

Our Primary Purpose

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

Your meeting counts:
Intergroup is doing
a census

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Spring into service:
get involved in the
Spring
Conference

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The world is coming to
Detroit 2020:
a flashback to
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How do YOU stay sober?

We believe it's by helping others, but what does that mean?

Natalie L could feel the pressure. It was coming from all sides. Her drinking was taking her down.

But she still couldn't control her intake. She was starting in the morning, and even getting up in the night. She was consumed; she was powerless.

"They say we always have choices. But with my back up against the wall, losing my family didn't seem like a choice to me, it was more of an inevitability. Deep down, at some unconscious level, despite knowing that I stood to lose everything, I still couldn't stop."

She credits a 12-Step call with helping her to turn a corner, and, likely, with saving her life.

Now, some five years later, Natalie herself is making 12-Step calls, and is motivated by that one very critical moment in time that helped usher her into the rooms of AA.

One call can change a life

The bottom came when, out of desperation, Natalie reached out to a woman she met through AA. She had actually been going to meetings, but continuing to drink. It had gotten to the point where her children were asking outsiders for help. School counselors and the Children's Aid Society were beginning to mobilize. The wagons were circling, and Natalie decided to flee.



Illustration by Ron M

What is a 12-Step call? It's an AA member paying a visit (with a buddy) to someone reaching out for help.

She asked this woman to pick her up at home and drive her to a hotel. She even asked her to buy some alcohol. The plan was simply to barricade herself in a room and drink.

That's when a 12-Step call saved the day.

"My friend, who had driven me to the hotel, reached out to our AA Intergroup, 12-Step program. And a group of women were soon knocking on my hotel door. They stayed with me for hours, and one of them finally took me home to her place."

See **12-Step Calls**, Page 7

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Editorial – We all need to relapse?!

Ok, don't panic. Your newsletter editor has not lost ALL his marbles. The headline was meant to shock, in hopes that you might keep on reading.



Of course, we don't want to relapse any more than we want to lose our jobs, or say good-bye to a loved one, or have to go back through some of the agony we went through to get sober.

So, now that we're back on planet earth...why would it make sense, at least metaphorically, to experience a relapse?

Well, let's first of all consider this...most of us have already relapsed. We haven't necessarily picked up a drink, but we've indulged, or over-indulged, in many other activities: eating, exercising, online shopping, binge Netflix watching, or burning the midnight oil at the office.

And where has it left us?

Quite often, with a profound loss of emotional sobriety, an emptiness, feelings of shame or guilt. If anyone knows how to push our buttons, we do.

And maybe, just maybe, there's an even greater reason for acknowledging our own quasi-relapses, or inviting those little monster-like indulgences to come and go.

Let's call it identification. We need to be able to identify with these feelings of shame and guilt in order to empathize with those who are just finding the rooms, or truly experiencing a drinking relapse, today.

Don't we always say, "the most important person in the room is the newcomer, or the person coming back."

But what are we doing to help that person? When the meeting is over...and we've recited our AA Responsibility Pledge together, in unison...what's our next move?

Are we headed straight for the parking lot? Or, are we going over to talk to the newcomer or the person coming back? Are we extending the hand of fellowship? Are we truly there for them?

If not, then why not? If not, then who is? If not, then what is our excuse? If not, then what could be more important?

Please, don't say you need to check your phone. But isn't that what we're in a rush to do when the meeting is over? We're all about jumping back into our just-in-time lives.

What about putting down this newsletter right now, and taking a couple of minutes to think...really think...about what it was like the day you stepped through the door of an AA meeting for the very first time.

Remember feeling disoriented. Remember the guilt, or remorse. Remember worrying about who you might see, or who might see you.

Remember how full of fear and anxiety you were; how full of despair, and regret. How dark and gloomy life's horizon appeared to be.

There's a good chance the person holding your hand in the circle, or standing in front of you at the coat rack, is feeling the same way you did.

Remember when someone took a moment to welcome you, and ask you how you were doing...and genuinely looked like they cared about the answer?

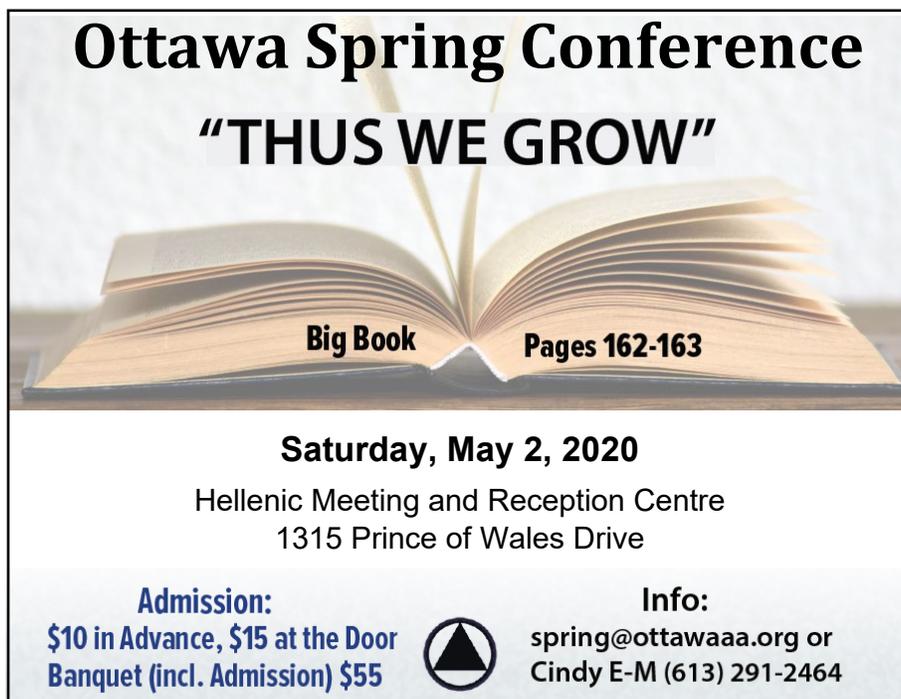
You have the power to make someone feel as good as you did.

Now, put down the newsletter and think about that for a minute or two. It might just be the best two minutes of your day.

“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



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

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:

March 15th and 29th, April 5th, 19th and 26th

OTTAWA AREA INTERGROUP

2020 GROUP CENSUS

Ottawa Area Intergroup is conducting a census of all AA Groups in the Ottawa Area. We hope that your group participates, as we are trying to update our Meeting List. This is also your chance to give us direct input on what more we can do to carry the message to the still suffering alcoholic.

GROUP INFORMATION

Group Name							GSO Number:
Date Established							
Current Facility							
Physical Address							
Meeting Time(s)							
Type of Meeting (Check all that apply)	Open	Closed	Speaker	Discussion	Meditation	Wheelchair Accessible	
Language	English	French	Spanish		Russian		
Intergroup Rep							Email
Alternate Intergroup Rep							
GSR							Email
Alternate GSR							Email
Other Info							

FEEDBACK

Ottawa Area Intergroup is a non-profit organization established under the Ontario Business Corporations Act, on behalf of the AA Groups in the Ottawa area. Intergroup is your local AA Service Center. We maintain an office at the Bronson Centre, where dozens of volunteers provide Literature Sales and our Telephone Answering Service. We also run the Ottawa website at www.ottawaaa.org, we publish a Newsletter called Our Primary Purpose, and we run the Annual Spring Conference, the Eastern Ontario Conference, and Workshops as required. We sponsor a meeting at McNabb Community Centre every Sunday morning. We also have a Group Liability Insurance Plan. We cooperate with all Districts, Area Committees, and the General Services Office in NY.

WHAT ELSE CAN WE DO FOR YOUR GROUP TO HELP YOU CARRY THE MESSAGE?

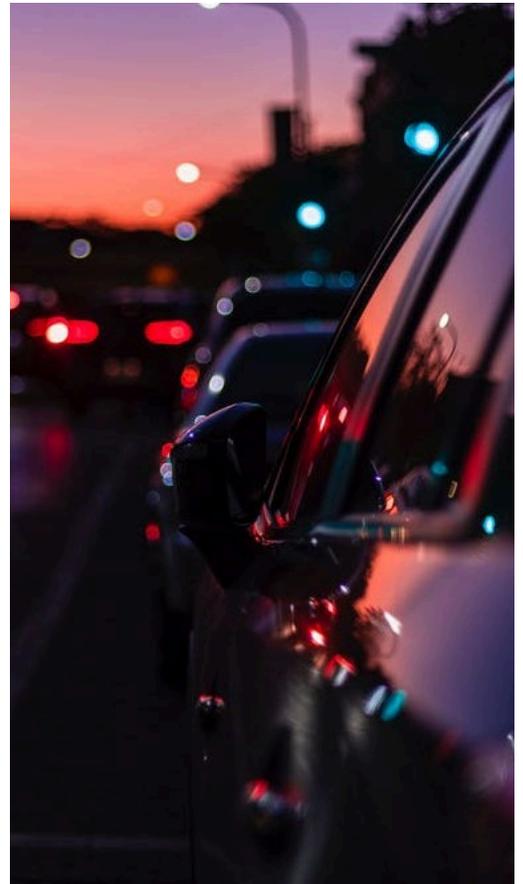
Please return this form as soon as possible. Either bring it to the Monthly Intergroup Meeting (the second Wednesday of each month at the Bronson Centre) or send it to:

By Mail: Ottawa Area Intergroup, 211 Bronson Avenue, Suite 108, Ottawa, Ontario K1R 6H5

By Email: info@ottawaaa.org



You too can become a vital part of our AA frontline efforts to help educate and empower the suffering alcoholic. Volunteer to answer the phone, or to do 12-Step calls.



Speak to your Home Group's Intergroup representative, or send an email to:

tas@ottawaaa.org

or

12step@ottawaaa.org

Remember, it's only human to think to yourself "I can't do this."

Don't worry we will train you and help you to succeed.

GO AHEAD, BE OF SERVICE TO YOUR FELLOW SUFFERING ALCOHOLIC

YOU WILL FEEL BETTER

IT WILL HELP YOU STAY SOBER

12-Step Calls, from Page 1

One door closes, another opens

Natalie went straight into a treatment program, but the demons stuck around.

“I credit a number of women from AA for coming to see me while I was in the treatment facility, and for continuing to encourage me to stay rooted to a recovery path. It really made me feel like the AA fellowship had my back, and would be there for me when I got out.”

Natalie has helped countless other women over the past few years, motivated by the support she herself received.

“I truly believe I understand what it means to pass along what has been freely given to me. I know now, in my heart and soul, that when I make a 12-Step call, it’s doing as much if not more for me than it is for the person I’m reaching out to. That’s the magic of AA.”

Telephone answering is the gateway

Marcel G hadn’t been sober very long when he decided to check out the AA office in the Bronson Centre. After all, it was just around the corner from his condominium.

With his cute little dog, named Sofia, at his heels, he was welcomed into the confines of our AA inner sanctum. The volunteer on duty was very friendly, and asked Marcel to join him at a meeting in Alta Vista, called the Oasis group.

At that meeting he was approached by one of the members and encouraged to come back to the Bronson Centre and help cover a Telephone Answering Service (TAS) shift.

“I didn’t really know what TAS was, or what to expect. But Sofia and I showed up, and helped out.”

Three years later and Marcel (and his furry friend) is one of the most trusted members of the TAS volunteer team.

“I really can’t say enough about how good it makes me feel to answer the phone on behalf of

AA. To know that someone, hearing my voice, at the other end of the line, could potentially decide to make a life-saving decision, or least begin to contemplate a journey that leads to a better quality of life...well, you can’t see that as anything but a privilege.”

People don’t know what they don’t know

Marcel says he is constantly amazed at how out of touch people can be. It’s a constant remember when.

“They want to tell you their life story. They want to complain about their landlord, or their boss, or a family member. Their misfortune is always somebody else’s fault. Mainly what I do is listen. And mainly what I hear is people – in their own strange way – asking for help.”

The fundamental question that people are asking, says Marcel, “am I an alcoholic?”

Of course, we all know who has the answer to that question. And while most of us would like to think we’re not alcoholic, it usually takes us a few trips in and out of the rooms to find the answer. AA is a bit of mystery to most of us, at least at the beginning.

“I had a woman on the phone who had already been to the website. She said she had found a meeting to go to that afternoon, but was concerned because it was a ‘closed.’ She wanted to know if that meant she was too late to make a reservation.”

Marcel and Natalie were just like all of us. They weren’t sure what a 12-Step call was all about. They didn’t know what TAS stood for. But they soon realized there’s nothing to be afraid of.

If you can get sober, and stay sober, then there’s absolutely no reason why you can’t become a TAS volunteer, or put your name on the 12-Step call list.

Ask anyone who has, and they’ll tell you, “it helps me stay sober.”

Intergroup Secretary rotating out ...

Five years ago, January, I arrived in the Ottawa area from Saskatoon with my partner, 2 dogs & 2 cats. I had been involved in service at the Intergroup level as Rep and then, after a few years, allowed my name to stand for Intergroup Treasurer. I had a job as a bookkeeper but didn't think I knew enough to be the Treasurer. I was acclaimed. I did it for a couple of years before leaving Saskatoon to follow my partner's job transfer to Ottawa.

I loved Saskatoon, loved Saskatoon's AA, had learned a lot while living there, had a sponsor, service sponsor and sponsees that I left behind. My sponsor had said to me, make sure you keep going to meetings. I knew that was imperative.

The meetings I went to when I first got here were DIFFERENT than the meetings I attended in Saskatoon. Yes, everyone read the Big Book or the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions, however it was like I was listening to a different language. I didn't know how my experience of AA, the Big Book, etc., was going to fit into Ottawa AA. My sponsor continued to tell me, "keep going to meetings". How was I to find my place in this much larger AA community?

After getting the house somewhat settled, without a job to go to, I searched the Ottawa Intergroup AA website. I found a notice saying the Intergroup Treasurer was looking for a helper. I talked to my service sponsor in Saskatoon and he supported my applying for the position. I wrote to the Treasurer expressing my interest in the part-time position. As it turns out, the position had already been filled.

At the same time, the then Intergroup Secretary was planning to move from Ottawa to Vancouver,

BC. My new sponsor mentioned it to me, and after some thought I attended an Intergroup meeting and allowed my name to stand for Secretary. I got the job! I knew a secretary took the minutes of the meetings, but I had no idea what was involved in an Intergroup of this size. While the numbers of Reps attending were quite a bit larger than Saskatoon, the ratio of groups represented was about the same.

The last four years have been a great learning experience, not without its angst and opportunities for personal growth. I had the privilege to work with three different Chairs, a number of Treasurers, Literature and Newsletter Coordinators, a couple of Webmasters and TAS Coordinators and lots of Intergroup Reps. I was humbled by the commitment for the good of AA that was exemplified by so many.

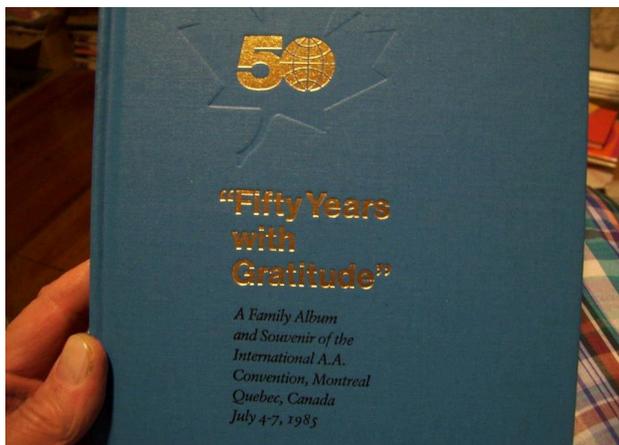
I got to see how the board comes to agreement on what seems to be the best solution, brings that to the Intergroup Membership meeting where new perspectives are voiced and the outcome changes, all for the good of AA. I have experienced an increase in trust and respect as we observe Robert's Rules of Order and do our best to live the Traditions and Concepts because we know AA unity is paramount to our individual recovery.

Thank you for the opportunity to be of service, to get to know you, to receive your feedback, to learn so much through doing the simple tasks of listening and writing. I have been changed by my time as secretary to Intergroup. I am deeply thankful.

Anne D

On the road to Detroit 2020: Montreal 1985

The eighth AA International Convention was held in Montreal, from July 4 – 7, 1985. The theme was, 'Fifty Years With Gratitude' and AA was celebrating its 50th anniversary. There were an estimated 45,600 attendees present, double the number from the last convention in New Orleans.



This would be only the second time the AA Convention was held outside the United States. After all, the Convention is touted as "International". There were 54 countries represented, and festivities began with what had become tradition, a flag ceremony. Although Montreal is known as a bilingual city, English was the principal language spoken at the Big Meetings, with simultaneous translations in French, Spanish, and German.

This would be the first Convention this writer would attend since Montreal is my hometown. The city was transformed that weekend into something it had never seen before. Montreal, known for its night-life, and a plethora of drinking establishments, did not roll up the sidewalks as AA members converged on the city. In fact, many of the bars and clubs welcomed AAs, and had coffee flowing in their establishments all day and night. Many laughed that the House of Seagram paid tribute to Alcoholics Anonymous by lowering the three flags adorning its Montreal headquarters to half-staff for the duration of the convention.

The Big Meetings were held at the Olympic Stadium and venues across the city housed workshops, panels, alkathons and a variety of other meetings.

Dave B ("Gratitude in Action" in the 4th edition of the Big Book), one of the founders of AA in Canada, in 1944, was to have been honoured at the convention.

But he died only a few weeks before, and was represented by nonalcoholic past trustee, Dr. Travis Dancey, who had first tried to bring the AA message to Dave.

Ruth Hock, Bill's first secretary, who typed the original manuscript of the Big Book in 1938, was there and was presented with the 5 millionth copy of the Big Book. Or was it the 5 millionth copy? Apparently not. Everyone was up on the stage and suddenly someone remembered that the book had not been returned from the binders (special leather cover). A representative snuck (almost literally) from the stage to find a book. Someone in the crowd (of course) had a Big Book with them, which was promptly borrowed for the presentation!!

Sybil C, a well-known figure in Alcoholics Anonymous having been the first woman member on the West Coast, was the main speaker. And she didn't disappoint. I can remember the thunderous ovation that rang from the Olympic Stadium, and I was in awe when the crowd started doing the wave at The Big O.

The focus of the whole event was on AA history; Lois, now 94, was assisted by her secretary, Francis H, to the microphone, where she delivered a short but touching speech in a strong voice.

Ernest Kurtz wrote: "Overall, the centrality of AA's own story suffused the whole convention and became permanently enshrined in the 'Family Album and Souvenir, Fifty Years With Gratitude', which in its reproduction of over a hundred newspaper clippings, and old photographs, recalled their history to AAs and AAs to their history."



From the AA archives...

Fellowship Group

Parkdale United Church – 429 Parkdale Avenue - Saturdays @ 8:00 PM – Open Speaker

The meeting began in October of 1961. The founding members were Alex M and Greg C. The first meeting was held over the bowling alley on the corner of Wellington and Merton Street and then moved to our present location in 1963.

The group has the old fashioned AA feel to it with a lot of long-term sobriety and everyone is welcomed at the door or soon after you enter the meeting. Every Saturday night there are snacks provided in way of sandwiches or donuts or cookies.

We always begin the meeting with a moment of silence followed by the serenity prayer; the secretary reads the preamble; How it Works, Steps, Traditions are read; a member's interpretation of one or more of the slogans is given; then the speaker; after the speaker the secretary takes over and passes out the baskets for the 7th tradition, announces flyers, asks for announcements and any out of town guests, announces free literature and books for sale; invites anyone who wants to join to sign our book, mentions the travel directories; then the chips are explained; we

close the meeting in a circle by reciting the Responsibility Pledge and the Lord's Prayer.

We set up each night with 50 chairs and a lot of Saturday nights we can fill those chairs. Our group has a few active members and it is these members who keep the group alive.



Secular Sobriety Group

Sandy Hill Community Centre – 250 Somerset Street East - Tuesdays @ 7:00 PM – Closed Discussion



The first meeting of the Secular Sobriety Group took place on March 1, 2016.

The group reads a chapter from the AA book "Living Sober" and then opens the floor to a discussion of what has just been read, or invites participants to share about any issues related to their program of recovery.

The group thus avoids the religious connotations of other AA meetings. This can be particularly valuable for newcomers who may be put off by what they might consider overly religious references such as the Lord's Prayer. Many of these newcomers to the Secular Sobriety Group "keep coming back" because of a greater sense of inclusiveness.

Apart perhaps from the "secular" aspects of the meetings, the Secular Sobriety Group is well within the great traditions of AA, and plays a full part in the institutions and service work of AA in Ottawa.

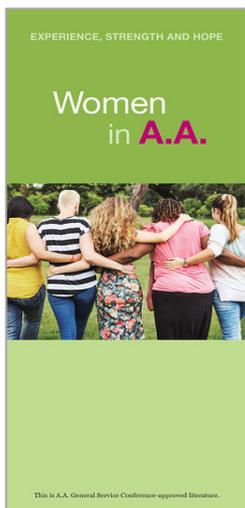
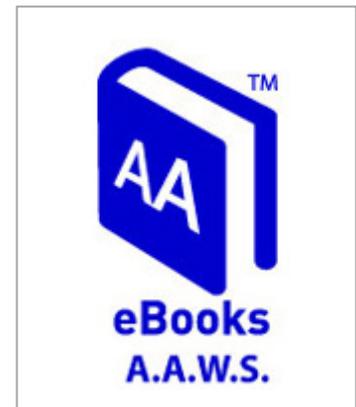
From the Literature Coordinator

March can be a challenging month. Winter's not over but dreams of spring taunt us into restlessness. Some of us can afford to travel, others search for something outside their regular routine to brighten the days. Perhaps the morning routine of daily readings and meditation needs something different.



It might be a welcome change to explore some of AA's video offerings. A.A.W.S. (AA World Services) has a YouTube channel. Open YouTube and search "Alcoholics Anonymous World Services Inc." to reach the channel. There you'll find a number of videos including the most recent "**Young & Sober in AA: From Drinking to Recovery**". Released on February 19, 2020, this video was created by young alcoholics who have found sobriety. AA estimates that 10% of our members are under the age of 30. The video helps dispel the myth that some drinkers may be "too young" to find recovery. No matter what your age, no matter what your gender or background, if you are drinking too much, AA offers a solution.

If you are travelling, you might want to take some recovery reading along in the form of an e-book. If you go online and google "A.A.W.S. eBook publishing program", you'll find the page where you can locate the e-book versions of: *Alcoholics Anonymous* 4th edition, *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*, *Daily Reflections*, *Living Sober*, *Alcoholics Anonymous Comes of Age*, *Came to Believe*, *Dr. Bob & the Good Oldtimers*, *As Bill Sees It*, *Experience Strength and Hope*, *AA in Prison: Inmate to Inmate*, or *Pass It On: the Story of Bill W and How the AA Message Reached the World*.



Have you noticed our pamphlets are changing? Does your group have the latest versions? There's new cover art for many that freshens their look and appeals to the 21st century eye. Others have more substantial revisions: P-5 *Women in AA* and P-32 *LGBTQ Alcoholics in AA* have new artwork and new member stories to reflect the current membership in AA. These are now in stock at the Intergroup bookstore. P-83, *AA for the Alcoholic with Special Needs* is being updated and given a new title "*Access to AA: Members share on overcoming barriers*". We'll stock new copies when they're available.

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.