

Our Primary Purpose

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

AAs express themselves:
visit our new Creative
Corner

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Finding humour in
crazy
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Marching to Vancouver
2025, looking back at AA
history

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Vancouver 2025

Beam me up Scottie! AAs going global during pandemic



Illustration by Ron M

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Editorial – Let's feast at the AA buffet

All it takes is one word, one turn of phrase, one thought, and before you know it, you're looking at sobriety from a different angle...your perception has changed...your perspective has been altered.

And, you just might be on the way to thinking and or behaving in a totally different manner.

That's the magic of recovery. And it has the potential to fundamentally improve our way of living and our quality of life...not to mention the impact, or ripple effect, it can have on those close to us, like family and friends.

When we let go and open our minds to the possibility of new ideas and new approaches to age-old issues, or maladaptive coping strategies, or defects of character – whatever you are calling them these days – then we become honest, open and willing to take risks and really move forward on our journey.

So, here's the \$64,000 question – are we hearing anything new or different at the same old meetings we keep going back to; day in, day out, week in, week out?

Obviously, we need a home group. We need a comfort zone. We need to feel grounded by seeing familiar faces.



But are we simply hearing the same messages, coming from the same people? Are we challenging ourselves to look at recovery, or emotional sobriety, or sponsorship, or relapse, or the 12 Steps, or service to AA, through a different lens?

Covid-19 has taken away one of our most precious gifts; the vibe and energy of a face to face meeting. An encounter with other alcoholics. The chance to interact with people who have what we want.

But the pandemic has also opened our eyes to the power of a technology, and the ability to travel light years with the click of a button on our computer.

There are meetings, and conferences, and discussions, and meditations, and prayer groups all over the planet. This pandemic has demonstrated to us that what's behind these

web addresses is truly accessible to anyone of us who wants to participate.

All it takes is a one click, and you're in.

All it takes is one word, one thought, one new idea...coming from someone you have never met before, and may never see again...to change your life forever.

There's a feast out there. What are you waiting for?

Announcements

How is your mood? Are you feeling especially anxious, or depressed?

Here in Ottawa, 13 mental health agencies have come together to provide free and ready access to a counsellor in order to have a confidential consultation about your mental health.

Follow this link to get help: <https://counsellingconnect.org>

We are all currently dealing with unprecedented challenges. And, our mental health is closely connected to our recovery. There's plenty of AA literature, including the Big Book, that points to the usefulness of professional help to address mental illness.

Disclaimer: AA is in no way affiliated with any of these Ottawa agencies. Ottawa Area Intergroup neither endorses nor opposes any of the programs or services offered by these social service organizations. The newsletter is publishing this link simply to serve and support its readers, and local AA members.

Ottawa Area Intergroup Office Remains Closed

Still not open ... we've been receiving calls from people wanting to know when they'll be able to come to the intergroup office. Sorry, still not open. We'll let you know when the Bronson Centre is once again open to the public. ... this may take a while.



It's about the gratitude... a member shares



One word comes to mind when I consider my thoughts about the last couple of months of physical isolation: gratitude. Gratitude had little to no prominence in my life while I was drinking. During my drinking years, I lived my life based on fear, anxiety, and self-pity. Gratitude was something that maybe crossed my mind when I had gotten through an anxious-ridden event, but looking back, it was short-lived relief prior to another round of anxiety.

I did finally stop drinking and have been living a sober life for over five years. Do I still experience anxiety, fear, and self-pity? Yes, I do. I also experience immense gratitude.

I had not given much thought to the coronavirus prior to reading a news release that Ontario schools would not be opening after March break. I had the same sick feeling that I get on airplanes when there is turbulence, and there is nothing I can do to make it stop. After the reality of physical isolation settled in, I did the same thing that I do during those

turbulent moments on the airplane – I said the serenity prayer. Many, many times.

Over the following days and weeks, I felt that same relief that I used to feel when I got through an anxious situation. This time though, that relief was accompanied by a sense of calmness about the situation. I should clarify that I am not always calm in every moment right now, especially when my eight-year old daughter tests my patience. As an only child, she has been stuck with only her parents over the last couple of months, and I sometimes feel that I have failed her when I get upset with her for small things. I have to remind myself that she is only eight, and she really needs a mom who is understanding, and most of all patient. I do not always succeed, but I am able to recognise these moments. While drinking, I would have only felt self-pity.

After a lot work on the twelve steps, I am grateful that I am now able to acknowledge my weaknesses. I can now reach out and ask for help, instead of hiding away and allowing my anxieties and fears to fester. I am grateful that I am able to share and actively listen to other members during meetings. Although online meetings are not my favourite, I am grateful that members have set up these meetings for all of us to attend from our homes. I am grateful that I am also able to help others, even if it is through virtual connections.

My new default in anxious situations is to say the serenity prayer; without Alcoholics Anonymous, I would not even know the serenity prayer. I would have continued to drink through times like these, and I am quite certain I would not have my family.

I would be obsessed with ensuring that I had enough alcohol to last me through a few days and would be frequently visiting liquor stores. I am so grateful that this is no longer my reality, but I also remind myself that this could have easily been my reality and could be my future reality if I do not maintain my emotional sobriety. I am so grateful that I do not have to drink today.

Karen R

You're just one click away from...anywhere from Page 1



If it's Sunday afternoon, you'll find Heather C huddled in front of a computer screen with her new-found friends from a small fishing village in Northern Ireland. The "Donoghadee" meeting, as it is known, was recommended by a former client who lives in Alberta, and whose sponsor has relatives in the shamrock state.

"There's a multitude of reasons why you could end up in an online AA meeting almost anywhere in the world these days. In the case of the Donoghadee group, there's a feeling I get when I'm with these people. They're very down to earth, and authentic, with real AA stories to tell."

While local Zoom meetings have become our daily staple, some, like Heather, have ventured beyond Canadian borders. With AA in at least 180 countries worldwide, there's an endless list of meetings to drop in on.

Heather now attends at least five online meetings a week. From Akron, Ohio, to Geneva, Switzerland, she's finding something unique, and of substance, at every web address.

Her pandemic-inspired, online AA activity has even spawned a new home group, called Friday Night Lights.

"It's an Akron-based 'old-style' AA meeting. It begins with a speaker delivering what's called a 'lead', which is simply their recovery message, in their own words. In the days of Bill W, members

were allowed to speak for as long as they wanted to. In the Covid-era, they don't tend to go on for 90 minutes."

The original AA online – can you remember what a 'chat room' is?

For most of us, AA online is a zoom-based video conference. But for Heather, the online experience began more than 20 years ago, in a chat room.

She actually got sober online. But it was a much different experience than it is today. You typed what you wanted to share. There were no faces, no voices, like we have with our current technology.

"People were suspicious of my sobriety; they didn't believe I could actually get sober online. But I did. It just goes to prove that even if you are feeling hopeless...if you are willing to surrender, and to ask for help, then anything is possible."

Much has changed since the days of AA chat rooms, but as Heather says, it takes more than a meeting to get sober. Just like today, you can go to meetings, but you have to do the work, and for most of us that comes through doing the 12 Steps.

Expats reach home with heartwarming stories

Tina M has a real soft spot for Lunch With Bill (LWB), the noon-hour meeting in Ottawa's Westboro community. It's where she got sober 15 years ago.

More recently, LWB has become a port in the Covid-19 storm, now that its daily meetings are online. And that's because Tina's been 'zooming' her old home group all the way from Copenhagen, Denmark, where she's busy mothering a two-year-old.

The fact is, Tina, along with her husband and daughter, are planning to move back to Ottawa. And up until February - March thought they would be here by now. Then the world changed.

“Covid-19 is disrupting so many lives. And I can’t say enough about how beneficial it’s been for me to be able to attend my old home group. I’ve reconnected with an AA family that helped me begin my recovery journey. What a silver lining, given that our moving plans have been pushed back.”

An entrepreneurial spirit has not only helped Tina pursue a career in fashion design, but also to grow what was a very small English-speaking AA community in Copenhagen.

The gift of sharing – across continents



Tina M brings a bit of Copenhagen and San Francisco to LWB

Just over a year ago, Tina welcomed a new member into her Copenhagen meeting. Harry J, a twenty-something, San Francisco native, in Denmark studying for a masters degree, had decided his life was becoming unmanageable.

Harry quickly became an active member of the close-knit, English, Copenhagen AA family, which helped him celebrate his first-year anniversary. Then Tina got an idea.

“I thought, wouldn’t it be great if I could introduce Harry to my friends back in Ottawa at LWB, and open up his celebration to a wider, albeit virtual, AA community.”

And so, on Wednesday, May 13, Harry shared his story with Tina’s LWB friends here in the nation’s

capital. Harry’s mother, Wendy, joined the meeting from her home in San Francisco.

“Wendy has been sober for many, many years, and so her power of example has played a big part in Harry’s perspective and ability to find the rooms of AA. There were some tears of joy shed that day. And a lot of hearts were touched, on both sides of the ocean, and in between.”

Virtual AA can sometimes improve the message

When Joanne B first heard Polly P, a well-known international AA speaker, talk about emotional sobriety, it had a profound impact on her recovery. Lately, Joanne’s been even more impressed by Polly’s message, and that’s because of the way Covid-19 has changed the way our fellowship is operating.

“The first few times I heard her speak, it was on a podcast; what I got were her words and tone of voice. We all know that effective communication is at least 50 percent body language.”

And so, on Saturday, March 21, when Joanne joined the 1st International Women’s Corona Woodstock of AA conference, put on by the Greater Minneapolis Intergroup, she was actually able to see, as well as hear, Polly’s message.

“Because it was a video conference, you got to experience Polly’s thoughts and words in a very different way; you could see her facial expression. It added a whole new dimension to the way I was able to experience it.

Joanne is also very excited about how online AA conferences are giving members from around the world greater access to some of the fellowship’s truly gifted speakers and thought leaders.

“In the past, not everyone could afford to travel and get to some of these conferences in other cities and countries. Now, all of our members, regardless of means, can enjoy the wonderful messages that impactful speakers like Polly P can provide. These messages can change the course of one’s sobriety.”

New The OPP Creative Corner

Covid-19 is giving us gifts. We have more time to reflect and to create. Our new “Creative Corner” is going to be a place where we can share what AA members are doing with extra time on their hands during the pandemic. **Send us your poetry, or your paintings, or your photographs.** You can reach us at: newsletter@ottawaaa.org

A Work in Progress Kim M

Booze, drugs, sex and shoes
Diet, dance, daddy issues

Possessed by satan, black out drunk
Lurking in the night, Perception is junk

Party girl, smarty girl, rebellious and
stunted

Run away, please stay, promises fronted

Defective, rejected, self-pitied extreme
Prideful, broken, the damage is unseen

Insecure, ugly, stupid and shy
People pleaser, unlovable, fix me
with a guy

Spiritually birthed, acceptance,
surrender
I'm ok, you're ok, pro chaos ender

Teacher, mother, sponsor and friend
It's not the beginning, but it's not
the end

From the AA archives...

Stittsville Second Chance 30 Year Anniversary

May 2020 marked the 30th anniversary of our group. We had intended to gather informally to celebrate this landmark however our higher power decided otherwise.

The group was founded by Mike P, Murray S and Mickey R, when he was anticipating a liver transplant, and needed a meeting within walking distance.

Details of the new meeting spread through Intergroup and word of mouth. The meetings

initially discussed the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions in the basement nursery room. With growing membership tables were set up to ensure all could hear each other. They were later removed which facilitated the introduction of Our Big Book discussion in 2013.

In normal times, our closed meetings are held 8 p.m. Tuesdays at the St. Thomas Anglican Church (1619 Main Street in Stittsville). The meeting breaks into subgroups to focus on the beginner steps and runs a separate action steps/tradition discussion. On the last Tuesday, we host an open speaker/anniversary meeting.

Currently we average 30 members at our online meetings. We strive to provide a safe, welcoming place for the newcomer, and regular members alike, so that we can include a good mix and demographics.

Keep Coming Back!



On the road to Vancouver 2025: San Diego 1995

Local AA historian, Mike B, has written series of stories that were leading up to the 15th International Convention, in Detroit, in July of this year. Due to the pandemic, the event was cancelled. But *OPP* continues to bring you Mike's insightful and informative glimpses of conventions past. Thanks Mike.

The 10th AA International Convention was held in San Diego, California, in 1995, from June 29 – July 2. The theme was, AA Everywhere Anywhere and was celebrating its 60th anniversary. There were 56,000 attendees, making it the largest AA convention to date.



No where was that theme more evident than the opening flag ceremony. John from Pennsylvania wrote: "Flags from eighty-seven countries were paraded out, Olympic style. Lights from the cars on the surrounding freeways kept us informed that we were still on earth, but as the house lights were brought up, I had the sense that I was in almost a sacred place. Where else on earth could there be gathered this many souls, all trying to help each other?"

Flag bearers, some in national costumes, marched into the stadium and lined up in front of the dais. From Antigua to Chile, Ireland and Poland, through South Africa and Western Samoa, every country was cheered loud and long.

Flag bearers were chosen at random from members who registered from each country, and they regard their service as a great honor. In the case of the Fiji Islands, the name that came out of the hat was a man who lived in the Islands but was not a native. However, late in the day on Friday, a native of the Islands arrived at check-in, and the original flag bearer withdrew in his favour. AAs' spirit of sacrifice was alive and well.

It's interesting to note on Saturday afternoon there was a session on 'Electronic Meetings.' Two instances

were shared where alcoholics' lives were saved by having 'cyber friends' on the Internet. In both cases, one person was able to discern that something was wrong with the other and despite being thousands of miles apart, dispatch police to avert tragedy. Here we are in 2020 using similar but more advanced technology during the coronavirus pandemic.

The first-ever Old-Timers Meeting, on Saturday night, featured 129 members with forty or more years of sobriety (a total of 5,318 years). Fifteen were chosen at random to tell their stories. Chants of "Ruth...Ruth... Ruth..." will probably become the way this San Diego convention will be remembered. Forty-three years sober, Ruth O 'N, from New York City, was the first to speak, and completely won the hearts of the 42,000 crowded into Jack Murphy stadium. By the time her allotted five minutes were up they wanted her to finish even if it took all night.

The "Ruth" chants continued between each of the fourteen remaining speakers (and in one case, during). It caught on as a theme, and could be heard Sunday morning, and later in the week at AA meetings in San Diego, a true celebration of the fellowship itself.

At all three Big Meetings and indeed, throughout the city AAs carried a message of courtesy, and mature sobriety. After each meeting, members picked up and cleaned up. Stadium workers said they never saw the place so orderly, during or after an event. City police outside directing traffic were asked how it had gone. They replied, "Rather boring, but we never witnessed anything like it before, not one bad incident."

AA members' amazing ability to consume vast quantities of coffee was duly noted by the planners of the 10th International Convention, and they did not run out of coffee. But the San Diego ATM's ran out of money!

Sources:

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

Mike B

From the Literature Coordinator

While we're moving along in our recovery one day at a time, we may need a laugh or two ... here's some jokes and cartoons from AA Grapevine's, **Take Me to Your Sponsor**©

Sponsee: "I think I've been catapulted into the Fourth Dimension."

Sponsor: "No. You've just had too much coffee."

Joe M, Sandusky, Ohio, Nov 2017



"I call it 'Early Sobriety'."

No Cinderella

Sobriety is never having to say, "Hey, what's your name? Can you help me find my other shoe?"

Patrick M, Pittsburgh, PA, Nov 2017



"It's official! I can fish sober!"



"Before we start, we need to be clear about something ..."

Caught on Tape

Dear Alcohol, We had a deal. You were going to make me funnier, sexier, more intelligent and a better dancer. ***I saw the video. We need to talk.***

Anonymous, Jan 2014

Better Days

I thought I had bad days, but now I've learned that I have bad moments for five minutes and complain about it the whole day.

Anonymous, Apr 2014

SERVICE CALENDAR

Individual committees may organize their own online meetings.

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.