

# Our Primary Purpose

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

[www.ottawaaa.org](http://www.ottawaaa.org)



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## Sponsorship during a pandemic: An exercise in learning to adapt

There’s little doubt in Lorraine’s mind that the pandemic has had an impact on her recovery, but also the way she goes about being a sponsor.

She’s been sober long enough to know what it’s like to sponsor someone face-to-face, and has now had time to reflect on how dramatically different it is to get to know someone virtually.

“Our role as a Sponsor is fundamentally the same, but it sure changes things when you can’t sit side by side with someone and read the body language. People tell you things with the expression on their face. You can just begin to feel whether or not they are ‘getting it,’ and if they are truly aligned with the values of the program.”

And speaking of values...one of the silver linings of the pandemic, for Lorraine, has been the way in which her thoughts and values about recovery have evolved. And, as a result, so has her approach to sponsorship.

### The AA world outside Ottawa

It was Lorraine’s own Sponsor who encouraged her to spread her AA wings and try dropping in on some meetings outside of Ottawa once Covid-19 had arrived and shuttered in-person meetings locally.

“Like so many of us, I had never really considered going to an online meeting

before Covid came along. Then, all of sudden, it became the thing to do. So, I started attending meetings south of the border, and it really began to expand some of my ideas about the real essence of the broader recovery journey.”

Lorraine discovered she really liked how forthright some of these new voices were that she was hearing in these other meetings.

“There wasn’t as much small talk, it was more about the building blocks of recovery: the Steps, Fellowship and Service.”

Now she’s bringing these bigger ideas with her into conversations with her Sponsees.

### Guiding vs telling

Lorraine admits that with her first Sponsee she followed, almost to the letter, the same path as her own Sponsor had laid out for her.

“I was pretty firm about giving out homework and making sure it was done. I had some rather strict ideas about the do’s and don’ts. But over time, and now with a Sponsee that I’ve never actually met in person, I’m letting the conversation evolve more organically.”

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## 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](mailto:info@ottawaaa.org)

Newsletter Coordinator  
[newsletter@ottawaaa.org](mailto:newsletter@ottawaaa.org)  
Article submission deadline is  
the 20th day of the month  
preceding publication date

## Ottawa Area Intergroup

Chair – Harry B  
Vice-Chair – Vacant  
Secretary – Charlene R  
Treasurer – Tim W  
Website – Carolyn O  
Telephone Answering – Carolyn S  
Literature – Al L  
12-Step Coordinator-Natalie L  
Spring Conference – Dick G  
Eastern Ontario Conference-Vacant  
Newsletter – Dawn-Marie M

[chair@ottawaaa.org](mailto:chair@ottawaaa.org)  
[vicechair@ottawaaa.org](mailto:vicechair@ottawaaa.org)  
[secretary@ottawaaa.org](mailto:secretary@ottawaaa.org)  
[treasurer@ottawaaa.org](mailto:treasurer@ottawaaa.org)  
[webmaster@ottawaaa.org](mailto:webmaster@ottawaaa.org)  
[tas@ottawaaa.org](mailto:tas@ottawaaa.org)  
[literature@ottawaaa.org](mailto:literature@ottawaaa.org)  
[12step@ottawaaa.org](mailto:12step@ottawaaa.org)  
[spring@ottawaaa.org](mailto:spring@ottawaaa.org)  
[eoc@ottawaaa.org](mailto:eoc@ottawaaa.org)  
[newsletter@ottawaaa.org](mailto:newsletter@ottawaaa.org)

## Ottawa General Service Districts and Committees

District 54 – Ottawa East – Kevin O	<a href="mailto:district54@ottawaaa.org">district54@ottawaaa.org</a>
District 58* – (See note below)	
District 62 – Ottawa West – Trevor F	<a href="mailto:district62@ottawaaa.org">district62@ottawaaa.org</a>
Cooperation with Professionals	<a href="mailto:cpc@ottawaaa.org">cpc@ottawaaa.org</a>
Public Information/Media Contact	<a href="mailto:pi@ottawaaa.org">pi@ottawaaa.org</a>
Corrections Facilities & Treatment	<a href="mailto:cft@ottawaaa.org">cft@ottawaaa.org</a>
Archives – Sue B	<a href="mailto:archives@ottawaaa.org">archives@ottawaaa.org</a>

\*District 58 is no longer meeting. Please contact District 54 or District 62.



# Editorial: The learning never stops

How many times do we say to ourselves, "I've got this. I've passed the exam. It's time to move on. I've got bigger fish to fry."

Maybe it's time to eat some of those fishy words.

They say that when the student is ready the teacher will appear. And for many of us that's what happened when we got sober. Our lives were a mess, and somehow, something got us into the rooms of AA.

We started thinking more clearly. And, as the fog lifted, we began to realize that this amazing program only exists by virtue of the fact that our best chance at staying sober is by helping someone else get sober.

Then, often without warning or preparation, we found ourselves doing more than just having a casual chat with someone after a meeting. We were being asked that fateful question: "Will you be my Sponsor?"

At first, we trembled at the notion of having someone else's sobriety in the palm of our hand. But then, through trial and error, we discovered that it wasn't our job to keep a Sponsee from relapsing. Our job was simply be there, to listen and to be present without judgement.

Here's where it gets tricky.

Our Sponsee continues to stay sober, and we begin to feel that our great work as a Sponsor is the reason why. We begin to think we've got ALL the answers. Deep down, we know we don't. But the teacher or parent in us, wants to lead the way and protect our Sponsee from harm. This is why Sponsors need to have Sponsors. We DON'T have all the answers. Nor should we be expected to. But

what we do have is the ability to ask questions, and to continue to learn more about ourselves and our own recovery journey.

It's wonderful to have experience, strength and hope. It's great to have a bag full of tips and tricks. We should all be so lucky to be able to let those pearls of wisdom drop delicately into the ears of our Sponsees. But...

The learning never stops. When we stop asking questions or asking for help then we stop growing. And if we're not growing in our own sobriety, then it's pretty hard to empower others to grow alongside us.

Jeff





# Pearls of Wisdom

## From my Sponsor

This column will feature simple pearls of wisdom which have been imparted to me and others over the years by our respective Sponsors. These statements are in no particular order in recovery or of importance:



One triggers more.

Anger tells you something isn't right.

Feeling less than.

Envy: Ask God to remove it.

Accept your feelings about this.

That's obsessive thinking.

Realize that it is but for the grace of God.

EGO = Easing God Out. Trust God.

It's out of your hands. Surrender to God's will.

Pray the Serenity Prayer.

God is interested in  
how you feel.

It's good for your self-esteem.

Be flexible. Be vigilant.

Try doing some writing/reading.

Meditation will help.

Recognize the insanity. Ask God to restore sanity.

Be grateful to be sober.

Ask God to remove the fear.

"Anger  
tells you  
something  
isn't right."

Please submit your Pearls of Wisdom to: [newsletter@ottawaaa.org](mailto:newsletter@ottawaaa.org).

Thank you for this service!

# Two Members Share...

## Things we don't hear anymore

Dan and Mickey – Stittsville Second Chance

Dan: I came into the program in 2012. I was lucky to find a home group with many “Old-Timers”, who always said what was on their minds. I needed that and I appreciated hearing it. Mickey and I started talking about things we heard “Old-Timers” say in the rooms. This is where this list started.

Mickey: In the 80's and 90's the rooms were full of what I consider old people e.g. “Older Members”. Diplomacy was not used when talking to Newcomers. Everyone always talked to Newcomers; they were never left alone. It was part of the groups gift to me at every meeting.

Below are common quotes/instructions used by Old-Timers to get the Newcomers' attention and lead them down the road to sobriety. Like the Pearls of Wisdom, these are in no order of importance.

1. Keep your side of the street clean.
2. When you don't want to go to a meeting - GO!
3. Don't try to get too damned good by Thursday!
4. If you don't like the coffee, make it next week.
5. Don't drink, don't die.
6. Poor me, pour me a drink.
7. Sounds like you just got a “God Shot”.
8. I have not seen you in a long time, thought you got cured!
9. When someone asked, where do I sit at a meeting: First 5 rows, first 5 years, then repeat.
10. Come early, stay late.
13. See you next week (to Newcomers so they make a commitment).
14. The worst time to get sober is tomorrow.
15. Don't leave before the miracle happens.
16. Hold one hand with God/HP and the other hand with AA.
17. You don't have to clean the whole house today, just one drawer at a time.
18. It's better to be in the middle of the boat than the middle of the road.
19. “What's on your mind besides yourself?”





# An exercise in learning to adapt

(Continued from front page)

Time, and the wider perspective picked up during the pandemic, are teaching Lorraine that Sponsorship is about empowering people, not telling them what to do.

"It's a lot easier to just say to your Sponsee, 'you should do this, or don't do that.' We have to learn to take our ego out of the equation. We need to let our Sponsees take ownership for their sobriety, and sometimes that means letting people make mistakes."

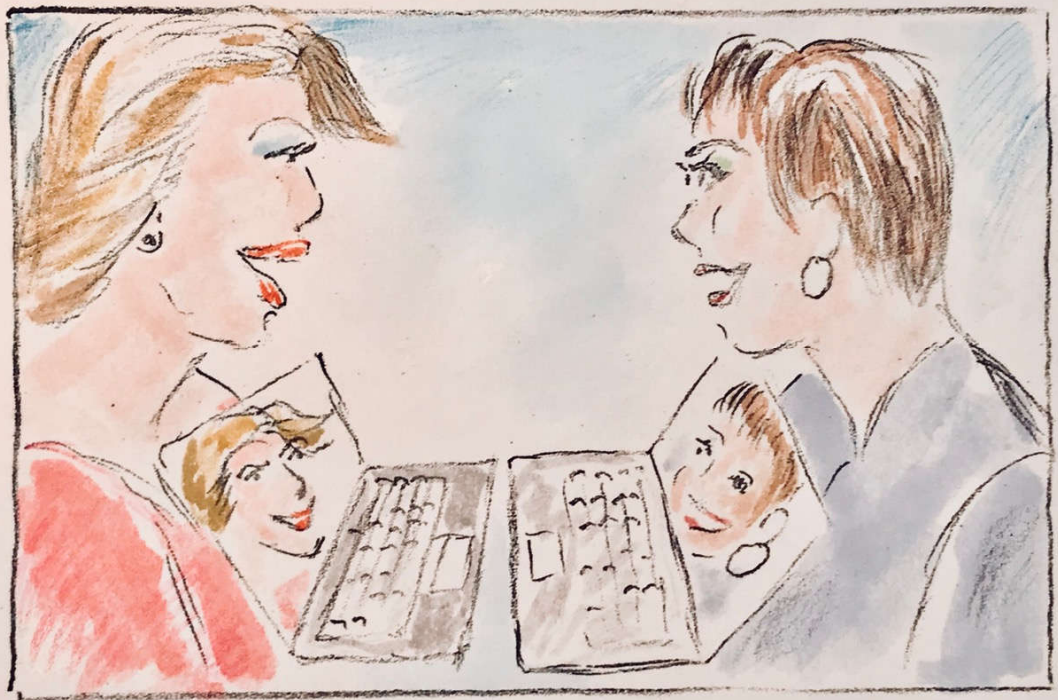
## Trusting ourselves

There's another Sponsee Lorraine met, in person, before the pandemic started, who she has continued to work with virtually. This individual has had some slips, and at times Lorraine has wondered if she would come back.

"You really have to follow your gut. As new sponsors we are inclined to measure our success

by how well the Sponsee does at staying sober. We have to trust the process. We have to learn to let go and give people the space they need to grow. We can't chase people and try to shepherd them back."

Easier said than done. Sponsorship as we know is the ultimate



*Illustration by Ron M.*

form of service...but just like it was when we first tried to get sober...it happens the way it's meant to happen.

## Did you know?

- a. AA World Services has a YouTube channel! Go to: <https://www.youtube.com/c/AlcoholicsAnonymousWorldServicesInc/videos>
- b. AA Grapevine Instagram account had 2,700 followers in the first 3 weeks!



# National AA Technology Workshop

**Theme: AA and Technology  
in a Time of Change**



*As we emerge from the pandemic: technology lessons learned,  
what worked, what didn't and where we go from here*

***When: September 17-19, 2021***

Friday 8pm -10pm eastern | 5pm – 7pm pacific

Saturday 11am - 8pm eastern | 8am – 5pm pacific

Sunday 11am – 6pm eastern | 8am – 3pm pacific

***Where: Zoom Platform***

***Registration:*** Tickets to the event are \$5 and available here:

<https://naatw2021.eventbrite.com/> .

The National AA Technology Workshop is a group of AAs who gather and work together to share about carrying the message of AA through technology.

For more information about NAATW visit [naatw.org](http://naatw.org)

The Online Intergroup of A.A. (OIAA) is pleased to serve as this year's host committee.



## Important Dates:

October 22-23, 2021—Area 83  
Service Information Day

October 24, 2021—Area 83 Assembly

Area 83 holds 7 committee meetings each 2 year term. The next Area Committee Meeting will be held on September 11th, 2021 at 10:00 am. This will be a virtual Zoom meeting.

Zoom Information:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87813264090?pwd=d2c1dTllaUtYYXIOb01EYXMxOWV6UT09>  
Meeting ID: 878 1326 4090

For password details, please contact Area 83 Secretary at: [area83secretary@gmail.com](mailto:area83secretary@gmail.com)

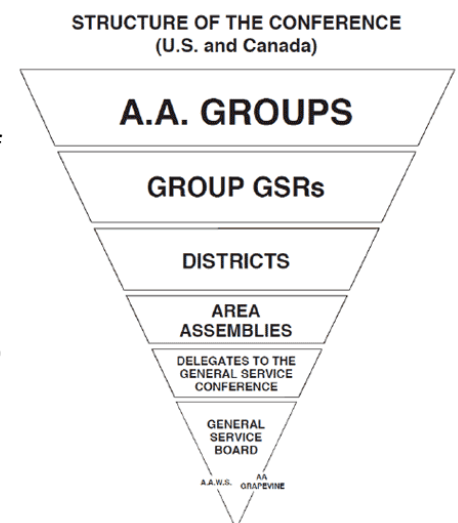
## The Upside Down Triangle

**Did You Know...** that the A.A. service structure is described as *“the upside down triangle”*? Everything begins at the group level. Every group is autonomous and is governed by their own group conscience which takes place at the groups monthly business meeting. If there’s an issue outside the group, that the group would like to address, a representative of the group called their General Service Representative or GSR will bring their concern to the District Committee.

A.A. groups are organized within geographical areas called Districts. Groups work together at the district level to further the primary purpose of Alcoholics Anonymous in their community. The district meetings are made up of the General Service Representatives or GSRs from the local groups.

Our Districts are within Area 83 which ranges from Oakville the West to the Quebec border in the East and from upstate New York in the South to Algonquin Park in the North. There are 25 districts in our Area. In the same way that each group has a representative, each district has a representative called a District Committee Member or DCM. Likewise, our Area has a representative called the Delegate.

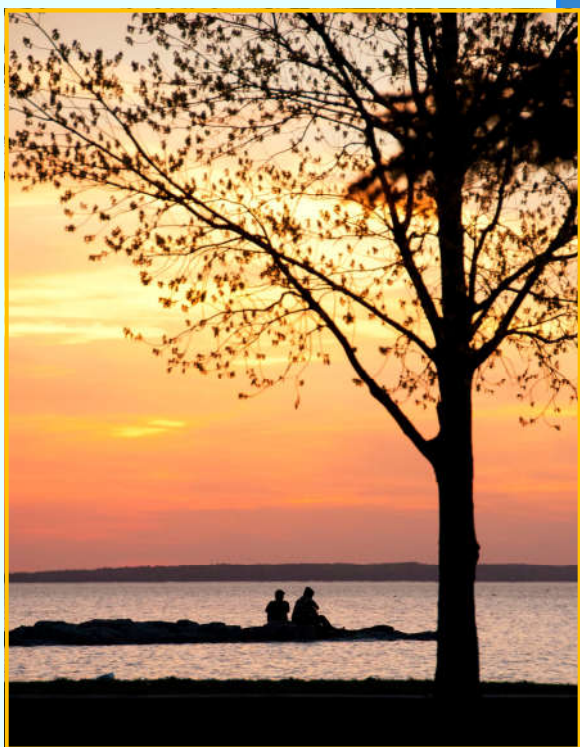
The groups are at the top of the triangle because they are ultimately responsible for Alcoholics Anonymous. Our Delegate carries the group conscience of all the groups in the Area to the week-long business meeting that takes place once a year. Delegates from the 93 Areas in Canada and the U.S. meet with Trustees, Directors and General Service Office staff to conduct business on our behalf. The work they do ensures that A.A. is shared with the still suffering alcoholics in North America and around the world.





## 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](mailto:newsletter@ottawaaa.org)



*Photos by  
Tamara L.*



# A Little Bit About Your Ottawa AA Archives

Hello, I am an alcoholic and my name is Sue L. My Home Group is the Parkwood Hills Group and I am currently serving as your Ottawa Archives Chairperson. It is with pleasure that I may share with you a little bit about Archives in Ottawa and how it serves our Fellowship.

In my early sobriety, I used to think the Ottawa AA Archives would be very boring. I think it has something to do with how some people view the word "Archives" ... old and boring! I have found that this is so far from the truth!! Archives is interesting, busy, fun and very important to the history of AA in Ottawa!

In 1957, Bill W said...

"We are trying to build up extensive records which will be of value to a future historian ... It is highly important that the factual material be placed in our files in such a way that there can be no substantial distortion ... We want to keep enlarging on this idea for the sake of the full length history to come..."

Ottawa Archives is a part of General Service and is funded by the Ottawa Districts. AA has been in existence in Ottawa since 1945 and fortunately, Ottawa Archives has the records on how, when and who started AA in Ottawa. It has the records from the first Group at that time, the Tuesday Friday Group, which is still in existence today!

Ottawa AA Archives receives, classifies and indexes all relevant material. We hold and preserve material such as Group's Business Meeting Minutes, Minutes from the Ottawa

Service Committees, District Minutes, Intergroup Minutes, along with Area 83 Minutes. Many are still paper copies; however, we also have digitized copies and are in the process of digitizing those that are not. We have Books, Pamphlets and Plaques that have an historical importance to AA in Ottawa with associated documentation; we have



information on AA events in Ottawa such as the Conferences, Alkathons and Vanier Round Ups; there are also directories from the General Service Office (GSO) that include Ottawa; we have Meeting Lists, Newsletters published in Ottawa such as Our Primary Purpose, going back many years; audio recordings from different Ottawa events, including oral histories from Ottawa AA Longtimers. Lastly, we have AA memorabilia from members and events in Ottawa.

Before the Coronavirus pandemic began in March 2020 and the world basically shut down, the Committee

was very busy, something was always going on, and the Archives Display had been traveling quite a bit!! Since the start of the pandemic, and up to today, the Intergroup Office has been closed and therefore there has been no access to the Archives Repository as it is held there. We have seen a new term begin from 2021 – 2022. Unfortunately, there are now only two Committee members left this term – Juliet H and myself. We do however have two new District Liaisons, Barre C for District 54 and Andrew F for District 62.

Since the shut down, I have been recording oral histories virtually with Longtimers using Zoom, and have prepared a PowerPoint which was used to participate in the virtual Ottawa Districts Service Day. Co-hosting this past years Alkathon, which was held virtually, has allowed me to update the Alkathon History we have on file in Archives, to include the pandemic era.

We had a very interesting event take place in April 2019. A request came into the Archives email address, requesting a talk from an Ottawa member that had died over 30 years ago. The talk was of Alf McG from 1976. According to the woman writing, who is not in AA, her father was going to be celebrating 43 years of continuous sobriety on May 15<sup>th</sup>.

(continued on next page)



## A Little Bit About Your Ottawa AA Archives (continued)

In 1976, her father had visited Ottawa and heard Alf give a talk about his story. After hearing Alf speak, her father bought a cassette of Alf's talk. He was so taken by what he had to say that he decided to stay sober. He has remained sober to this day. The problem was, her father lost Alf's talk over the years, and she was checking to see if we had a copy. There was none to be had anywhere in the Archives repository. I reached out to many Longtimers to see if they had a copy, and David T had two CD's of Alf's talk. He sent me both and I sent one to this woman and kept one for Archives and also downloaded it! It arrived on time for her father's celebration on May 15<sup>th</sup>! Believe it or not, they live in Minnesota and always have. Someone had mentioned to her to reach out to Archives in Ottawa to see if there was a copy. It was a talk from 1980, not 1976, but her father was just as happy.

Archives has recently received some long-awaited Group Histories that we were missing! We are so grateful to add these Group's to the Repository. Once we meet again, we hope to receive a picture of the Group (without people in it) so that we can add the history with the picture for the Archives Display Board. At this time, I would also encourage Groups to update their Group Histories with how

they dealt with the Pandemic, as this is certainly history making! Did your Group meet virtually? Did you change the meeting time or format while meeting virtually? Perhaps when the province allowed, did the Group meet in person? Or perhaps your Group closed completely waiting for everything to open back up again.

Approximately twice per year, I

## ARCHIVES



### Ottawa Area Archives of Alcoholics Anonymous

request from our Area 83 Registrar all the Active, Unknown and Inactive Groups in the Districts in Ottawa. This has allowed the Committee to find out which Groups we are still missing Group Histories for, along with Groups which have folded. We have prepared a list of Groups that belong in each District for which we are still missing Group Histories. Should you be interested to see if we are missing

your Group's History, you can email Ottawa Archives at [archives@ottawaaa.org](mailto:archives@ottawaaa.org). The District Committee Members (DCM's) of the Ottawa Districts also have this information. Your Group General Service Representative (GSR) will probably already know this information, but if not, they can ask their DCM.

Should you, or someone you know, have 35 years or more of sobriety, by all means, please send contact us at: [archives@ottawaaa.org](mailto:archives@ottawaaa.org). Perhaps a virtual oral history can be done if there is interest.

As I said, Archives is busy and fun, even with the shut down!! If this sounds like something you think you would like to become a part of once we open back up, please do not hesitate to come and find out more! We would love to have you volunteer to help out. You do not need to join the Committee! Meetings are the third Wednesday of the month, 7 pm at the Intergroup Office in the Bronson Centre.

Thank you for allowing me this time to share with you a little bit about your Ottawa AA Archives!

# 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\* Discontinued. Please contact District 54 or District 62.**

**DISTRICT 62 MEETING**..... Second Monday (7:30 pm)

(ZOOM Meeting ID 638 562 068 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](mailto:info@ottawaaa.org).

**Do you have a question for the Intergroup board?** Please email us with your questions and you can also request an invitation to meet with us at our monthly virtual board meeting. Send your email to [chair@ottawaaa.org](mailto:chair@ottawaaa.org).

**If your group needs insurance,** please contact Ottawa Intergroup at [info@ottawaaa.org](mailto: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 newsletter coordinator 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. It neither seeks 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 newsletter coordinator 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!*