

Our Primary Purpose

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

www.ottawaaa.org



Witnessing greatness and resiliency Outgoing chair of Intergroup lauds members

With 18 years of sobriety, Harry B. has seen plenty of heroic efforts from individual members of Alcoholics Anonymous. But when asked to sum up his last two years as chair of the Board of Ottawa Area Intergroup, he jumps at the opportunity to lavish praise on the membership as a whole, for the way it responded to COVID-19.

“I can’t say enough about how everyone came together in service and met, head on, what has been, without question, one of the biggest challenges AA has ever had to deal with since the program was founded almost 90 years ago.”

Harry, like most of us, has been frustrated by how long the pandemic has dragged out, and teased us with false hopes for a return to some semblance of normality. He feels the risks taken and lessons learned during COVID, have given AA a bold new confidence to move forward with even greater capacity to serve the suffering alcoholic.

“What we did, way back in March 2020, was basically re-shape our entire program. In a matter of days, using an online platform, we started building a more robust and inclusive fellowship. In the future, with both in-person and virtual meetings happening side by side, AA will un-

doubtedly help more people in need.”

Trusted servants who don’t govern

If there’s one thing Harry has learned as Chair of the Intergroup Board is that its leaders are but trusted servants, they do not govern.

“Alcoholics who go to meetings and join home groups...they are the bosses of AA. What we do as members of the Board is simply to try and put in place the tools that are needed to help make AA sustainable. The website, the telephone answering service, the literature, the conferences: These are the basic elements we need to survive.”

As a leader, Harry has also learned that volunteer driven organizations can only thrive if members step up in service. And while stepping up at the home group level – by supporting the newcomer or running a zoom meeting – may appear quite obvious to most, service at the Intergroup level can seem a bit more abstract.

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preceding publication date

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Ottawa General Service Districts and Committees

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

RECRUITMENT

Editorial: Just ask someone to help

Yes, it happens multiple times a day; we get asked for money to support a cause.

Buy a girl guide cookie, support a run or a walk for cancer, drop a toonie into the paper cup of a homeless person at the next red light.

When to say yes, when to say no? Some days our hearts are bigger, and our pockets are deeper.

But what usually tips the scale is having a reason to support the cause. The girl guide at the door is the daughter of your next-door neighbor. The runner with the pledge form is your best friend's partner. Or that homeless person just seems way too vulnerable.

How about this for a cause...IT MIGHT SAVE SOMEONE'S LIFE!

Yes, this is the cause that's closest to our hearts as members and supporters of AA. And it's also the most compelling reason to say "YES" when we are asked to serve.

Many of us know, deep down, that AA has probably saved our lives, or at least saved us from a life of bitterness and despair. We know, only too well, how many others, close to us, are enjoying the same fruits of sobriety...not to mention the ripple effect it has had for the families and loved ones of the suffering alcoholic.

But have we stopped to realize the number one reason many of us don't do more for this incredible organization is: we simply have NOT BEEN ASKED!

We buy the cookies, we sign the pledge form, we drop the toonie in the cup, because someone asks us to.

The Board of Ottawa Area Intergroup is electing new officers next month. You can help the suffering alcoholic by asking one of your fellow members if they would serve, and let you nominate them.

Go ahead and ask someone to help. People usually say yes for a good cause. We all know that helping the suffering alcoholic is a good cause.

Jeff F.

Help the
Fellowship be
strong!

Service Opportunities

Ottawa AA Intergroup needs you more than ever!!! This is your opportunity to do service outside the group level. Intergroup elections are coming up in December. You can serve or you can encourage someone to serve. No prior Board experience is required. You will receive support.

Intergroup positions up for election/re-election:

1. Vice-Chair
2. Secretary
3. Newsletter Coordinator
4. 12-Step Coordinator
5. Vice-Chair 2022 Spring Conference
6. Chair Eastern Ontario 2022 Conference
7. Vice-Chair Eastern Ontario 2022 Conference

For more information go to:
www.ottawaaa.org or send an
email to: info@ottawaaa.org

Ottawa Area Intergroup of
Alcoholics Anonymous 

I am responsible...

When anyone, anywhere, reaches out
for help, I want the hand of A.A.
always to be there.

And for that:

I Am Responsible.



From the AA Archives...

Hull Liberty Group

Founded: November 1968

Today, Hull Liberty is a functioning member of Area 83 District 58, and has regularly provided a General Service Representative at the District Table and also an Intergroup Representative at the monthly meetings of the Ottawa Area Intergroup, and regularly participates in service commitments on behalf of both those organizations.

Hull Liberty Group started out as part of the Hull Gatineau Group but split off in November 1968 into 2 separate groups: Hull Liberty and Gatineau Freedom. There was a desire to correct the name due to location – Hull and Gatineau were separate locations and the joint name no longer pleased everyone. At the first anniversary “2by4 Henry” – Henry S. - started with the group, having the same anniversary as the group. One of his sponsees was Marc J.

Our own Elaine B. who continues to be a stalwart supporter of the group began coming to Hull Liberty at the third iteration of St. James Church in 1975 after a neighbour’s polite and gentle suggestion that her husband at the time might benefit from an AA meeting. John. K had already been at the group about 2 years when Elaine joined. Some of the early members included Morris M.; Conrad G. (deceased); John M. (deceased); Pat S.; John K. and Raymond Q.

During the 90s the group moved temporarily to another location at Cushman Memorial Presbyterian Church on Montcalm Street. When Cushman’s parish amalgamated with St. Giles in Ottawa in 1995, and complaints about the cold rooms continued, by 1997 the group had moved back to St. James Church following its major renovations.

When the Anglican congregation left St. James in 2006, the handwriting was on the wall for Hull Liberty too. Although a heritage site, the church didn’t have long to continue and it was really no surprise during 2009 –

2010 when the Anglican Diocese in charge of the St. James Church sold the property. Independent of that event, the group had been finding water on the floor of their basement meeting room for some time, so Elaine B and 2 other volunteers had already begun hunting for a new location for the meeting. Many churches refused to host an AA group, but persistence paid off and the Église Sacré-Coeur was finally found.

However, what had for so many years been their regular meeting night on Wednesday was not available at Sacré-Coeur so the Group was forced to accept Monday night instead.

And so here we find ourselves: an open speaker format, English-speaking meeting in a French neighbourhood, still going strong and still meeting regularly. Many thanks to the pioneering and courageous early members who saw this area as a viable option for a weekly meeting.



Footnote: this meeting is currently in-person and on-line

More from the AA Archives...

Queensway-Carleton Group



Much of the early information is from Archives at the General Service Office (GSO) in New York. The below is correspondence received by the Ottawa Archives Committee March 3, 2020. This has been passed onto the Group's General Service Representative (GSR).

History from the GSO:

The earliest correspondence we have from the group is a group information card. This card, dated November 13, 1973, lists the group as a hospital group that met at St. Joseph Hospital.

A letter dated January 4, 1974, from Bill W., member of the group, says:

About the group I started, with the help of many good people. Some time ago a sister at the hospital said something to me to the affect that she would like to see an A.A. group in the hospital, for there was so many from drinking. I was a member of the friendly group. So I started to try and get an A.A. group started in the hospital, and finally on the 12, of August 1973 with the help of the medical director of the hospital, and other good people

we got a group going. We call it the Queensway Group in St. Joseph's Hospital. The Queensway is the name of the street that the hospital is on. We have about 25 people at the meeting.

A group information card dated from January 16, 1974 lists the group as meeting on Sunday. Bill W. was listed as the contact person for the group.

The next correspondence is a group information sheet. This sheet is dated January 15, 1980. Ernie O. was the contact person for the group. They had 20 members who met on Thursday.

The only other correspondence is a group information sheet dated January 14, 1982. The group had 28 members and continued to meet on Thursday. Pat B. and Dick R. were the contact people. At this time the group's name was listed as the Queensway Carleton Group.

Our electronic database lists the group with 15 members who meet on Thursday. John D. is currently listed as the contact person for the group.

History from the Group:

The weekly meetings have been held in various locations within the Hospital. The Meetings were originally "open speaker" and in 2004 the format was changed to "open discussion". The readings used are "How it Works, The Steps, The Traditions, The Promises. We also have the Chips. The Group celebrates Birthdays with a cake, card and medallion where appropriate and maintains a supply of AA meeting lists, brochures and sells AA Books at cost.

Membership comes from all over, including current and former patients of The Queensway Carleton Hospital with half being over 40 years of age. The Group Membership Book lists about 8 active members.

Footnote: This meeting is currently on-line



Pearls of Wisdom

From my Sponsor

This column features 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 our recovery or of importance:

Ask God for help. His help is there for
the asking.

Are you putting *them* (other people) in
the God spot?

There is a God and it's not me.

Trust God.

Pray for the willingness.

Old habits.

Don't panic; this too shall pass.

Don't expect perfection. Progress
not perfection.

Self-love. Be gentle on yourself.

It's nothing I haven't heard before.

It clears away the wreckage
of the past.

It's not about them; it's about you.

Growth: seeing my part.

We look for our own mistakes.

No blaming.

Everyone has stuff in the past.

A fearless moral inventory – don't leave stuff out!

Do the writing.

Forgive yourself.

We're all human.



Please submit your Pearls of Wisdom to: newsletter@ottawaaa.org.

Thank you for your service!

A MEMBER SHARES...

THE 12 PRINCIPLES

The roadmap for our personal recovery is contained in the 12 Steps of AA. Each one of us arrives at AA's door broken physically, mentally, emotionally and spiritually. Incorporating the principles of the twelve steps into our daily lives produces a real personality change changing us from self-centered to other-centered.

People spend much time reading, studying, discussing, and analyzing these steps. But the steps are not an intellectual exercise. They are a roadmap to helping us live. They show us how to build ourselves into healthy and vibrant human beings.

The following are the underlying spiritual principles of each one of our 12 steps and my personal experience as I continue to integrate these principles into my life.

Step 1: Honesty - It was easy for me to honestly admit my powerlessness over alcohol. However, I was seriously dishonest about the unmanageability of my life. I slowly grew into honesty. Honesty in sobriety is the foundation on which everything else grows.

Step 2: Hope - My thinking was insane and so my behavior was I insane. Insanity when drinking is easy to accept. As I began to stop trying to control everything, I began to achieve some manageability in my life, and so I developed hope. As I found a Higher Power that worked for me, I began to hope to

be healthy one day.

Step 3: Faith - When I arrived in AA I had huge difficulty trusting anyone, least of all a Higher Power. I was deeply abused as a child and taught myself to rely on and trust no one. How could a Higher Power have allowed this abuse? I tested my Higher Power at first by handing over small stuff to see what would happen. The results were so positive! Today, I trust my Higher Power completely.

Step 4: Courage - It took a lot of courage to undertake an inventory of myself. I had major shame issues. I had to trust the process. A second 4th step brought me a great deal of peace of mind. I grew to know myself.

5. Integrity - I believe the most important part of this step was to get honest with myself. I can live in denial. But I slowly and progressively became more honest with myself, my Higher Power, and another human being. Through this step I also saw many of my assets and talents. I began to like myself.

6. Willingness - I only become willing to change when the pain is too much. I can say that I am willing but deep down I am not prepared to change. Sometimes my Higher Power brings me to my knees so that I am forced to become willing. Today, when this happens, I stop quickly and take a deep look at that situation.

7. Humility - I believe that each one of us has a chief character defect. Mine happens to be arrogance. Therefore, this step is so important to me. I work to understand who I am and my relationship to my Higher Power. I do the work and I leave the result to that Energy. But I am responsible for my efforts.

8. Love - The principle of love includes forgiveness, honesty, empathy, compassion, sincerity, and acceptance. It was easy for me to make a list of all persons who have harmed me. But as I grew, I became willing to make a list of people I had harmed.

9. Discipline - Thinking about others and the harm I have caused them is essential to my growth. Working this step helps to alleviate guilt and shame. After making an amend to my sister, for using her for booze, she commented that she was always glad to see me since she was lonely. You never know what an amend will bring.

(Continued p.9)

Outgoing chair of Intergroup lauds members (Front page continued)

“We have to continue to get better at communicating what Intergroup is and is not. We need to get more home groups to participate by sending a representative to our monthly Intergroup meeting. The more input we get from the frontlines of AA, the more voices there are around the table. This brings more buy-in, and a greater willingness to serve.”

People need to be asked

Ask a fundraiser or a volunteer coordinator from any charitable organization why their supporters do not give more of their time or money to the cause, and the answer is simple: “they are not asked.”

Harry, who has held numerous different positions on the Intergroup Board, knows this very well from his own experience.

“I’ve been asked to serve on many occasions, and frankly, I’ve probably said yes too quickly. For some of us, we need to learn when to say yes. But despite the time I’ve given, and any sacrifices I’ve made, I can honestly say that I’ve been blown away by the acts of generosity and kindness I’ve witnessed from my fellow members in AA.”

Bravo Harry for your service to AA, you continue to be a true power of example!

P.S. there’s an election for new Intergroup Board members coming up next month. You can help the suffering alcoholic by asking a qualified member if they would let you nominate them. Go ahead and “ask” someone to serve. You’ll be doing yourself and AA a big favour.



A MEMBER SHARES...CONTINUED

10. **Perseverance** - I begin each day asking my Higher Power for another day of sobriety, to help me to live in today and to be grateful. Gratitude keeps me centered in today, in a positive manner.
11. **Spirituality** - As I grow in sobriety, my relationship and dependency on a Higher Power deepens and deepens. I no longer feel lonely and isolated. Daily prayers are essential for my peace of mind. Meditation helps to still my mind.
12. **Service** - For me, service in AA is essential for real sobriety. My motive for service must be directly linked to my gratitude to AA for saving my life. It has giving me the opportunity to grow up, and to give back in some measure what has been given to me so freely.

Yours in Service,
Mary K
Hand in Hand Group
Ottawa, ON

A.A.® Guidelines

Central or
Intergroup Offices

from G.S.O., Box 459, Grand Central Station, New York, NY 10163

GROUP REPRESENTATION AT A CENTRAL/ INTERGROUP OFFICE Service centers usually have no authority on their own account; they derive it from the participating groups. Central/intergroup offices are essentially A.A. service entities, “directly responsible to those they serve,” as described in Tradition Nine. Local group representatives reflect the groups’ conscience in the service center operations. In most communities, a central/intergroup office committee or steering committee is set up to handle the administrative activities of the service office. The steering committee holds regularly scheduled meetings and deals with general policy and plans. Periodically, the steering committee reports to group representatives on central/intergroup office problems and accomplishments. It is extremely important to keep a two-way flow of information going between the central/ intergroup office and groups.



When you’re a general service representative (G.S.R.)

You are linking your home group with the whole of A.A. In 1950, a new type of trusted servant, “group representative,” was suggested to help in the selection of delegates to the newly formed General Service Conference. By 1953, the job of group representative was also seen as a good means of exchanging up-to-date information between individual groups and “Headquarters” (now the General Service Office). That’s still an important side of your work. But now, as general service representative, you have an even bigger responsibility: You transmit ideas and opinions, as well as facts; through you, the group conscience becomes a part of “the collective conscience of our whole Fellowship,” as expressed in the General Service Conference. Like everything else in A.A., it works through a series of simple steps. (For the complete picture in detail, read *The A.A. Service Manual*.)

For a new general service representative, this leaflet outlines responsibilities and useful sources of information; for a group, what to keep in mind when electing a G.S.R.

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



GARDENS FROM THE
UNDERWORLD
BY CARA W.

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.

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.

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 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!