

# THE SOBER TIMES

A NEWSLETTER FOR TRIPLE CITIES INTERGROUP AND SURROUNDING AREAS



*Mission Statement:* To share and encourage unity amongst the Triple Cities Intergroup and surrounding AA fellowship, by providing access to upcoming events, activities and personal views that may be of interest to those who are affected by alcoholism. Nothing published herein should be construed as Statements of AA or Triple Cities Intergroup, Area 47, Al Anon, AlaTeen, District 10 or any Intergroup District, Group, or the Sober Times Committee members.

Summer 2021 Issue No. 73



## Taking that Very First Step...

I admitted my drinking problem well before I came to AA. Nearly every time I drank I got drunk.

My first drink was at age 17 and it did something for me. For the first time, I felt comfortable in the world. I drank so much my friends cut me off. I was already drinking differently than everyone else. However, I didn't see this, I thought: "I want to do this again soon, this is the answer." In those first few months I ended up changing everything in my life to revolve around drinking and quickly started to experience blackouts and other negative consequences of excessive drinking.

For the next seventeen years I never drank normally, but many times I tried to moderate or stop. Drinking worked for me for a while. I felt I was friendlier and funnier when I drank. But I often did not remember my drinking nights and had others fill in the details. This mortified me, I did not like what I did, the lack of control, and the blackouts. This continued on and I did not enjoy my drinking for the next 10 years. I made commitment after commitment to stay away from drinking. I would stay dry and understood if I stayed away from the first drink I could not get drunk. But at some point during these dry times the thought of a drink would cross my mind and I'd be drunk again. I could not understand why I kept picking up the drink even though I made a decision to quit.

The mental and physical consequences of these drinking periods got worse over time. I needed to drink and when I could not I would feel sick and angry. When I finally drank to overcome this need I would face the consequences of shakes and sweats the next morning. This went on and finally got to the point

where on a drunken night I was done. I no longer wanted to live this way. I looked into the mirror and said "God what is wrong with me? Please help me." I believe at this point, I was finally defeated, I had no more fight left in me. This is when I believe my ego was defeated enough for God to separate me from alcohol for the final time. The next day I made one phone call to a family member, it just turned out to be that they were a member of AA for many years. They said AA was the best thing they ever did and I made the commitment to go to a meeting and ask for help.

I learned from AA that I drank to excess because of a physical craving (an allergy) that only alcoholics have. *This fit me perfectly, I could rarely control the amount I drank. I knew that if I just avoided the first drink I would not get drunk. But even with this knowledge, I continued to pick up the first drink.*

For most of my drinking career I did not enjoy it. I was ashamed of who I was when I drank. I would go places without wanting to drink, then the thought of "just one." I'd look at the first one and ask myself "I wonder what is going to happen? Probably nothing good." Then I would take the drink anyway. I showed myself that my will power was not enough to stay away from the first drink.

I learned in AA that I have a mental obsession with alcohol. My alcoholism did not get solved by using will power to avoid the first drink. I drink even though I know the negative consequences. Even when I want to stop, my will power and knowledge is not enough for me to avoid the first drink. So, I have a problem when I drink but also when I don't drink. *I am powerless over alcohol, I can't control it when I drink and I can't stay away from it when I try to quit.*

The first step talks about an unmanageable life. I thought my life was manageable because I had a job, a wife, and material items. AA showed me that my unmanageable life had nothing to do with material items and it was not caused by drinking. Using the book Alcoholics Anonymous, I realized my alcohol obsession drove my decisions even when I was not drunk. *Drunk or not, alcohol controlled my life, not me, my life was unmanageable.*

I was shown that my obsession was driven by a spiritual condition that is unique to alcoholics. I could relate to the statements in the Doc-



### INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

<b>COVER STORY -</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>An AA Taking the Step</b>	
<b>Rediscovering Life</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>ESCYPAA7 Coming</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Remembrances</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>TCI Service Guide</b>	<b>4</b>

tor's Opinion that I drink because I "...like the effect produced by alcohol." Also, I am "...restless, irritable, and discontented..." until I take the next drink. Through my experience I could also relate to the bedevils of misery and depression described on page 52. My experience was that drinking was my solution to all of these problems. *I never felt quite right or comfortable with myself until I drank and started to feel comfortable in my life.*

Searching through my drinking experience using the book Alcoholics Anonymous gave me an understanding of the first step. I am powerless - I had lost the power of choice and control of my drinking. *My decisions and will power were never enough to control or quit drinking. I need a power greater than myself to solve my alcohol problem.* From this understanding, the miracle of Alcoholics Anonymous started, I earnestly tried to incorporate the 12 Steps into my life.

*I have recovered from alcoholism through the power of the Alcoholics Anonymous 12-step program. It connected me to a higher power that has removed my obsession to drink. I am no longer controlled by alcohol, I can carry the AA message of hope to newcomers, and can be of service in all areas of my life. I am forever grateful to the founders and to those in the fellowship that continue to carry this message for me and newcomers.*

In Service,

**Nick B., Vestal 12-Step Group**

## What does ESCYPAA stand for?

ESCYPAA stands for Empire State Conference of Young People in Alcoholics Anonymous.

When we say "Young" we mean Young at Heart, or Room to Grow!

### What do we do?

We travel statewide raising awareness, sharing experience, strength and hope to an increasing number of "Young" AA's trying to find their way in recovery. We Unite together throughout the state regularly at meetings, participate in service, and host activities leading up to the annual conference.

### What is ESCYPAA?

The annual conference that we will host this year (2021) in Binghamton, NY!

We are looking for volunteers. We need help with Greeters, Security and Marathon Meetings.

We meet the 1st & 3rd Thursdays of the month at 7pm on zoom (Id:724-259-5292 pw:303359).

All are welcome.

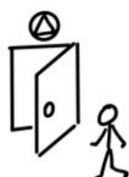
Visit our website [Escypaa7.org](http://Escypaa7.org) or contact Jeff T ([escypaaviicochair@gmail.com](mailto:escypaaviicochair@gmail.com))

## BRIDGE TO SHORE AA CONVENTION

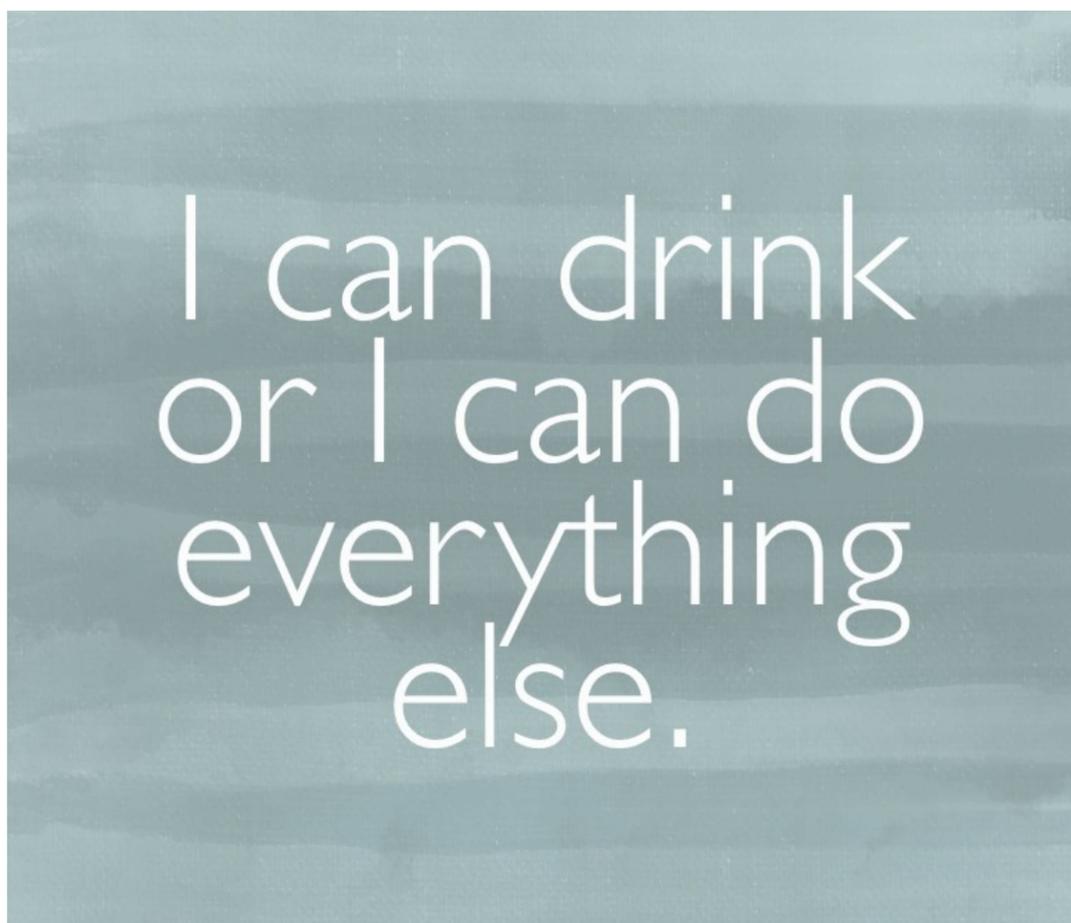
November 12th-14th 2021  
Holiday Inn Downtown Binghamton



*Ahh, I'm ready to go to my first in-person AA meeting in a year and I'm willing to go to any length...*



*I put on pants.*



## Rediscovering Life: How Sober People Have Fun

I remember one of our assignments when I was in rehab was to list the things we enjoyed doing that didn't include getting drunk or high... I was pretty good at all the other assignments. I was adept at identifying my triggers, listing all the people, places, and things I knew I should avoid upon release. But it had been such a long time since I had any real idea of who I was or what I enjoyed aside from substances that I drew a complete blank on that one. I recall making a list of all the stereotypical things people are "supposed to" enjoy like movies, hanging out with friends.

It wasn't until I was sober for a little while that I remembered how much I love to write. Fortunately I had been encouraged to keep a journal and it was through that that I began to remember who I was. And we all have these things or interests that go back to our very core.

I talked to several others and here are some of their experiences...

### Matt M. (Riding a motorcycle)

"It was a love I had before addiction even started for me. I sold a couple of bikes in active addiction for pennies. When I got sober I told myself I would get another bike and would never sell it because of my use again. Along the way I met people in the rooms who also loved to ride.

I did recently sell my bike again but this time it was because I have a daughter and my priorities changed. One day I'll get another one."

And that's the beauty of recovery too. As we grow our priorities continually shift, our interests change and the things we spend our time on are the things that matter the most to us. They are the things that make our lives complete.

### Sandi C. (Her love of dogs)

"If we had a lot of land I would probably have a ton of them! I've just always felt a connection with them, need to be around them and a desire to do what I can to help them. I've almost always had two dogs of my own but I would also love to foster one day."

### Steve B. (Why working out is such a big part of his life)

"I have always loved being physically active but for a long time in addiction that wasn't really possible for me. I had gained a lot of weight and had become less capable of doing the things I used to enjoy. I began to exercise again immediately in recovery. In fact, it was in rehab that I started running the stairs to try to get back the physicality that I had lost. It was really important to me to attempt to repair the damage I had done to my body for so many years. I honestly feel like working out has given me back time that I thought I lost."

Based on the conversations I've had and my own experience, there isn't one thing that works for everybody. But the consensus is that we tried to get back to the interests we had before drugs and alcohol sort of changed the trajectory of our lives. And there are all kinds of AA events that allow us to explore these things and rediscover what we used to love about life.

– Beth O.

## Remembering our Friends

### Ken E.

Ken E., an active home group member of the St. Mary's group in Kirkwood died with 40 years sober. Ken first got sober after a stint in a psych center where he realized he was not mentally ill but was, in fact, an alcoholic. His sponsor Jeff was able to talk with us about their relationship and who Ken was as a sober man. The two first struck up a friendship



when Ken was looking for someone to help him fix his truck. They became fast friends and it didn't take long for Ken to ask Jeff to be his sponsor.

Jeff informed us that Ken was sponsoring at least 2 men when he passed away and it grieved his heart that these men just weren't able to "get

it." Jeff and Ken talked about everything from daily situations in life to bigger issues and Ken has been quoted as saying that "men often don't like to admit when they are wrong." Ken was a man of integrity who kept his word and didn't repeat anything that was said to him in confidence.

Ken's desire to have a reconciled relationship with his son was reached before his death and he was even in close contact with his ex-wife as well. The two were able to have a healthy friendship for about 6 years before he died. Jeff sponsored Ken for approximately 10 years and was very proud of Ken making it to such a milestone as 40 years. He was even able to pick up that medallion before he left this earth.

### Donna

15 years after Jerry first asked Donna out she finally agreed to go and he was one of the many family and friends at her side when she passed away. Jerry told us a little about her life in recovery.

Donna's first experience in the program was in Sullivan County where she had been raised, married and had 5 children of her own. She was able to stay sober working a service based program for about 10 years before drifting away from AA and still managed to hang on for another 3 years before relapsing after being prescribed painkillers. When the prescriptions ran out she found other ways to keep the pain at bay but eventually found her way back to the rooms only when a friend in need requested that she come along for support. Sadly her friend ultimately died but Donna had a taste of recovery again at that point and continued to walk to Conklin and Hayes using her walker from her home, now in Binghamton, over a mile away.

Known as the "Den Mother", Donna kept the 5:35pm meeting open after most of the original home group had bailed. This time around Donna embraced the program in it's entirety and often quoted that line from the Big Book saying that "God is either everything or He is nothing." She had decided He was everything. Many folks in AA can relate to Donna's biggest regret which was that she couldn't save the newcomer. But that didn't stop her from trying.

Because she kept her problems to herself most people didn't even know she was sick until the cancer had progressed to stage 4. But she died in a room full of people that loved her, staying sober to the point of refusing medications until the very end. She was loved and will be missed but she is no doubt joyful on the other side, joined by her teenage child that had preceded her in death.

### Paul G

Dedicated. When discussing Paul, that word comes up over and over. He was a bedrock in AA.

You could drive by St. Patrick's church any day at 11am and find his car parked outside while he was inside opening the noon meeting.

He initiated and facilitated the Sunday afternoon meeting at Lourdes Hospital. This meeting was focused on HOW - Honesty, Openness, and Willingness. These were words Paul lived by.

Paul helped to open the Our Primary Purpose meeting for years. By doing this he was a great example of service to other AA members. He would greet newcomers and talk with everyone at the meeting. He was always the first to arrive at the meeting and the last to leave.

Kind, quiet, smart, welcoming, friendly, gentle, and with a good sense of humor, Paul shared wisdom and joy with humility and patience. Patience except on the golf course...he'd play the holes out of order to find empty tees and avoid waiting. He was great fun to play with.

During the pandemic, he established a new "group of friends" meeting to fill a desperate need for in-person meetings by newcomers and old-timers alike. He helped ensure the meeting was a safe place for all by setting up the meeting with social distancing in mind and plenty of sanitizer. This allowed Paul and others to reach out to newcomers. Many of these new members are still sober and in AA. This is only a recent example of Paul's deep and long commitment to sobriety and to the fellowship.

*Our thoughts and prayers go out to family and friends.*

– The Editors

*For thousands of alcoholics yet to come,*

*AA does have an answer. But there is one condition.*

*We must, at all costs, preserve our essential unity;*

*it must be made unbreakably secure.*

*Without permanent unity there can be little lasting*

*recovery for anyone. Hence our future depends upon the*

*creation and observance of a sound group Tradition. First things*

*will always need to be first: humility before success,*

*and unity before fame.*



–AA Co-Founder, Bill W., October 1947

*"Traditions Stressed in Memphis Talk," The Language of the Heart*

### TCI MEETING SCHEDULE

listings can be found at

[aabinghamton.org](http://aabinghamton.org)

Because of the changing nature of COVID-19 related closings and restrictions, a full printed schedule won't be published until further notice.

Visit the website meetings page and note the arrows indicating which meetings are gathering in-person. Check the virtual clubhouse page for online meetings.

It is the responsibility of each group to decide how and when they will suspend or resume their regularly scheduled meetings. Public health measures must be respected.

Groups, please advise TCI once you know of a meeting status change. It is the only way we can keep the listings current – a critical tool, especially for newcomers. Contact:

[schedule@aabinghamton.org](mailto:schedule@aabinghamton.org)

## What is an AA Intergroup?

An intergroup is an AA service group that involves partnership among groups in a community — just as AA groups themselves are partnerships of individuals, it exists to aid the groups in their common purpose of carrying the AA message to the alcoholic who still suffers.

### What does Triple Cities Intergroup (TCI) do?

Officers, committee chairs, committee members, and group representatives meet monthly. All AA members are welcome. We carry out our service through these committees:

#### Answering Service/Hotline

Coordinates with the telephone answering service that handles the AA hotline. Maintains an up to date list of AA volunteers willing to receive calls from people interested in AA.

#### Cooperation with Professional Community (CPC)

Builds working relationships with the many professionals (e.g., doctors, probation officers, nurses) who may come into contact with alcoholics and may be able to refer them to AA. In cooperating with professionals we may be able to do with them what we could not do separately.

#### Corrections

Focuses on carrying the message behind the walls of corrections facilities. Works to develop and maintain good working relationship with professionals in the Corrections field in the Triple Cities Area.

#### Events

Plans and coordinates events, and other activities that fall outside workshops and outside the group level.

#### Literature

Keeps a stock and record of inventory of AA approved literature and sets up a "store" at the monthly Intergroup meeting, so that the Intergroup representatives can purchase AA literature for their home groups. Can order literature between Intergroup meetings for members who request it.

#### Meeting Schedule Lists

Continuously updates meeting lists online and distributes printed copies twice a year.

#### Public Information (PI)

Handles requests to educate the public at large on what AA is and is not. Makes speakers available to schools, military, etc. Also makes public service announcements available to newspapers, radio and television stations. Maintains the TCI website.

#### Sober Times

Collects, edits & publishes submissions to this local AA newsletter.

#### Special Needs/Accessibilities

Facilitates the carrying of the AA message or AA meetings to people or groups with members with special needs (e.g., visual, hearing, mobility).

#### Treatment

Works to improve cooperation between AA and treatment centers and their professionals who refer alcoholics to AA. Helps get AA meetings and literature into treatment facilities.

#### Workshop

Puts on workshops to educate the community and/or AA members on a variety of matters concerning Alcoholics Anonymous.

#### District Committee Member

Represents the groups which meet within our District, the geographical unit of the AA service structure. S/he is automatically a member of the Area committee which meets monthly. Chairs the regular district meetings and attends all the Area meetings and possibly, regional meetings.

#### AI-Anon Representative

Liaises with the AA community. Contributes to the Sober Times.

#### STCYPAA/ESCYPAA7

Southern Tier Committee of Young People in AA committee members travel statewide raising awareness, sharing experience, strength and hope

to an increasing number of "young" AA's finding their way in recovery. We unite throughout the state at meetings, participate in service, and host events. ESCYPAA 7 (Empire State Committee of Young People in AA) annual conference will be held in Binghamton in 2021.

### What does an Intergroup Rep do?

As your home group's Representative, you attend monthly Intergroup meetings. You serve as your group's connection to our local Intergroup, keeping your group informed and bringing this active participation back to Intergroup.

### You vote on Intergroup decisions.

Triple Cities Intergroup meetings are held the last Sunday of each month at 12:30 PM  
East Side Congregational Church, 284 Robinson Street, Binghamton, NY

## Hey God! Are you listening?

By Jack Kelly

*Hey God!*

*I owe a lot of money.*

*The debts are coming due.*

*I am running out of time.*

*I am really in a stew.*

*Hey God! Are you listening?*

*I need to find a job.*

*I need to pay the rent.*

*The landlord's coming over.*

*And I don't have a cent.*

*Hey God! Are you listening?*

*My family's given up.*

*They don't know what to think.*

*My life is in a shambles.*

*I really need a drink.*

*Hey God! Are you listening?*

*If you would send some money*

*I'd turn my life around.*

*I'd live my life for others.*

*I'd tell them what I found.*

*Hey God! Are you listening?*

*I promise I'll reform*

*If you'll help me with this jam.*

*I'll walk the straight and narrow.*

*I'll be your biggest fan.*

*Hey God! Are you listening?*

*Hey man!*

*Don't blame me for your problems.*

*I'm willing to accept what's mine.*

*But it wasn't I who swallowed the pills.*

*It wasn't I who drank the wine.*

*Hey man! Are you listening?*

*I've always been beside you*

*To raise you when you fell.*

*I kept offering heaven.*

*But you kept choosing hell.*

*Hey man! Are you listening?*

*I see the void within your soul;*

*The pain behind your eyes.*

*I know the heavy heart you bear.*

*I can hear it in your sighs.*

*Hey man! Are you listening?*

*There is a bridge that you must cross*

*Which separates fact from fiction.*

*The bridge is called denial.*

*The fact is your addiction.*

*Hey man! Are you listening?*

*I can't be there in person*

*To walk with you each day.*

*But if you'll just take the Steps*

*I promise - I'll light the way.*

*Hey man! Are you listening?*

All AA members are invited to submit content for this publication.

sobertimes@aabinghamton.org

