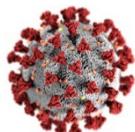


Our Primary Purpose

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

Getting sober during
Covid: a member
shares

Page 6



From the archives:
how the Alkathon was
born

Page 7



Need a diversion? Check
the titles on our Literature
page

Page 11



Service: it's SOUL food, so why the diet? How one of our local Districts is bucking the trend

Kevin O is excited and encouraged by the changes he sees taking place in AA, as a result of the pandemic. But he also appreciates that it's only through effective internal communications that AA will benefit more broadly as it emerges from the Covid-19 experiment.

There's good reason for Kevin to be philosophical and forward thinking at this point on his recovery journey, and that's because he just became the new District Committee Member (DCM) for District 54.

Getting AAs to step up and take on service commitments is challenging at the best of times. All the more reason for us to take notice of what's happening in Ottawa's District 54. It was nomination/election time in October, and ALL nine positions around the table were quickly filled.

As most of us know, securing a full slate of volunteers in one sitting, is a true accomplishment. And it proves,



Illustration by Ron M

Ottawa Area Intergroup is holding nominations this month to elect four new board members: Telephone Answering Coordinator, Newsletter Editor, Literature Coordinator, and Treasurer.

pandemic or not, we can answer the bell and show how much we care about the health of our fellowship...if we decide to.

Our AA instincts tell us (it was often our first sponsor who ingrained it in us, over and over) – to ALWAYS say “yes” when asked to do something for the good of AA, or for the suffering alcoholic.

The “ask” usually happens during those critical few minutes of fellowship that take

place immediately before or after a meeting. Someone you know marches up to you, full of vim and vigour and buttonholes you, “how's it going, we really need you to help us out...”

Obviously, this scenario is simply not happening these days; virtual meetings have made it much more difficult to get up close and personal, politely cajoling someone into a service role.

See **Service gets us sober**, page 4

Ottawa Intergroup Office

211 Bronson Avenue, Suite 108
Ottawa, Ontario, K1R 6H5
Office Hours: 10 am – 4 pm,
Monday-Friday and
1 pm – 4 pm Saturday
Telephone: (613) 237-6000
Email: info@ottawaaa.org

Newsletter Editor

newsletter@ottawaaa.org

Article submission deadline is
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preceding publication date

Ottawa Area Intergroup

Chair – Harry B

Vice-Chair – Frank O

Secretary – Charlene R

Treasurer – Sandy C

Website – Carolyn O

Telephone Answering – Al L

Literature – Doris M

12-Step Coordinator-Natalie L

Spring Conference – Cindy E-M

Eastern Ontario Conference-Richard C

Newsletter – Jeff F

chair@ottawaaa.org

vice@ottawaaa.org

secretary@ottawaaa.org

treasurer@ottawaaa.org

webmaster@ottawaaa.org

tas@ottawaaa.org

literature@ottawaaa.org

12step@ottawaaa.org

spring@ottawaaa.org

eoc@ottawaaa.org

newsletter@ottawaaa.org

Ottawa General Service Districts and Committees

District 54 – Ottawa East – Jo Anne D

District 58 – Ottawa Centre – Kim B

District 62 – Ottawa West – Trevor F

Cooperation with Professionals

Public Information/Media Contact

Corrections Facilities & Treatment – Mike B

Archives – Sue B

district54@ottawaaa.org

district58@ottawaaa.org

district62@ottawaaa.org

cpc@ottawaaa.org

pi@ottawaaa.org

cft@ottawaaa.org

archives@ottawaaa.org

Editorial – you can be the future, or not



As has been written about on this page, over the past few months, Alcoholics Anonymous, like so many organizations, is being pulled apart and put back together again by Covid-19.

And that is probably a good thing. Change we must.

But...the change(s) we are going through will be that much more profound, and have that much more of a long-term benefit, if we ALL try to participate in the fellowship.

If we all try to SERVE.

Your Ottawa Area Intergroup...the organization that provides us with a telephone answering service, a website, books, literature, chips and medallions...has an executive board. It has nine positions on it.

Currently, four of those positions are turning over; new volunteers are being asked to come forward to serve a two-year term. Next year at this time, the other positions will rotate out so there isn't a massive turnover in any given year.

The sad truth is that very, very few nominations have come forward to fill these roles.

It's not too hard to understand why. AA has become virtual. Everything is there at your fingertips, at the touch of a keystroke. There's no coffee to be made, no literature table to set up, no conference registration table to sit behind. Members can't touch it, so they just kind of assume that everything is taking care of itself. NOT!

Last time we checked...there was still a central office in New York City, still an Area 83, Districts 54, 58 and 62 were still on the map, and the fact you're

able to read this newsletter tells you Intergroup is still around.

Metaphorically speaking, the lights still need to be turned on at all of these service levels...so that we can see what we're doing, and where we're going.

Don't despair, there's still a strong pulse beating in every corner of AA. But 95 percent of the heavy lifting is being done by 5 percent of the membership...do the math everyone, it's time to step up.

AA will be a different fellowship after we stop wearing masks and start shaking hands again. There will be in-person meetings for some, and online meetings for others. Some will put money in the basket, and some will make e-transfers.

The "rooms" which we have fondly referred to are no longer only to be found in church basements and community centres, but now in our living rooms, and kitchens.

There will be other changes too, some of which we will like and some we won't. But we can have a voice in how these changes come about.

If we participate, if we serve, then we get to offer an opinion about what we see going on around us. Those who remain on the sidelines will simply get swept along by the tide.

Think about joining the business meeting at your home group, think about becoming an Intergroup Representative or taking on a board position, think about becoming a General Service Representative at the District table.

There are countless opportunities to serve.

If you really care about the suffering alcoholic and want to positively influence the direction AA is going in, then there's a place for you at the table. You can be a builder, or a bystander.

Who wants to see the menu?

Service gets us sober from Page 1

For Kevin O, becoming a DCM is a huge commitment; for the next two years he will be a key player in the



communication chain that connects local home groups with the other Districts that make up Area 83, and the central office in New York City.

Kevin claims that from the get-go being involved in service work helped re-wire his brain. And we all know there are service opportunities available to us the minute we get sober.

“I’ll never forget some of those early AA tasks: helping to set up the room for my home group, and then getting involved in the business meeting, as secretary. These were formative experiences that showed me how quickly I could get that sense of connection and belonging. And most importantly, the spirituality that comes from helping others, and putting others first.”

As Kevin looks forward to his new role, he is reminded of how the District table brings important messaging in from other levels of AA, making it available to the grassroots, and vice versa.

“‘Safety in the rooms’, is a good example of an issue that needed to be discussed at our home group. It was the District that helped us get it on the business meeting agenda...and as it turned out, we had had some concerns that needed to be addressed anyway.”

As Kevin points out, there are many subjects that require a group conscience, and a healthy discussion.

“As we move through and beyond this pandemic, for example, we need look at how best to support each other, either online or in-person. And I’m confident

the volunteers around our District table will be doing what they can to engage the frontline membership in a robust dialogue.”

Service – a measure of sobriety

When Karen A is asked why she agreed to be Alternate DCM for District 54, her answer is very matter of fact.

“If I wasn’t doing this, I would be doing something else. Service, in one capacity or another, is always going to be a big part of what keeps me sober. Service at the District table connects me to Alcoholics Anonymous in a broader sense, helping me to see a bigger picture.”

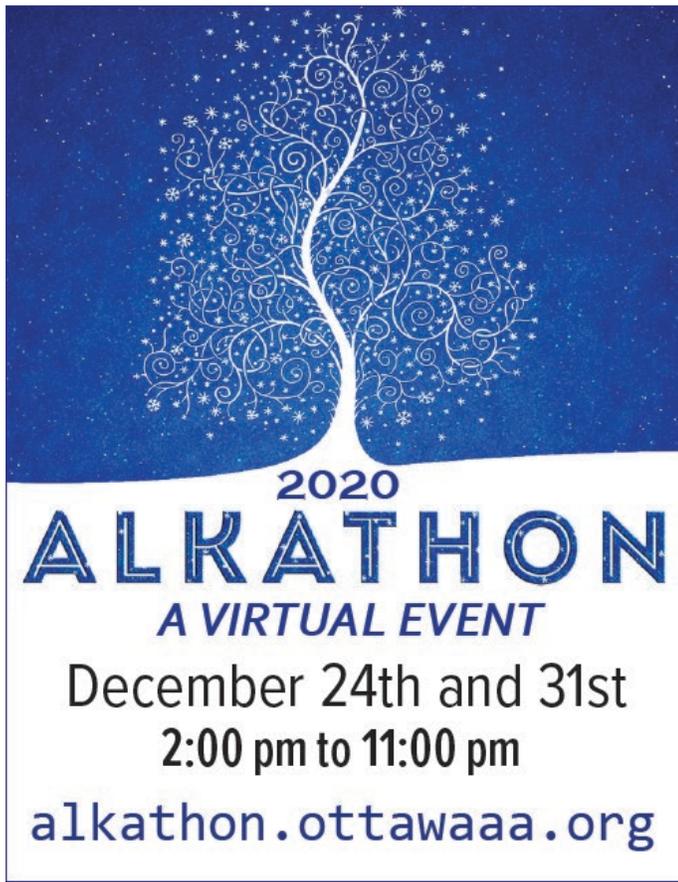
Karen looks at her recovery as an equilateral triangle. One side is Recovery, based on working the 12 Steps; one side is Unity, attendance at meetings to keep the fellowship healthy; one side is Service, putting the needs of others ahead of her own.

“I can ask myself, do I want to be a ‘member’ or do I want to be an ‘attender’. I can either go to AA, or I can be in AA. Being in AA means doing what I can to help where it is needed. It means carrying the message, and, most importantly, it means learning all I can so I can do my part to make sure AA continues to be available to the still suffering alcoholic for years to come.”

Karen is known to regularly ask her sponsees, “what does your triangle look like today, or this week?” In other words, what meetings are you going to? What Step work are you doing to strengthen your program? What service work are you doing to help others?

“When I was drinking, I was alone. I never had the feeling I was “part of” something. Now, thanks in great measure to my service work, I have the chance to really belong to something much bigger than me. And that’s because I’m contributing and taking ownership.”

Announcements



The Alkathon provides a safe and sober environment for the new and still suffering alcoholic over Christmas and New Years'

The event will be held on Zoom

Meeting ID 622 095 1353
Passcode: Alkathon

The virtual room will open at 1:00 pm both days

Meetings will be held throughout the event and are hosted by local Ottawa area groups. There will also be a main speaker each day. The schedule is below:

December 24 th		December 31 st	
Time	Host Group or Speaker	Time	Host Group or Speaker
2:00-3:00 pm	Carry the Message	2:00-3:00 pm	From the Heart
3:30-4:30 pm	Ottawa South	3:30-4:30 pm	Orleans Hub
5:00-6:00 pm	Step by Step	5:00-6:00 pm	Freedom
6:30-7:30 pm	Westboro Big Book	6:30-7:30 pm	12 & 3
8:00-9:00 pm	Main Speaker: Molly K Ottawa	8:00-9:00 pm	Main Speaker: Aneka S Montreal
9:30-10:30 pm	The Friendly Group	9:30-10:30 pm	Labyrinth
10:30-11:00 pm	Fellowship	10:30-11:00 pm	Fellowship

A member shares

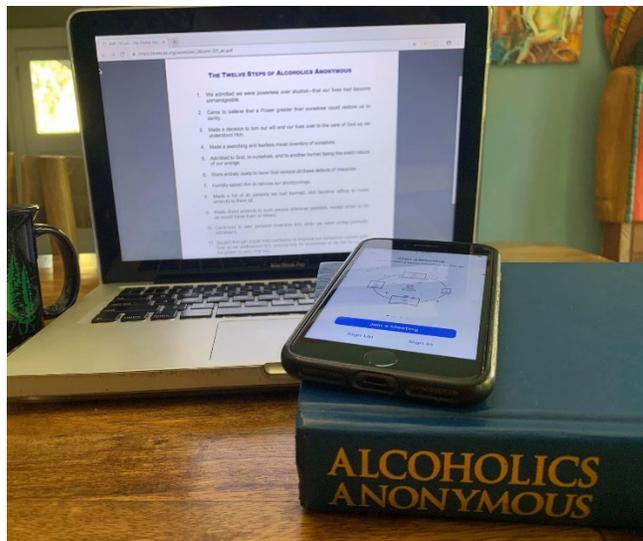
My initiation to true sobriety was a sharp shove into what I believed to be the icy waters of AA. Another drunken, incoherent binge had ignited a family maelstrom. An ultimatum was delivered (again!) and for the final time. The drinking stops or the family does.

AA was an involuntary step towards serenity. But as frightened and ashamed as I was, I knew I had no choice. I studied the options: Sisters of Sobriety, Happy Nooners, Stittsville AA (who knew?) and then, it appeared: Lunch with Bill (LWB). Free lunch and a nice man named Bill, perfect I thought. Well, there was NO lunch and NO Bill. Just a sweet guy named John, who assured me that I could pick up a desire chip with one day of sobriety. Finally, a reward for my significant accomplishment.

Three meetings in, I was hooked (addictive personality to the core). I loved the familiar faces and the common purpose. I felt safe in this place, but as I came to anxiously anticipate these meetings, COVID struck, mercilessly. My goal of “90 in 90” was shattered. No meetings, no connection, nothing.

Luckily, Zoom rushed in to fill the void. Virtual meetings began almost immediately. Once again the “rooms” became alive as small faces dotted my computer screen, almost like an AA version of Hollywood Squares. But rather than experiencing the same joy I had in continuing our journey virtually, many of my fellows were complaining about the loneliness brought on by COVID. Some were fearful of Zoom, or adamant that it “was not the same as being there.”

Make no mistake. COVID has fundamentally changed the way we live. Our “old normal” is not coming back. Much like airline travel has never returned to the glory days of aviation prior to 9/11, COVID has forever altered the way we interact, connect, and stay sober. Similarly, our fellowship may never be the same. But that does not mean that it cannot be better, more accessible and more inclusive.



Zoom meetings allow us to get to know each other more intimately, as we are welcomed into individual’s homes when we sign in. We see each other up close, witnessing real time responses to shares and posting reactions in support. Young people, so fearless of technology, are coming into the rooms with more ease; individuals are going to four, five, or more meetings a week; some are able to get to more than one session per day; lack of transportation has ceased to be an issue. We are able to participate in rooms anywhere in the world, from Denmark to Dublin, should we dare to travel virtually. Suddenly, the fellowship is not just in Stittsville, its global.

Before I came to AA, I was angry, lost and without purpose. I was living a truly selfish life. Today, with nine months of sobriety, I am reaping the Step 9 Promises: I know peace, I am no longer baffled, I am not alone, I have purpose, and my outlook on life has completely changed. All things around me, from relationships to daily living, to nature, are joyful. Almost daily, the promises have been arriving on my doorstep like Amazon packages at Christmas time.

I am now a gladiator with a coffee cup and a computer, waging the war on alcohol with my video fellowship army, knowing one day I will embrace my fellow combatants in person again; and this knowledge keeps me sober – one day at a time!

Karen S

The OPP Creative Corner

Covid-19 is giving us gifts. We have more time to reflect and to create. Our new "Creative Corner" is 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



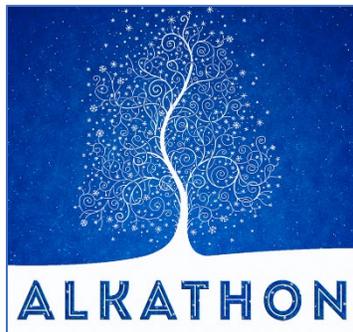
Photographs
taken by
Alberto F



From the AA archives...

History of the Ottawa Alkathon - Founded: Late 1960's

The Alkathon was started by two members (Toby Craig and Jack W) during the late 60s. At the time, they invited the destitute and homeless alcoholics to a dinner on Christmas Eve at St. Giles Church, corner of Bank St. and First Ave.



It was an unparalleled gesture to serve a first-class meal to the street people of Ottawa afflicted with alcoholism. It was a two-hour affair followed by an AA meeting. Some of these hardened street people didn't show, as they did not want to pay the price - attending an A.A. meeting. It was nonetheless successful and repeated the following year with an increased attendance. This Christmas dinner has evolved into what is now the Alkathon.

A dedicated committee, made up of AA members from local groups, began to run the event, with the focus on AA meetings and fellowship. New Years Eve also became part of the tradition. After a few years, the operating committee started having the event catered, which was quite expensive.

In the late 80s, early 90s, the Alternate District Committee Members from Districts 48, 54, 58, 62 and 66 took over responsibility for the Alkathon. Information was shared amongst groups and meetings throughout the region, and many started to contribute time, money and food.

More recently, the Alkathon has been organized and run by a stand-alone committee. Districts 54, 58 and 62, as well as Ottawa Area Intergroup,

have provided seed money to get the Alkathon off the ground.

On a regular basis, the Alkathon, with help from 7th tradition baskets in the hall, has been able to more than cover its expenses and reimburse the groups, the Districts and Intergroup.

Volunteer liaisons from each of the three Districts attend Alkathon committee meetings to bring the information back to their Districts. Many of these liaisons also become active members of the operating committee, helping out where needed.

In 2014, the Alkathon held a group inventory, facilitated by a District Committee Member. It examined how well the event was doing to see if it was adequately serving the fellowship and carrying the AA message. It concluded the focus needed to remain on meetings and fellowship; that food was secondary. A mission statement was developed: "The Basic purpose of the Alkathon is to provide a safe and sober environment for the new and still suffering alcoholic over Christmas and New Years."

In 2018 another inventory was held, and a proposal was debated to have the Alkathon become a sanctioned Ottawa Area Intergroup event. Following lengthy discussion, a decision was made to maintain the status quo, and allow an independent, stand-alone committee to continue to operate the Alkathon.

To this day, the Ottawa Alkathon still thrives. The local fellowship takes good care of it. The main goal has always been to help the still suffering alcoholic, newcomers and old-timers alike. Christmas and New Years can be a very difficult time of year for many, and the Alkathon provides hope, love and acceptance to all.

DISTRICT 62 ANNUAL GSR WORKSHOP



General Service Representative WORKSHOP

JANUARY 11, 2021 7:30 PM

Zoom Meeting ID 638 562 068

Password 016224

- Overview of the General Service Structure of AA
- Roles and Responsibilities to the group's General Service Representative
- The Roles of AA Service Committees
- The Roles of Ottawa Area Intergroup

WORKSHOP FACILITATOR – Mike B.

ALL MEMBERS ARE WELCOME

Wondering what a GSR is?

GSR stands for General Service Representative. It is a very important volunteer service role that helps keep home groups informed of subjects and issues critical to AA members. Recently, for example, GSR's brought information to their groups about "safety in the rooms". It helped spark discussions at group business meetings about how to deal with or prevent inappropriate behavior in AA meetings.

*There are four levels of service in AA. Your local **meeting**, your **District** (which takes in meetings close to you), your **Area** (which brings together a number of districts), and the **General Service Office (GSO)** in New York City.*

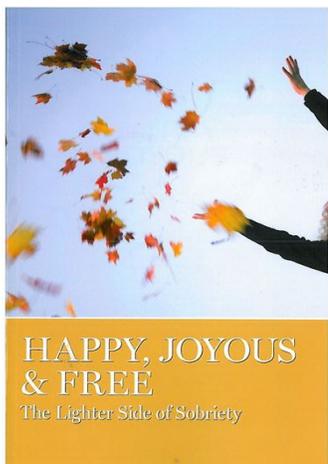
The GSR helps the two-way flow of information: from the frontline all the way to the GSO, and vice versa, from the central office to the frontline. The GSR attends a monthly District meeting. Ottawa AA is divided into Districts 54, 58 and 62.

From the Literature Coordinator

December is a difficult month this year. But there's hope. There's light at the end of the pandemic tunnel. Even though many of us are protecting each other by not getting together for year-end celebrations, we can still be grateful for what we have now and send best wishes to all for continuing health and serene sobriety.

This past year has seen us adapting to huge upheavals in every aspect of our lives. However, the basis of living sober, no matter what the daily challenges are has remained the same: we seek the serenity to accept the things we cannot change, the courage to change the things we can and the wisdom to know the difference.

Peace and happiness to all. Thank you for the opportunity to volunteer as Intergroup's literature coordinator. It was such a good experience. See you in the rooms **Doris Mc**



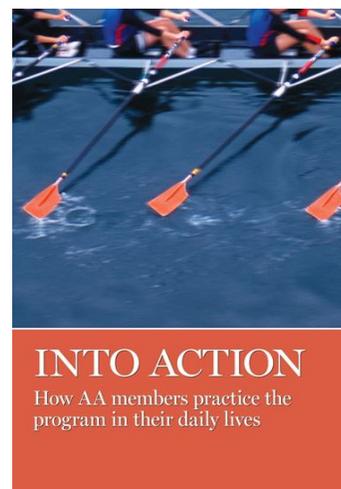
Whatever the challenges, we need to laugh, lots.

Part of the message we carry is that a sober way of life is full of things to do and fun to be had. The collection of members' stories in "Happy, Joyous & Free" shows how, in recovery, AAs have learned to laugh. It's full of light and humorous stories about our early mistakes, navigating drinking events, funny things our sponsors say, interesting twelve-step calls and more. They remind us not to take ourselves so seriously.



Even though we don't take ourselves so seriously, we still take action. "Into Action" shows the many ways members work the program in all areas of their lives.

Still, in these dark December days, we deserve more chuckles. Luckily, we have this collection of jokes and cartoons in "Take me to Your Sponsor".



All these books are available to be ordered online at the Intergroup bookstore.

SERVICE CALENDAR

Online meeting logistics are shown for committees that have provided it.

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)
([ZOOM Meeting ID 824 3878 6359 Passcode OAIG2020](#))

DISTRICT 54 MEETING..... First Thursday (6:30 pm)
([ZOOM Meeting ID 834 9953 9650 Passcode 141892](#))

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

DISTRICT 62 MEETING..... Second Monday (7:30 pm)
([ZOOM Meeting ID 638 5623 068 Passcode 016224](#))

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

PUBLIC INFORMATION/ COOPERATION WITH PROFESSIONALS..... Third Monday (6:30 pm)
([ZOOM Meeting ID 815 4385 6025 Passcode PICPC](#))

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

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.