

Our Primary Purpose

www.ottawaaa.org



Ottawa Area Archives of Alcoholics Anonymous

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National Capital Region

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Staying sober over Christmas

It helps to be strategic



The holiday season can be quite challenging for alcoholics; even for those of us who have seen the mistletoe come and go a few times without a “drink” in hand.

For Michelle, despite more than seven years of sobriety, it still takes some strategic thinking to get from the old year to the new without incident.

“It’s definitely easier than it was when I first got sober, but Christmas still has a way of making us all a little crazy. So I need to be mindful of a few things about myself and those I’m going to be spending time with over the holiday season.”

She vividly remembers how the first couple of sober Christmas seasons required a specific plan in order to have peace of mind about not drinking in the company of others who were.

“I needed to know exactly what beverages I was bringing to any given function or family gathering. I had to sit down and map it out: at dad’s place I’m going to be drinking cranberry juice and soda, at our friends’ party I’ll be ok with ginger ale.”

Thinking of others

As the years of sobriety tick by Michelle has found that the best way to approach Christmas is with an attitude of service.

“What can I *bring* as opposed to what can I get *out of* this party or event,” has become her mantra.

She can now reflect on what it was like to be drunk and in no way ‘present’ for her family or work colleagues.

“Can I do some dishes, or play with the children? I will often bring supplies and set up an art table for the kids. Can I be emotionally available for someone who might need an ear?”

Gifts of a different kind

Michelle has discovered that true gifts don’t require wrapping, or a special place under a tree.

“To be at peace with what *is*...it’s one of the biggest gifts of sobriety. And there’s probably no time of the year when it is more important. We need to practice acceptance, especially with our loved ones.”

Most of us, consciously or not, realize that Christmas seems to bring unrealistic expectations of how perfect things could or should be. It can put us on edge and set us up for conflict.

Michelle recalls an argument she once had with her partner over something as trivial as what specific ingredients were supposed to go into a dish they were making.

“I jumped in my car and drove over to my sponsor’s place. I showed up on her doorstep crying. At least I was driving to her place and not the LCBO. She was great, and said to me, ‘it’s okay, dear – everyone’s a little crazier at this time of year.’”

Maybe we have to step back and acknowledge that at unique times of the year, like Christmas, we just have to realize that the biggest gift we can give or receive is sobriety itself.

No tinsel, no turkey...all we need is the Fellowship of AA.

Editorial: Being present at Christmas

Ah yes, those sleigh bells are starting to ring; ice cubes are tinkling in the bottom of stately highball glasses.

And, Uncle what's-his-name is yelling out for everyone to hear, "what are you having to drink...?" Followed by a hush...the silence then broken with, "oh yeah, I forgot you're not drinking anymore." Haha, chuckle chuckle.

For a moment we feel like everyone is watching and listening as we shrink down into this little person the size of a snowflake. We try to muster a response, like, "Oh, soda water is fine."

Ay yes, it's that wonderful time of year again. And at the risk of being politically incorrect, let's call it... Christmas.

Of course, what makes it so charged, and what we often find so triggering, is FAMILY. Yes, we love our family...but...and it's a BIG BUT, they just seem to have this uncanny ability of saying the wrong thing at the wrong time.

What to do?

It's frustrating when, despite our best efforts to educate everyone about the need for abstinence, we still get family members asking why we just can't "have one drink."

But we have to ask ourselves...in the midst of all the Christmas frivolity...is this the right time to pull out our AA rule book and try to explain, once again, why it simply has to be an 'all or nothing' proposition for us to overcome our powerlessness.

And speaking of powerlessness...Christmas is the perfect time to realize that we are also powerless over family. Acceptance is the key as we navigate the punch bowl, while watching family do what we used to do...making alcohol-induced fools of ourselves.

The sooner we cut our family some slack the better off everyone will be. Let them be merry and 'over

the top.' We can feel good about being emotionally 'present' and able to communicate more authentically.

Who knows, we might even get to know and appreciate some of our relatives who we used to dismiss when they didn't want to play along with our old boundary-busting antics.

Christmas time...who said we can't bring a little spirit of service to our own family. They deserve our help and support as much if not more than anyone.

Service can and should begin at home.

Jeff F.



Service Opportunities

Ottawa Area Intergroup needs you! Elections are coming up at the December Intergroup meeting.

Intergroup Positions up for Election/Re-election:

Vice-Chair

Secretary

12th Step Coordinator

Telephone Answering Service Coordinator

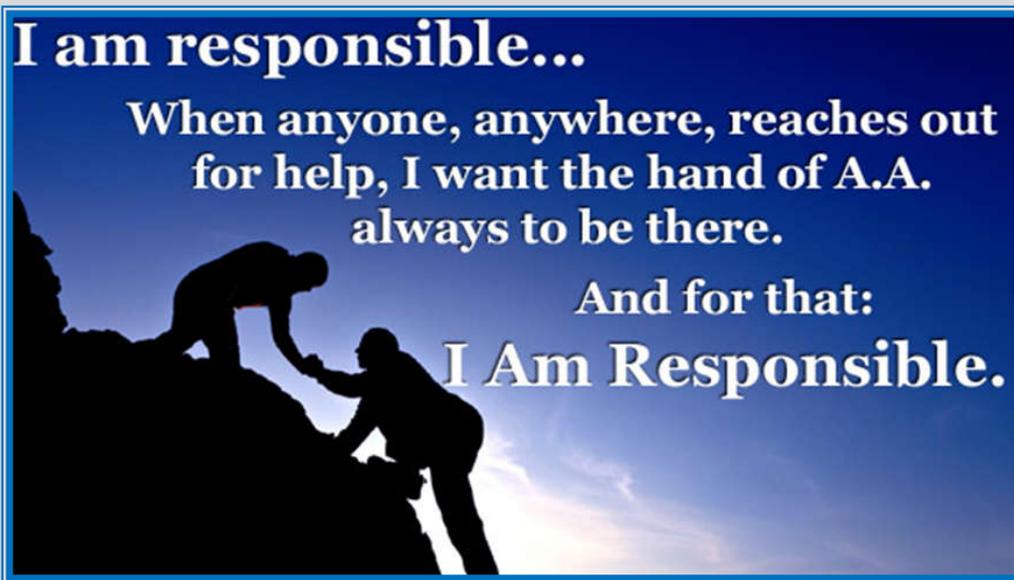
Newsletter Coordinator

Chair Eastern Conference 2022

Vice-Chair Eastern Conference 2022

Vice-Chair Spring Conference 2022

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



Service Positions up for Election/Re-election:

12 Step Coordinator: During my two year tenure as the 12 Step Coordinator, I have witnessed many times how a 12 Step call can save someone's life. This has been true especially during the pandemic when in-person meetings were discontinued. The 12 Step service is a lifeline to the still suffering alcoholic. This service is fundamental and crucial on the road to one's recovery.

Personally, the benefits of this service work was its own reward. I have enjoyed working at the Intergroup level and getting to know the other Board members. The Coordinator maintains and updates the 12 Step list. We need members on an ongoing basis, particularly members from various ethnic backgrounds and francophone men.

It would be ideal if the Coordinator was knowledgeable in excel and spreadsheets. Regardless, support will be given.

In my time as Secretary, I had the opportunity to work with several phenomenal members of the AA community. I learned more about how the Program works, made new connections, and got to work on some skills!

The main duties of the Secretary are quite straightforward:

1. Attending 2 meetings / month - one meeting with the Board, and one with Intergroup (group reps). At each meeting, I jotted down Board updates and main points of discussion (using an existing template to make it easier!) and passed it along to members for their review. Once completed, it was just a matter of sending it out to the Intergroup representatives to share with their groups.
2. Maintaining a list of current Intergroup representatives - there's an existing spreadsheet with the name and contact email for each Intergroup member that is used to share the minutes and other important information for groups.
3. Answering questions from the membership and/or public. Often, this was just a matter of redirecting to the appropriate Board member (i.e. a request to update a meeting's info being sent to the webmaster)

I really appreciated the knowledge and experience that the other members of the Board freely shared with me and the opportunity to get more involved in the AA community in Ottawa. Thank you!

Newsletter Coordinator/Editor: I've had the privilege of doing this service position for the last year. This is meaningful and enjoyable service where you can interact with the membership and use your creativity. Duties include coordinating/assembling input from a group of volunteers who contribute regularly. As well, you will solicit and accumulate submissions from the membership at large who contribute stories, announcements about special events and works of art. Board members also contribute important/timely information. Tasks also include proofreading and editing. There is a requirement to attend one Board meeting and one Intergroup meeting per month. Desktop publishing and writing/editing skills are desirable but not mandatory. I'm hoping to be re-elected to finish out the two year term.

Dawn-Marie M.

Telephone Answering Service Coordinator is responsible for the maintenance of the 24hrs a day telephone answering service provided by Intergroup. Description of responsibilities:

1. Update the online schedule to show which shifts are vacant.
2. Train members on how to forward the office phone to their home.
4. Recruit members to volunteer for answering the phones.
5. Help volunteers and field questions from members and the public.
6. Answer calls and emails received at info@ottawaa.org
7. Assists 12 Step Coordinator when required.

Good communication and organizational skills as well as computer skills desirable.

The Vice Chair of Intergroup is a two year assignment. It prepares you to assume the position of Chair when the two years are completed. The Vice Chair is a support to the Chair of Intergroup. This position represents Intergroup as our member on the Spring and Fall Conferences committee, since Intergroup assumes overall financial responsibility for these conferences. Additionally, the Vice-Chair takes on the duties of the chairperson in his/her absence.

Corrections Facilities & Treatment (CFT Committee)

Hello friends, I am an alcoholic and my name is Luc C. In October, I joined Corrections Facilities & Treatment Committee (CFT) during their election. This is a 2 year commitment and I am eager to get out of self and to start helping others. Going on 6 years of sobriety, my sponsor suggested performing some service work. It would sure be nice to start connecting with a small group of people safely.

Carrying the message to alcoholics in a correction or treatment facility is basic Twelfth Step work, an opportunity to practice Step 12. We strongly recommend a minimum of 2 years of sobriety, knowledge of our Steps and Traditions and of course a willingness to carry the message. An easy way to get started is by reading the information pamphlets, which are all available on aa.org. One of the CFT committee roles is to organize A.A. groups to bring an A.A. service meeting into treatment or correction facilities in the Ottawa area. In these service meetings, we are sharing our experience, strength and hope – giving it away in order to keep it. Prior to entering a facility, CFT would request you to read not only our guidelines and expectations but those of the facility that we are visiting. This information would be emailed to your group prior to your visit. The guidelines will be very clear on the suggested dos and don'ts. Examples would be explaining how A.A. works for you in your day to day lives. Reading our Preamble / Promises and having a discussion about them. This commitment is also about sharing what an A.A. meeting is like and explaining or demonstrating the different

We would share about the importance of meetings, of having a home group, explaining the purpose of sponsorship...

types of A.A. meetings. We would share about the importance of meetings, of having a home group, explaining the purpose of sponsorship and how the Steps can make a difference in our lives. This is basically a beginners meeting. "When we are carrying the A.A. message into a treatment facility, we are not just one drunk talking to another. In their eyes, we represent the entire Fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous. How we look, act and talk are all they are going to know about A.A. This is a very important responsibility."

Here is a service opportunity for members of A.A. to help ensure we are carrying the message to the alcoholic who still suffers. CFT will be preparing a list of interested groups/individuals to ensure that we are ready in 2022, when it is safe to do so, to carry the message to facilities within the Ottawa area. There is also the Bridging the Gap program to help connect people with meetings when they are leaving the facilities and moving back into the community.

For more information or to share your expression of interest please email cft@ottawaaa.org Please include your name, the name of your group, the contact details and we will respond.

Let our new friends see, hear, and talk to a winner!

In Service,
Luc C.



Volunteers are needed as contacts for the Badge of Courage and Nomads meetings

Intergroup is currently looking for contacts to take referral calls from TAS for people looking for Badge of Courage or Nomad meetings. The Badge of Courage is a meeting for Police Officers and Firefighters and the Nomads is a meeting for Officers of the Court. The Badge of Courage contact would be a Police Officer or Firefighter and a member of A.A. with at least 2 years of sobriety. The Nomads contact would be a lawyer or other officer of the court and a member of A.A. with at least 2 years of sobriety. If interested please contact TAS@ottawaaa.org

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 Christmas Dinner held on Christmas Eve at St. Giles Church, corner of Bank St. & First Ave. It was an unparalleled gesture to serve a first-class dinner to the street people of Ottawa afflicted with alcoholism. It was a two-hour affair followed by an A.A. 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 on Christmas Eve had grown and grown to what has become known as the Alkathon today.

After that it went to a stand-alone Committee comprised of members from local Groups with the focus being placed on A.A. meetings and fellowship; the food was secondary. New Years Eve was also now included. This lasted for a few years; however, the Alkathon Committees started having the event catered which was quite expensive.

In the late 1980's, early 1990's, the Alternate District Committee Members (Alt/DCM's) from Districts 48, 54, 58, 62 & 66 became responsible for the Alkathon Committee due to the fact that they have committee experience. The Alt/DCM's brought information back to their District's regarding the happenings of the Alkathon Committee and how it was coming along. Contributions came from Districts and Groups and any surpluses were disbursed back to Districts.

For quite a number of years now, the Alkathon has returned to a stand-alone committee and has been that way ever

since. Traditionally, Districts 54, 58 and 62 (Districts 48 and 66 now have their own event) and Intergroup in Ottawa provide "seed money" to get the Alkathon off the ground. Again, traditionally, the Alkathon Committee would return the seed money and any surpluses back to the Districts and Intergroup if it was available. More times than not, the Ottawa Fellowship has been extremely good to its Alkathon and the seed money, plus surplus, has been returned. Liaisons from each of the three Districts are asked to attend Alkathon Committee meetings, to bring the information back to their Districts. Many of these Liaisons also become active members on the Alkathon Committee helping out where needed!

In 2014, the Alkathon held a group inventory which was facilitated by a District Committee Member (DCM) to take a look at how they were doing and if they were adequately serving the fellowship and carrying the A.A. message. Out of that inventory, it was realized that the focus needed to be placed back on the A.A. meetings and fellowship; the food was secondary. A mission statement was then developed which reads: "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 Year."

In 2018, the Alkathon held another group inventory which was facilitated by another DCM. A few weeks later the Alkathon Committee met with the Chair and Vice-Chair of Intergroup and there was a proposal to take the Alkathon under the umbrella of Intergroup. The joint meeting was quite lengthy and there was ample discussion and a vote was taken whether to remain a

stand-alone committee or not. Results were twenty in favour for remaining as a stand-alone committee, with 1 abstention.

The 2019 – 2020 Alkathon was one like no other. It was quite unique and one for the history books for sure! In December 2019, the first case of COVID-19, also known as the Coronavirus pandemic, was recognized in China. By March of 2020, the world had basically shut down due to the spread of this disease.

To this day, the Ottawa Alkathon still thrives. This is Ottawa's Alkathon and the fellowship takes good care of it. The main goal of the Alkathon has always been for the alcoholic who is suffering. This is not always the new comer. Christmas and New Years can be a very difficult time of year for many and the Alkathon provides hope, love and acceptance to all.

The 2020 Alkathon was held virtually on Zoom as we were in the midst of the Covid-19 Virus pandemic. The Alkathon Chair was Gene M, Zoom Host was Mike B, Zoom Co-Hosts were Sue L and Chris D. Both December 24th and December 31st had the days starting at 2:00 pm with different Groups putting on meetings. From 8 – 9 pm, Speaker meetings were held. The days wrapped up with Fellowship being held from 10:30 – 11 pm. Both days saw good attendance, with the Speaker meetings being very well attended.



Al-Anon\AA Family Holiday Event

As there is no Alkathon this year, you are invited to join this Al-Anon Virtual Family Holiday event with Al-Anon and AA speakers, Dec 24th and 31st from noon to 5pm. Panels with family members who attend AA/Al-Anon and Alateen. Sponsor and sponsee panels from Al-Anon/AA & Alateen. Adult children panels. Come for fellowship, inspiration and a little holiday cheer. We hope to see you there!

Meeting ID: 841 9012 4756

Passcode: 609769

Zoom meeting link:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84190124756pwd=TWROMXdqVnpoWkxuUGxTNHJGUEhTUT09>

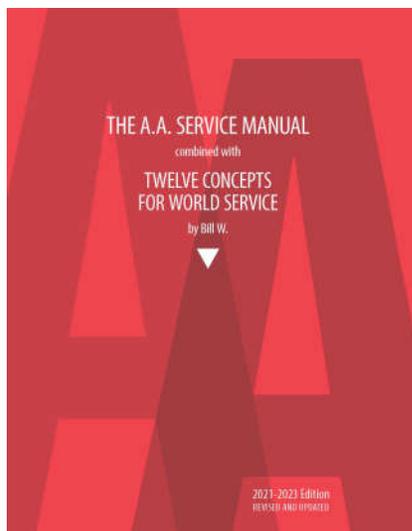
Same ID & Password for both days.

Phone numbers to dial-in from Canada (these are common default numbers):

+1 647 558 0588 Canada
 +1 778 907 2071 Canada
 +1 204 272 7920 Canada
 +1 438 809 7799 Canada
 +1 587 328 1099 Canada
 +1 647 374 4685 Canada

For more information contact Peggy F. at: 613-295-5354 or
 Natalie R. at: ncrobichaud@gmail.com

For updates go to: <https://www.al-anon-ottawa.ca/>



Two titles in a single booklet. The A.A. Service Manual is a critical resource for A.A. members involved in service. Chapters cover the roles of GSRs, DCMs, delegates, directors and trustees, as well as what happens at G.S.O. and Grapevine. Substantive appendices cover the principle of rotation, the Third Legacy Procedure and much more. In Twelve Concepts for World Service, A.A. co-founder Bill W. articulates the principles by which A.A.'s world service operates and recounts how these emerged through A.A.'s early history and experience.

Revised and fully reformatted in 2021.

General Service Conference-approved.

The A.A. Service Manual PDF: https://www.aa.org/assets/en_US/en_bm-31.pdf

Printed version order on-line at: www.ottawaaa.org

Price: \$6 CAD

Pearls of Wisdom
From my Sponsor

Get off the cross, we need the wood!
Don't cry over spilled milk.
Now acceptance – it's done, you can't undo
it. The deed cannot be undone.
You've done a lot of things to help yourself
in this last year.
Obsessive thinking.
Stuff happens; things happen in life.
Let it go; stop taking it back.
When you make an amend, let it go.
"I will let go tomorrow". We hold on.
Address the "Poor Me" in us.
So what if it's not perfect.
Stop spinning – do what you have to do.

Please submit your Pearls of Wisdom to: newsletter@ottawaaa.org.
Thank you to those who have contributed this month!

Request for Fellowship Sharing on Experiences using Virtual Baskets – Deadline: February 9, 2022

Dear A.A. Friends,

Warm greetings from G.S.O. We are all sending you best wishes. We look forward to hearing from you. The A.A.W.S. Finance Self-Support Subcommittee considered a proposed agenda item from a previous year, and forwarded a recommendation that was approved by the A.A.W.S. board:

“The A.A.W.S. Finance committee perform a request for sharing from the Fellowship about using various “virtual” baskets, especially in terms of our Traditions; and forward a report to the trustees' Finance and Budgetary Committee for further consideration on updating Conference-approved literature and service pieces with this shared experience.”

The Finance committee asked the subcommittee to develop questions and to collect Fellowship Sharing. The Self-Support subcommittee developed questions for the Fellowship to consider that were aligned with the service structure: starting with A.A. groups, local committees, General Service Conference, and General Service Board.

The Self-Support subcommittee hopes that you will forward this request to groups, local committees, Treasurers, Finance Committees, and local service entities within your area.

The subcommittee hopes that the following questions will encourage Fellowship Sharing:

1. Did Virtual Baskets change your group's ability to carry the A.A. message to still-suffering alcoholics near you?

2. What type of software or App has your group/meeting used to pass Virtual Baskets?

3. Did your group have any challenges using Virtual Baskets?

4. What were some of the easiest things about using Virtual Baskets?

5. How did your group conscience interpret the Traditions when discussing to use/not use Virtual Baskets?

6. How have Virtual Baskets evolved your group's participation in the Seventh Tradition?

For example, in some groups, more (or less) members participated in the 7th Tradition because of using virtual baskets. Additionally, some groups decided to not have a Virtual Baskets and contributed in other ways.

7. What changes (if any) did Virtual Baskets have on your group's contributions to AA service entities?

a. Did your group decide instead to ask members to make individual online contributions to Central Offices/Intergroups, District, Area, or to G.S.O.?

b. Did members reference your group when making these individual contributions to these service entities?

8. In the spirit of Concept Seven¹ and the balance of power between the Conference Charter¹ and the trusteeship of the General Service Board:

a. Have Virtual Basket contributions produced any practical or traditional changes to the final effectiveness of the Conference?

b. Do you believe Virtual Basket Contributions that are made through out the General Service Structure still preserves the A.A. Group as the most important entity in Alcoholics Anonymous?

c. Do individual contributions (either one-time or recurring) to the General Service Board produce any practical or traditional changes to serving the A.A. Groups?

Please email secretary, Self-Support-subcommittee, nominating@aa.org with your experiences on or before, February 9, 2022.

The Self-Support page, A.A. Service Manual/Twelve Concepts Essays or the Concepts Checklist might be useful.

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Newsletter Coordinator
newsletter@ottawaaa.org
Article submission deadline is
the 20th day of the month
preceding publication date

Ottawa Area Intergroup

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

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vice@ottawaaa.org
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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 – Kevin O
District 62 – Ottawa West – Trevor F
Cooperation with Professionals - Jo D
Public Information/Media Contact - Jo D
Corrections Facilities & Treatment - Elaine H
Archives – Sue L

district54@ottawaaa.org
district62@ottawaaa.org
cpc@ottawaaa.org
pi@ottawaaa.org
cft@ottawaaa.org
archives@ottawaaa.org

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!