

SOBER NEWS

NEW YORK INTER-GROUP – SPRING 2009

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

(212) 647-1680; (914) 949-1200; TDD for the deaf: (212) 647-1649; Fax: (212) 647-1648

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

E-mail: sobernews@nyintergroup.org

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.

When a Phone Line Is a Lifeline

I am very fortunate to belong to a service-oriented home group. One of our commitments is answering phones at New York Inter-Group on the first Sunday of every month. Our goal is to provide at least two volunteers for the morning shift, from 9:00 am to 1:30 pm, and the afternoon shift, from 1:30 pm to 6:00 pm.

When I first heard the call for volunteers, I had been sober for about a month, but I was really drawn to what I heard. I thought: "I can do that." It seemed easy enough. I told the group member who made the announcement that I wanted to answer the phones. The woman, now my sponsor, smiled and said that I had to be sober for at least a year to perform this service. I could not wait for my one-year anniversary! When the time finally came, I volunteered enthusiastically. I was instructed by a member of my home group who answers phones with regularity. For the first time, the scope of AA's reach became clear to me.

Calls were from people verifying a meeting time or location, from people who had never been to a meeting, from people who were in despair. There was a call from an AA who was moving to our area and wanted to connect with AA right away. I gave her the names of several meetings, one of which was my home group. Imagine my happy surprise when she introduced herself at our meeting, stating that she was there thanks to a phone volunteer at New York Inter-Group!

I love the feeling of usefulness and the satisfaction of helping another alcoholic. It is a crucial way to help, whether it is as simple as confirming the time and place of a meeting or as sensitive as guiding a suffering and frightened caller to a meeting as soon as possible.

I have also found great joy in the fellowship which takes place among volunteers during the shift. Our wonderful conversations are often about our experiences before and after we found AA. I have learned a great deal from my fellow volunteers, one result of which been closer relationships with members of my home group. There is laughter, too, and conversations about books, movies and life in general. I sometimes take "projects" with me to fill the downtime - I almost never complete them. The time, filled with laughter and good conversation, flies by! Answering the phones at New York Inter-Group is one of my favorite ways to be of service. I volunteer on a regular basis, usually signing up with one of my closest friends in the program. It has become our tradition to answer phones during our anniversary months, as well as at several other times throughout the year. The hours I have spent in that office have been very happy ones: I always look forward to the next time! I am grateful to be a sober member of AA and to have been given the opportunity to be of service to others. I have come to feel more connected, not only to the members of my own group, but to AA as a whole. Thank you for my sobriety and for my life.

Lisa C., Manhattan

THE THEME OF THE 2009 BILL W. DINNER IS "A VISION FOR YOU"

**The ticket lottery is fun and friendly and full of fellowship!
Keep the date open!**

When:

June 4, 2009 at 7 pm

Where:

The New York Hilton Hotel – Murray Hill Suite on the 2nd floor
1335 Avenue of the Americas (between 53rd and 54th Streets)
New York, NY 10019

**Last day to nominate a speaker for the Bill W. Dinner: Monday,
May 11, 2009 – don't miss out!**

Hope Within a Different Kind of Bars

After I had been sober for about a year, I was elected alternate representative for my home group to what is now named the New York Inter-Group Corrections and Treatments Facilities Committee, whose monthly meetings I attended. We were asked to announce at meetings that there were unfilled requests for AA meetings at area institutions. Since I went to meetings all over the city, I made this announcement whenever I could.

It was not long before I volunteered to bring a meeting to an institution. Our committee chair arranged for me to take a monthly meeting to Rikers Island Jail.

Although I had been arrested a few times while I was active, I had never really served any time. I was not sure that this would be a good commitment for me. Nevertheless, I started taking a meeting to Rikers Island.

I brought my sponsor to my first meeting at the jail. We had a great meeting. The inmates that showed up were grateful to us for carrying the message.

Doing this service really changed my sobriety. I looked forward to that monthly meeting. I continued to go to the monthly committee meeting and, to my surprise, I was elected to be the Manhattan corrections co-chair.

I had had no experience other than the meeting that I was taking to Rikers Island, but I kept showing up at the Manhattan and the all-area committee meetings, and, over time, I learned a lot about carrying the message inside prison walls.

After two years as corrections co-chair, I was elected corrections chair through June 2009. This service has been a huge part of my sobriety. I have come to realize that this is good, solid Twelfth-Step work. I believe that it is a gift to be able to carry the message to incarcerated alcoholics who cannot get to the meetings they crave. When I became committee chair, I rotated out of my Rikers Island commitment. As I prepare to leave my position as committee chair, I have submitted the paper work necessary for approval to carry the message to Sing Sing Correctional Facility in Ossining, New York.

I am deeply grateful to AA for my sobriety. This service has played a powerful role in my ongoing sobriety.

I am looking forward to the annual Corrections and Treatments Facilities Committee conference on February 21. I hope that by the time this article appears, I will have had the pleasure of seeing you there!

John C., Manhattan



Art by Lord C., Manhattan

Sober News is Online, Too

Sober News can be viewed online, at nyintergroup.org. Click on the *newsletter* link. You will need a .pdf-file reader to open *Sober News* online.

Are your name and number on file at New York Inter-Group for Twelfth-Step calls?

Has being an inter-group delegate enhanced your sobriety? Share your **SOBER NEWS with us by mail, E-mail or fax, shown at the top of page one of this issue.**

A caller asks:

What Is the Big Meeting???

IG volunteer: AA, can I help you?

Caller: I'm a newly elected inter-group delegate. My group has asked for information about the Big Meeting. What is that?

IG volunteer: The Big Meeting, first held in 1989, is an annual open meeting, with three speakers, sponsored by New York Inter-Group, held in June to honor the June 10, 1935, founding of AA.

Caller: How are the three speakers selected?

IG volunteer: Any AA member can nominate a speaker for the Big Meeting. The chair of the speaker-selection committee, for which any AA member can volunteer, schedules meetings at which the nominees can be heard by the speaker-selection committee. The committee votes for three speakers and two alternate speakers, the choices subject to ratification by the New York Inter-Group Steering Committee and by inter-group delegates at their quarterly meeting prior to the event. Nominees must be a member of an AA group in one of the five New York City boroughs or in Westchester County. You can mail your nomination to the New York Inter-Group office or fax it to (212) 647-1648. **The deadline to nominate a speaker for the June 2009 Big Meeting is Monday, March 23, 2009.**

Caller: Who plans the Big Meeting?

IG volunteer: Responsibility for chairing the Big Meeting rotates among the five boroughs of New York City and Westchester County. Usually in December, the next year's responsible area forum nominates a candidate, whose selection is subject to ratification by the New York Inter-Group Steering Committee and by inter-group delegates at their quarterly meeting.

* * * * *

Sobriety, Service and Scrabble

"There's a meeting right down your street. Can you make it there tonight?" Tom, who answers phones at New York Inter-Group, still recalls that friendly voice he heard years ago, when he made the crucial call that turned out to be his introduction to AA. He now finds great satisfaction in being on the other end of the phone for the same kind of calls. Tom and scores of other telephone volunteers at our inter-group office provide the most basic link between AA and its members - and potential members - anonymously

dispensing facts, schedules, encouragement, inspiration and good cheer for seventeen hours of every day. It is a basic way to practice the Twelfth Step, a very particular kind of service that appeals to a broad range of people, and might well appeal to you.

Answering phones at inter-group provides a special and individual service from one alcoholic to another: The caller asks for help and the telephone volunteer provides it, whatever it is. The calls are wonderfully varied: "I forgot my meeting book; is that beginners' meeting on 67th Street or 68th Street?" "I'll be in New York next week, and would like some evening step meetings." "Is there a meeting near downtown Brooklyn in the next hour?" "I'm not sure I'm really an alcoholic, but" Now and then someone calls just to "check in," knowing he or she will find another alcoholic willing to talk for a moment, to ease away a bit of fear or loneliness. The most rewarding calls of all are the ones from newcomers making their very first contact with AA. Sometimes you will know because they tell you. Or you might guess it from the questions they ask: How much does it cost? Do I need a reservation or a ticket? What should I wear? But however such a call begins, it puts the volunteer on the front line in a very special way, keeping it about as green as it can get: "When anyone, anywhere, reaches out for help, I want the hand of AA always to be there"

The working shifts are four or four and a half hours - morning, afternoon, evening or late night - and you can sign up for the same shift every week or different shifts in different weeks, on or off, or any other schedule that fits into the rest of your life, with complete flexibility. On some shifts, a particular AA group will sign up for two or three slots, undertaking to provide trained volunteers from the group. The late shift, from 10 pm to 2 am, is staffed by a volunteer who takes the calls at home, forwarded there automatically after the office is closed.

When it is open, the office, on Seventh Avenue between 27th and 28th streets, is a lively place. There are three full-time employees, but most of the people hanging around are volunteers, and though their mission is serious they mostly have a good time fulfilling it. One night the phone volunteers usually order in Indian food; another night is Scrabble night. Working the phones also provides an interesting vantage from which to see the inner workings of the place - the committees and the office structure that keep AA alive. But first and foremost, it is a service of the most direct kind, between the person who makes the call, for whatever reason, and the person who answers it: "AA, can I help you?" All you need is one year of sobriety and twenty minutes of orientation. Come on down!

Bill B., Manhattan

* * * * *

New York Inter-Group Calendar of Events, Mar. Apr. May 2009

Office Telephone & Call-Forwarding Volunteer Orientation, NY Inter-Group, 307 7th Ave, @ 27th & 28th Sts, Rm 201, Manh, 10001. Orientations are held Mon morning; betw. 9 am. & 1:30 pm, Wed, Thu & Fri betw. 6 pm & 9 pm & Sat afternoon betw. 1:30 pm & 6 pm. No appointment needed for those time periods. If you are unable to attend one of the listed times, call an Inter-Group staff member at (212) 647-1680 to arrange an orientation. One year's continuous sobriety is required to answer phones at NY Inter-Group.

March 10th Group Relations Committee Mtg, 6:30 pm., NY Inter-Group, 307 7th Ave, @ 27th & 28th Sts, Rm 201, Manh, 10001.

March 10th Westchester Corrections and Treatment Facilities Committee Mtg, 7:30 pm, @ Immaculate Conception Church, 199 N. Bway, 2nd fl, Tarrytown Pocantico Hills: 1 mtg place. @ College Ave, Rte 9. Sleepy Hollow, 10591. Meets the 2nd Tue each month same time & location.

March 14th Corrections & Treatment Facilities Literature Packing, 10 am @ NY Inter-Group, 307 7th Ave, @ 27th & 28th Sts, Rm 201, Manh, 10001, 2nd Sat of month, same time, loc. **Newcomers always welcome.**

March 14th Spanish-Language Corrections & Treatment Facilities Committee Mtg, 3:00 pm, Spanish Inter-Group, Oficina Central Hispania de AA, 2234 First Ave @ 120th St, Manh, 10029. 2nd Sat of month.

March 19th Manhattan Corrections & Treatment Facilities Committee Mtg, 6:30 pm, @ NY Inter-Group, 307 7th Ave, Rm 201, @ 27th & 28th Sts, Manh, 10001. Meets on the 3rd Thu each month, same time & location.

March 19th Queens Corrections & Treatment Facilities Committee Mtg, 7 P.M., Christ Congregational Church 85-27 91st St, @ 85th Road Church Hall, Grnd Fl, Qns, NY 11421. 3rd Thu of month, same time & location.

March 20th Bronx Corrections & Treatment Facilities Committee Mtg, 7:00 pm, @ St. Nicholas of Tolentine, @ Fordham Rd & Andrews Ave, Univ. Hgths group mtg place, Bx, 10468. 3rd Fri of month, same time & location.

March 21st Westchester Area Forum, 9:30 am, First Baptist Church, in the Wilson House, Bryant Ave & North St, enter parking lot on Bryant Ave, White Plains, 10605. Meets every other month, same time & location.

March 21st Bronx Area Forum, 11:00 am to 12:30 pm, Bedford Park Congregational Church, 3008 Bainbridge Ave, Gunhill group mtg place, Bx, 10458. Mtg is on the 3rd Sat every other month, same time & location.

March 21st Brooklyn Area Forum, 2:00 pm, Queen of All Saints Church, 300 Vanderbilt Ave, betw. Lafayette & Dekalb Aves, Bklyn, 11205. Army Plaza group mtg place, 3rd Sat every other month, same time & location.

March 21st Queens Area Forum, 4:00 pm, Our Savior Lutheran School, 64-33 Woodhaven Blvd @64th Dr., Qns, 11374, 3rd Sat every other month, same time & location.

March 21st 2009 Big Mtg Planning Committee Mtg, 1:00 pm @ NY Inter-Group, 307 7th Ave, @ 27th & 28th Sts, Rm 201, Manh, 10001.

March 23rd Staten Island Corrections & Treatment Facilities Committee Mtg, 7:00 pm, How Club 552 Port Richmond Ave, SI, 10302, 4th Mon ea. month, same time & location.

March 28th Brooklyn Corrections & Treatment Facilities Committee Mtg, 1:00 pm, 103 Quincy St, betw. Franklin & Classon Aves, bsmt, Bklyn, 11238. Last Sat of mo., same time & location.

April TBA 2009: 1. Bill W. Dinner Planning Committee Mtg. @ NY Inter-Group, 307 7th Ave, @ 27th & 28th Sts), Rm 201, Manh, 10001. Call the office for further information. **2. Big Mtg Planning Committee Mtg**, @ NY Inter-Group, 307 7th Ave, @ 27th & 28th Sts, Rm 201, Manh, 10001. Call the office for additl information. **3. Telephone Volunteers Committee Mtg**, 6:30 pm, NY Inter-Group, 307 7th Ave, (@ 27th & 28th Sts), Rm 201, Manh, 10001. Every other month; call for date & time.

April 11th Corrections & Treatment Facilities Literature Packing, 10 am, NY Inter-Group, 307 7th Ave, @ 27th & 28th Sts, Rm 201, Manh, 10001: the 2nd Sat of each month, same time & location. **Newcomers always welcome**

April 11th Spanish Language Corrections & Treatment Facilities Committee Mtg, 3:00 pm., Spanish Inter-Group, Oficina Central Hispania de AA, 2234 First Ave @ 120th St, Manh, 10029. Mtg is on the 2nd Sat ea. month, same time & location.

April 14th Manhattan Area Forum, 7 pm, NY Inter-Group, 307 7th Ave. @ 27th & 28th Sts, Rm 201, Manh, 10001. Every other month, same time & location.

April 14th Westchester Corrections & Treatment Facilities Committee Mtg, 7:30 pm, @ Immaculate Conception Church, 199 N. Bway, 2nd fl, Tarrytown Pocantico Hills; 1 group mtg place, @ College Ave & Rte 9, Sleepy Hollow, 10591. 2nd Tue of month.

April 16th Manhattan Corrections & Treatment Facilities Committee Mtg, 6:30 pm, NY Inter-Group, 307 7th Ave, Rm 201, @ 27th & 28th Sts, Manh, 10001. 3rd Thu ea. month, same time & location.

April 16th Queens Corrections & Treatment Facilities Committee Mtg, 7 pm, Christ Congregational Ch. 85-27 91st St, @ 85th Rd Church Hall on Grnd Floor, Qns, NY 11421. 3rd Thu of month, same time & location.

April 16th Staten Island Area Forum, 7:30 pm., Immanuel Lutheran Church, 2018 Richmond Ave, between Rockland Ave & Signs Rd, SI, 10314. Mtg is held every other month, same time & location.

April 17th Bronx Corrections & Treatment Facilities Committee Mtg, 7:00 pm, St. Nicholas of Tolentine, @ Fordham Rd and Andrews Ave, Univ. Hgths group mtg place, Bx, 10468. 3rd Fri of month, same time & location.

April 25th Brooklyn Corrections & Treatment Facilities Committee Mtg, 1 pm, 103 Quincy St, Betw. Franklin & Classon Aves, Bsmt, Daily Reflection Workshop group mtg place, Bklyn, 11238, on the last Sat ea. month, same time & location.

April 27th Staten Island Corrections & Treatment Facilities Committee Mtg, 7:00 pm, How Club, 552 Pt Richmond Ave, SI, 10302. 4th Mon of month.

May TBA 2009: 1. Big Mtg Planning Committee Mtg. @ NY Inter-Group, 307 7th Ave, @ 27th & 28th Sts, Rm 201, Manhattan, 10001. Please call the office for the date and time. **2. Bill W. Dinner Planning Committee Mtg.** @ NY Inter-Group, 307 7th Ave, @ 27th & 28th Sts), Rm 201, Manhattan, 10001. Please call the office for the date & time. **3. Group Relations Committee Mtg.** NY Inter-Group, 307 7th Ave, @ 27th & 28th Sts, Rm 201, Manhattan, 10001. Mtgs held monthly at NY Inter-Group; please call for date & time. **4. Telephone Volunteers Committee Mtg**, NY Inter-Group, 307 7th Ave, @ 27th & 28th Sts), Rm 201, Manh, 10001. Every other mo.; call for date, time.

May 9th Corrections & Treatment Facilities Literature Packing, 10 am, @ NY Inter-Group, 307 7th Ave, @ 27th & 28th Sts, Rm 201, Manh, 10001. Literature packing is done on the 2nd Sat of ea. month, same time & location. **Newcomers always welcome.**

May 9th Spanish Language Corrections & Treatment Facilities Committee Mtg, 3:00 pm, Spanish Inter-Group, Oficina Central Hispania de AA, 2234 First Ave @ 120th St, Manh, 10029, 2nd Sat of month, same time & location.

May 12th Westchester Corrections & Treatment Facilities Committee Mtg, 7:30 pm, @ Immaculate Conception Church, 199 N. Bway, 2nd fl, Tarrytown Pocantico Hills: 1 mtg place. @ College Ave & Rte 9, Sleepy Hollow, 10591. Meets on the 2nd Tue ea. month same time & location.

May 15th Bronx Corrections & Treatment Facilities Committee Mtg, 7:00 pm, @ St. Nicholas of Tolentine, @ Fordham Rd & Andrews Ave, Univ. Hgths group mtg place, Bx, 10468; the 3rd Fri ea. month, same time & location.

May 16th Westchester Area Forum, 9:30 am, First Baptist Church, in the Wilson House, Bryant Ave & North St, enter parking lot on Bryant Ave, White Plains, 10605. Mtg is held every other month, same time & location

May 16th Bronx Area Forum, 11:00 am to 12:30 pm, Bedford Park Congregational Church, 3008 Bainbridge Ave, Gunhill group mtg place, Bx, 10458. Mtg is on the 3rd Sat every other month, same time & location.

May 16th Brooklyn Area Forum, 2:00 pm, Queen of All Saints Church, 300 Vanderbilt Ave, betw. Lafayette & Dekalb Aves, Bklyn, 11205. Army Plaza group mtg place. Meets the 3rd Sat every other month, same time & location.

May 16th Queens Area Forum, 4:00 pm, Our Savior Lutheran School, 64-33 Woodhaven Blvd @64th Dr., Qns, 11374, Location of Share-A-Thons, etc. Mtg held on the 3rd Sat every other month, same time & location.

May 16th Westchester Booking Mtg, 6:30 am, Memorial United Methodist Church, 250 Bryant Ave, Betw. North & Mamaroneck Aves, White Plains, 10605. Booking mtgs will also be held 8/15/09 & 11/21/09.

May 21st Manhattan Corrections & Treatment Facilities Committee Mtg, 6:30 pm, @ NY Inter-Group, 307 7th Ave, Rm 201, @ 27th & 28th Sts, Manh, 10001. Mtg is on the 3rd Thu ea. month, same time & location.

May 21st Queens Corrections & Treatment Facilities Committee Mtg, 7 pm, Christ Congregational Church 85-27 91st St, @ 85th Rd Church Hall, Grnd Fl, Qns, 11421, on the 3rd Thu ea. month, same time & location.

May 25th Staten Island Corrections & Treatment Facilities Committee Mtg, 7:00 pm, How Club 252A Port Richmond Ave, SI, 10302. Mtg is held on the 4th Mon ea. month, same time & location.

May 30th Brooklyn Corrections & Treatment Facilities Committee Mtg, 1:00 pm, 103 Quincy St, betw. Franklin & Classon Aves, bsmt, Bklyn, 11238, on the last Sat ea. month, same time & location.