

SOBER NEWS

307 7th Avenue (28th Street), Room 201, New York, NY 10001-6007

Voice Phones: (212) 647-1680, (718) 515-8481, (914) 949-1200

Fax: (212) 647-1648

TTY deaf: (212) 647-1649

Website: www.nyintergroup.org
(includes Meeting List)

A.A. at Ground Zero

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

The words of our Responsibility Declaration, which most often assure help for active alcoholics or A.A. newcomers, have taken on a special meaning in the aftermath of the tragic events of September 11, 2001. Shortly after crews of firefighters, police, medical, construction and other workers began the massive cleanup operation at the site of the collapsed World Trade Center twin towers, A.A. members among them – working virtually around the clock, and too exhausted to make their regular meetings – began asking for meetings near the site. New York members responded immediately, and in the midst of the horror and chaos, there are now two rooms where workers can come straight from what has come to be called “the pile” into the supporting atmosphere of an A.A. meeting.

The need for an A.A. presence manifested itself from the very beginning. Dorothy D., New York City Intergroup’s institutions chair, is a nurse who was working nights at the disaster site. She tells about running into a fireman who was a member of her group, and as the word spread, meeting and sharing with other A.A.’s among the work crews. She started taking literature to work every night to distribute to the workers, and describes one rainy night when she and several other sober alcoholics climbed into an empty bus and had a meeting. She says, “I noticed a change in them simply because A.A. was there.”

Within two weeks of the collapse of the twin towers, the General Service Office heard from a Red Cross official, who had received many requests from labor union shop stewards for an A.A. meeting near the cleanup site. A G.S.O. staff member phoned Dorothy D. and also got in touch with Richard S., Southeast New York area’s Cooperation With the Professional Community chair, and the two service workers met with Red Cross personnel to find a way to establish meetings in these difficult conditions.

They faced real organizational challenges. Starting a meeting in a disaster area is vastly more complicated than the proverbial “coffee pot and a resentment,” and A.A.’s tradition of cooperation with other organizations is vital. In many respects, the task was similar to that of taking meetings to prisons or other institutions, for not only is Ground Zero designated a crime scene, but the cleanup is volatile and extremely dangerous. A.A.s who volunteer must follow the stringent rules and regulations established to maintain safety and security in the area. Only people with photo ID badges are allowed on the site, and members who are responsible for the two A.A. rooms must travel to Red Cross headquarters in Brooklyn to apply for badges, which need to be renewed every few weeks. Dorothy and Richard coordinate the work of other volunteers, relaying names and other information to the Red Cross as the first step in the certification process. They estimate that about 50 people will be needed to keep the two rooms open.

Throughout, Red Cross workers have been generous with their time, their help, and their understanding of A.A. principles. The first order of business was finding a meeting room that would be readily accessible but also ensure anonymity. The A.A.s were assigned a room on the second floor of a Red Cross respite center at a university, which provides meals, sleeping quarters, and other services for cleanup crews. It is far enough from the center of activity to protect anonymity, and identified only by a circle and triangle on the door. Signs posted throughout the area invited “friends of Bill W.” to come in, and word of mouth helped spread the news that A.A. was there. A week or so later, because getting from one side of the “pile” to the other can

be hazardous, the Red Cross provided a second room, at a nearby hotel on the south side of the disaster area.

Richard S. believes “just the fact that the room is there is the important thing,” and describes it as a “cross between an alkathon and a hospitality suite.” At the university, two A.A. members are there 24 hours a day, working rotating 6-hour shifts, and the goal for the hotel is also to provide a round-the-clock presence. G.S.O., New York Intergroup and some of the A.A. volunteers have donated literature, as well as Steps, Slogans, and other material (which have been discreetly placed so they are not visible to the casual passerby). Some workers have also started putting stickers (the circle and triangle or one of the slogans) on their hard hats, so they can recognize each other during the long days and nights.

The two A.A. rooms are places to rest, to talk, to meditate, to call a sponsor on a cell phone. Richard commented, “The guys just need to be there, in the atmosphere of a meeting. Their whole demeanor changes after they’ve been there a few minutes.” Many workers bring food because they have only a short lunch or dinner break. Typically, the men (as well as a few women) will come in with a day’s work on their minds, but quickly relax into just talking A.A. When enough people show up, someone will usually say, “Let’s have a meeting.”

Dorothy D. reports being tremendously moved when, on the day the first scheduled meeting took place, one of the men wrote on the board: “Ground Zero A.A. Group, established September 28, 2001.” Because cleanup crews work long hours with few breaks, the schedule of “formal” meetings remains flexible, and times are set at the workers’ convenience. The format varies, Literature—*Daily Reflections*, the Twelve and Twelve, or the Big Book – often provides the topic, and sometimes one of the men will offer to qualify.

Whether impromptu or scheduled, meetings are always a mix of people, for there are numerous A.A.s from outside New York among the firefighters, police and other workers. Many have traveled long distances to help, taking time off from their jobs or using vacation time, simply to be of service. New York City Intergroup has provided meeting lists for out-of-towners who can manage to attend regular meetings, with special listings for new locations for downtown groups displaced by the devastation throughout the area.

A.A.’s future at Ground Zero is full of uncertainties. No one knows how long the cleanup operation will continue or what form it may take in the days and weeks to come. Space in the area as a whole is already at a premium, and it is possible that A.A. can lose its first meeting place when conditions get back to normal. Questions abound, but one thing is absolutely certain: suffering alcoholics have reached out for help, and the hand of A.A. is there.

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Sharing About Service

When I was newly sober an old timer took me aside and pointed to the A.A. triangle on the wall of the meeting room. “The sides of that triangle,” he said, “show the three foundations of A.A. and of our sobriety: Recovery, Unity and Service. They are like three legs of a stool; take one away and the thing topples over.” I got the message—even in the fog of my first few months of sobriety. Service was to be a part of my program. No ifs, ands or buts.

I started picking up ashtrays (I got sober in Rome, Italy) and putting away chairs. When I visited New York A.A. in my fourth sober month, I got a chance to qualify for the first time. I was thrilled for two reasons: I survived my first qualification without rotten fruit being thrown (paranoia anyone?) and I did my first stint of “substantial” service.

Later during the visit, I volunteered to chair a meeting. And I started getting some of the fruits of service; showing up, sticking to a schedule, meeting and getting to know more A.A. members.

Since then—back in Europe and here in New York where I now live—I have kept my A.A. stool on balance as best I can by doing service including a regular phone shift at the Inter-Group office. I haven’t done big time stuff like chairing committees or organizing functions, but I do a lot of small time stuff. It adds up to sobriety just the same.

Helen G., Lunch Bunch group

When I joined A.A. people suggested to me that I find a home group and take a service commitment among other things. I had just come out of a rehab, had five months sober and I was very nervous about what to do next. So I just started going to the same meeting every day. I wanted to do something for service so I just started helping with the chairs and before I knew it I was making friends.

When elections came in June, right about the same time as my first anniversary, I was elected to co-chair the Friday meetings. And from then I really started getting involved with A.A.

One of the great benefits of taking a service commitment was I felt responsible. All I had to do was show up and the rest happened. I was obligated to go to the meetings on days I really didn't feel like going. And every single time that happened I was grateful I'd gone. I really heard things at those meetings that I needed to hear.

Now that the co-chair commitment has ended at my home group I have other service commitments. I take a meeting to a detox on weekends. I lead meetings when invited. I answer phones at the Inter-Group office. I stay connected with the General Service Representatives (G.S.R.'s) in my district.

A.A. service isn't my "life's work" but it's a part of my life that I enjoy. The most important thing about it is that it helps me to stay sober one day at a time.

Mark B., New But West group

2002 Bill W. Dinner Committee Chair Elected

At the December 8, 2001 quarterly Inter-Group Delegates' meeting, Bill A., Listening Post group, The Bronx, was elected to Chair the 2002 Bill W. Dinner Committee. The dinner will be held on Saturday, October 26, 2002 at the New York Marriott Marquis Hotel, Broadway @ 45th Street, Manhattan. The 2002 ticket price remains at \$90.

Public Information Committee Chair Elected

Kathleen M., 79th Street Workshop group, Manhattan, was elected to Chair Inter-Group's Public Information Committee at the December 8, 2001 quarterly Inter-Group Delegates' meeting.

Kathleen will coordinate the activities of Public Information Committees in each of the five Boroughs of New York City and Westchester County. The Public Information Committee is comprised of A.A. members trained to speak to non-A.A. groups about alcoholism and the A.A. program. Committee members speak in schools, senior citizens' centers and to community groups. Members interested in serving on the Public Information Committee are invited to submit a Public Information Volunteer Questionnaire to the Inter-Group office. The form can be downloaded from Inter-Group's website at www.nyintergroup.org

N.Y. Inter-Group's Meeting List Now Online

Effective the first week in December 2001, Inter-Group's Meeting List became accessible online at www.nyintergroup.org.

Since group's had, and continue to have, the option of listing some or all of their meetings, the Meeting List online is not a complete list of all meetings as in the printed Meeting List. However, only a few groups have opted out of the Meeting List online. Groups continue to have the option of having meetings deleted from the Meeting List online by submitting their requests in writing.

The online Meeting List is structured much the same as the printed list. Access to meeting information online is by location, keyword (any word in the group name) or zip code. Inter-Group welcomes comments or suggestions to improve the online Meeting List.

The 2002 Big Meeting Date Set

The 2002 Big Meeting, celebrating A.A.'s 67th birthday, will be held on Sunday, June 30. Once again the location will be the sixth floor Broadway Ballroom of the New York Marriott Marquis Hotel, Broadway @ 45th Street, Manhattan. The three-speaker meeting will start at 1:00 PM. Admission to The Big Meeting is free. A Seventh Tradition collection will be taken.

Cookie S., Potpourri group, Manhattan, has been elected to Chair the 2002 Big Meeting Committee.

THANKS TO PARTICIPANTS IN THE QUARTERLY INTER-GROUP DELEGATES' MEETING

This is a Gratitude List of the names of 69 groups that were represented at Inter-Group's quarterly Delegates' meeting on December 8, 2001. By their presence at the Inter-Group Delegates' meeting these groups participated in setting the policies by which the Inter-Group office functions.

BRONX (13)

A Better Life
Celebrating Sobriety
Early Morning Sobriety
Growing Up
Gunhill
Jughead
Listening Post
Marble Hill Kingsbridge
Sobriety First
Stepping Stone
Throggs Neck
We Agnostics Of The Bronx
Young And Old In AA

BROOKLYN (6)

Bedford
Greenwood
Have Faith And Survive
Pass It On
Sidney Place
Slope Open Discussion

MANHATTAN (35)

Alive Again
Bloomingdale
Carlyle
Chelsea Riverside

MANHATTAN (CONT'D)

Clean And Dry
Completely Sober
East Village
Eightieth Street
Exchange Views
Fast Break
First Things First
Greenwich Village
Hell's Kitchen
High Noon
Into Action Manhattan
Lesbian & Gay People Of Color
Living Now
Lost And Found
Lunch Bunch
Manhattan
New Life In Sobriety
Nu Garden
Oxford
P.A.X
Potpourri
Riverton
Second Avenue Clean And Dry
Seventy-Ninth Street Workshop
Spotlight On Sobriety
St. Nicholas
Sutton

MANHATTAN (CONT'D)

T.G.I.F. & S.
Trafalgar
Twelfth Street Workshop
Twenty-Two Below

QUEENS (8)

Astoria Topic
Elmhurst
Forest Hills
Men At Work
Rich Haven Splinter
Sobriety First
Sobriety Plus
Universal Springfield

STATEN ISLAND (4)

Attitude Adjustment
Eye Opener
Four O'Clock Lounge
H.O.W. (Honesty, Open Minded,
Willingness)

WESTCHESTER (3)

Bedford Village Cornerstone
Croton Harmon
Pelham

**NEW YORK INTER-GROUP
CALENDAR OF EVENTS
JANUARY & FEBRUARY, 2002**

- Jan. 2 & 17 Office Telephone and Call Forwarding and Volunteer Orientation, 6 P.M., N.Y. Inter-Group office,
Feb. 6 & 21 307 7th Avenue, (28th Street), Room 201, Manhattan, 10001. (Orientations are held 1st Wednesday,
3rd Thursday each month, any Thursday night between 6 P.M. and 10 P.M. and any Saturday
afternoon between 1:30 P.M. and 6 P.M., same time and location. No appointment necessary.
(One-year continuous sobriety required.)
- Jan. 2 Westchester Area Institutions Committee Meeting, 7 P.M., First Baptist Church, South Highland
Feb. 6 Avenue, (Route 9) (Corner of Church Street), Ossining, 10562. (Meeting is held 1st Wednesday each
month same time and location.)
- Jan. 8 Queens Area Institutions Committee Meeting, 7 P.M., Our Lady of the Cenacle School Cafeteria,
Feb. 12 87-25 136th Street, Hillside Avenue and Van Wyck Expressway), Richmond Hill, 11418. (Meeting is
held the 2nd Tuesday each month, same time and location.)
- Jan. 14 Institutions Literature Packing, 10 A.M., N.Y. Inter-Group Office, 307 7th Avenue, (28th Street),
Feb. 11 Room 201, (Between 27th & 28th Streets), Manhattan, 10001. (Meeting is held 2nd Monday each
month, same time and location.)
- Jan. 12 & 26 Spanish Language Institutions Committee Meeting, 7 P.M., Spanish Intergroup Office. (Oficina
Feb. 9 & 23 Central Hispana de A.A.), 237 East 115th Street, Manhattan, 10029. (Meeting is held 2nd and 4th
Saturday each month, same time and location.)
- Jan. 17 Manhattan Area Institutions Committee Meeting, 6:30 P.M., N.Y. Inter-Group Office, 307 7th
Feb. 21 Avenue, Room 201, (Between 27th & 28th Streets), Manhattan, 10001. (Meeting is held 3rd Thursday
each month, same time and location.)
- Jan. 18 Queens Area Forum 7:30 P.M., Old St. James Church, Annex 86-02 Broadway (@ 51st Ave.),
opposite Elmhurst Library. Elmhurst Group meeting place. (Meeting held 3rd Friday every other
month, same time and location.)
- Jan. 19 Bronx Area Forum, 11:00 A.M. to 12:30 P.M., Bedford Park Congregational Church, 3008 Bainbridge
Avenue, (Gunhill group meeting place.) (Meeting is held 3rd Saturday every other month, same time
and location.)
- Jan. 26 Brooklyn Area Institutions Committee Meeting, 1 P.M., St. Peter Claver Church, 29 Claver Place,
Feb. 23 (Jefferson Avenue, 11238.) (Meeting is held last Saturday each month, same time and location except
July and August.)
- Jan. 18 Bronx Area Institutions Committee Meeting, 8 P.M., St. Phillip Neri School Cafeteria, 3031 Grand
Feb. 15 Concourse, (201st Street, 10468) (Meeting is held the 3rd Friday each month, same time and location.)
- Jan. 28 Staten Island Area Institutions Committee Meeting, 7:30 P.M., Staten Island University Hospital,
Feb. 25 475 Seaview Avenue, 4th floor Conference room, 10305. (Meeting is held 4th Monday each month,
same time and location.)
- Feb. 6 Manhattan Area Forum, 7 P.M., N.Y. Inter-Group Office, 307 7th Ave., (28th Street), Room 201,
Manhattan, 10001.
- Feb. 16 Brooklyn Area Forum, 11:00 AM to 1:00 PM , Our Lady of Refuge Church, 2020 Foster Avenue
(@ East 21st Street, 11210. (Refuge group meeting place.)
- Feb. 16 Westchester Booking Meeting, 7:30 A.M., Memorial United Methodist Church, 250 Bryant Avenue,
(Between North and Mamaroneck Avenues), White Plains, N.Y. 10605. (Booking Meetings will also be
held 5/18/02, 8/17/02 and 11/16/02, same location and time.)
- To be Staten Island Area Forum
announced