 30-foot high world map outlined on a blue background behind the stage. During the flag ceremony, as each flag bearer recited the theme of the convention in his or her native tongue, the country represented was lit up on the map.

This convention was the first to have a marathon meeting running continuously, day and night, from Thursday midnight to Sunday morning. A man who had sobered up just two days before, in the marathon meeting, was introduced to the entire convention crowd.

Special workshops were also scheduled for gay members and for young people as well as for doctors, lawyers, and women. An archives workshop was held, the first ever at an international convention, and a

Sources:

Grateful to Have Been There©, by Nell Wing
Not God©, by Ernest Kurtz
Nancy O.-AA History Lovers.

large, enthusiastic crowd attended. The films "Bill's Own Story" and "Bill Discusses the Traditions" were shown continuously throughout the convention. On Sunday morning Lois gave a brief talk and was presented with the first Big Book in Italian, by Roberto C, who had done the translation. He spoke about how AA was growing in Italy.

Then a surprise guest came to the microphone and introduced himself as Bob S, a member of Al-Anon. He explained that he was probably the only person at the convention who had been present when Bill W first met Dr. Bob. He was the only son of Dr. Bob Smith. "Smitty," as he was known, shared some of his early memories of Bill living in their Akron home that summer in 1935.

The 1980 convention was the first to feature women, and Marty Mann ("Women Suffer Too" in the Big



Book), of course, was the keynote speaker. She, like Dr. Bob and Bill before her, was very ill when she gave this last major talk to AA. Like Bill, in 1970, she arrived in a wheelchair. When she

was introduced, she rose from the wheelchair and walked slowly to the podium as a prolonged ovation shook the rafters.

When the ovation finally ended, Marty looked out over the thousands of women (and many men, as well), and said: "Talk about tears -- I can't tell you what it feels like to be a great-great-great-great grandmother to so many women. Because that's what you are, all of you. You're my children, and I'm so, so proud of you."

Marty Mann died two weeks after she returned from New Orleans, July 22, 1980, having survived three of the most often stigmatized health problems of the 20th century: alcoholism, tuberculosis, and cancer. She died suddenly from a massive cerebral hemorrhage.

Mike B

From the AA archives...

Back to Basics

St. Elizabeth's Church – 1303 Leaside Avenue - Saturdays @ 8:00 PM – Closed Discussion

The roots of the Back to Basics Group can be traced back to a meeting that was held on February 18, 1989 at St. Basil's Church. The founders of the Group were Nadia S, Bill R, Carol K, Jim K, Brian S, Brian P and Eileen P, who all believed that there was a need for a Saturday night discussion meeting.

The members present decided that the meeting would initially be a step discussion and eventually elected to include the reading and discussion of one tradition each month. The members also chose not to register it as an official group with the New York General Service Office until it was clear that the meeting was up and running. The group was officially registered in September 1989; Jim K, and Don S, were the first "official members" to join.

Since the first planning meeting the group grew rapidly. However, in the early 2000's when it moved to its present location at St. Elizabeth's Church, it struggled to survive. David T, and Frank V joined to help keep the meeting open. Soon after, they were joined by Kevin A, and Girard F, and attendance began to flourish once again.



Freedom Group

Kitchissippi United Church – 630 Island Park Drive - Tuesdays @ 8:00 PM – Open Speaker



The Freedom Group's roots originated as the "Royal Ottawa Hospital Group" in 1973 when it was originally conceived and funded by The Royal Ottawa Hospital.

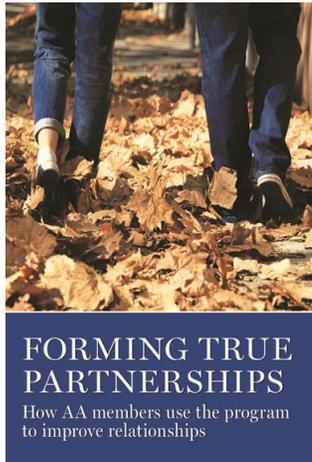
The group became "self-supporting" on February 10, 1977, when it registered with the General Service Office as an AA Group, with 15 members. The name was changed to "The Royal Ottawa Group" and the format altered to an open speaker meeting. The founding members were Mike M, Dave B and Joanne M. In 1982 the name was changed again to "The Freedom Group".

Meetings were held on Tuesdays at 8:00 pm in The Patients Centre at The Royal Ottawa Hospital from 1973 to 1983. In September 1983, the meeting location was changed to Kitchissippi (formerly Kingsway) United Church where it remains today.

By the mid 1980's attendance grew into one of Ottawa's largest mixed meetings; running consistently with 100 - 150 people in attendance. Active group membership was approximately 20 to 30 core members. By the late 1990's, attendance dropped off dramatically and there was concern the meeting might fold. However, interest once again picked up to where it is today, at around 50-85 people, sometimes exceeding more than 100 for celebrations. It is very rare that we don't have at least two birthday celebrations every month. Membership demographic is about 40% over 40 years of age with a mix of males to females about 60/40. Members are very active in all aspects of AA Service with sobriety ranging from less than a year to over 25 years.

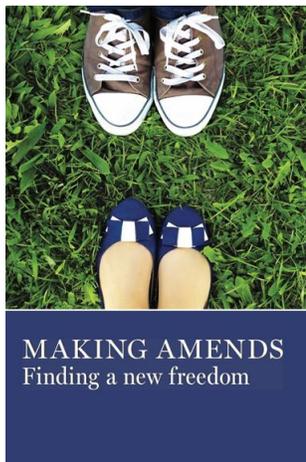
From the Literature Coordinator

For some of us, February is an especially dreaded month. It's not the freezing temperatures, the snow, the ice, and the long hours of winter dark It's worse than any of those things: February has *Valentine's Day*! Human relations have brought all of us much pain. Here's some titles from the Grapevine bookshelf that might be of particular interest this month.



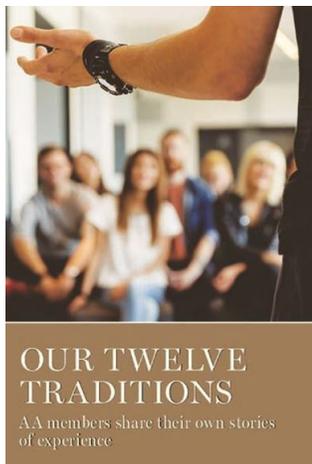
Forming True Partnerships *How AA members use the program to improve relationships*

*This collection of Grapevine stories shows the many ways members use the Twelve Steps, sponsorship, and the tools of the program to improve and repair relationships, old and new. When we were drinking, many of us had, as the Step Four chapter in the AA book *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions* puts it, “a total inability to form a true partnership with another human being.” With candid and colorful stories on families, friendships, marriage, divorce, dating, romance, co-workers, sponsorship and pets, this book covers a wide range of experience from sober alcoholics on how we form true partnerships with others.*



Making Amends *Finding a new freedom*

Making Amends features fifty-five candid, firsthand stories from AA Grapevine magazine of members' experience with Step Nine of the AA program. The book includes chapters on making amends to parents, children, family members, exes, financial institutions, friends and co-workers. These powerful stories illustrate how practicing Step Nine can help us, as AA's co-founder Bill W wrote, “know a new freedom and a new happiness.”



Our Twelve Traditions *AA members share their own stories of experience*

While the twelve steps guide us in our relations with people on a personal level, the twelve traditions guide us in how we work with others as a group. In this collection of stories from AA Grapevine, members write about their experiences with the core principles contained in AA's Twelve Traditions. Born of the trial-and-error experience of the Fellowship's earliest years, the Twelve Traditions provide the spiritual and practical underpinning for AA's ongoing adventure of living and working together. Seen through the eyes of individual members, the stories in this book offer groups, as well as members, workable solutions to difficult problems.

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 – Nepean Room)

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.