

SOBER NEWS

NEW YORK INTER-GROUP – WINTER 2009

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

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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.

Getting Through the Holidays

I walked through the doors of AA for my first meeting (a Traditions meeting, no less) two weeks before Thanksgiving, three weeks before my 40th birthday and six weeks before Christmas. Not to mention another pending holiday many AA members affectionately call Amateur Night: New Year's Eve. Although I was by no means brimming with enthusiasm for the "AA way of life," I was extremely grateful to hear a lot of practical sharing in meetings about how to get through the holidays and all the seasonal festivities without picking up a drink. Or, for that matter, how to get through a day, any day, without picking up a drink. Both seemed highly improbable propositions for a drunk like me. I couldn't remember the last time twenty-four hours came and went without a drink.

What I heard was a powerful mix of the practical and the spiritual, like the program of AA itself. Go to a meeting. Talk to your sponsor or another recovering alcoholic. Rely on a power greater than yourself. Go to the party late and leave early. Get a soda and never let it leave your hand. Ask someone to go with you. Don't get too hungry, angry, lonely or tired. Help another alcoholic. Go to another meeting.

This was all startlingly new to me and I was thankful that people were making a special effort to share on this topic (I thought it was just for me...) during a season that can pose a particular challenge for the alcoholic, newcomer and old-timer alike. The holidays no doubt present their special challenges. Alcohol is flowing and it's a family disease. Sometimes it can feel a little like just "getting through" them. But today, after a few seasons of self-inflicted alcoholic anxiety, I have learned to enjoy the holidays and view them, as the 12th -Step essay says of life, not as something "to be endured or mastered." Thanks to the program I have learned to experience the sturdy joy of a sober holiday, the true spirit of giving thanks, the freshness of new beginnings and the welcome glow of light in a sometimes darkened world, all the time remembering, first and foremost, that I am an alcoholic. Along with the challenges, certainly, there is also the opportunity to reconnect with gratitude for the second chance at life AA has given me. After all, as a recovering alcoholic I have suggestions, tools, principles, steps, traditions, the fellowship of AA and a higher power to help me live life on a daily basis, whether it's a holiday or just another manic Monday. So, when the calendar advances and the sharing turns to "how to get through the holidays," I always remember those early days and the gift the members of AA gave me by keeping it simple and

sharing what I needed to hear when I needed to hear it. It was the holiday present I needed most.

Many newcomers now face their first holiday season without a drink and, thanks to AA, each has the chance to discover, as I did, that they don't have to pick up a drink today and that a holiday is not something to be endured or mastered.

Lyle S., Manhattan

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Hooray! The Holidays are Coming!

Is your group planning a special meeting or alkathon, a party, a dance, an open house, or any other celebration of the season? Are there holidays when your meeting will be closed? New York Inter-Group needs to know so we can **spread the word!** Looking for a special event for the holidays? **Call New York Inter-Group for the scoop!**



My Experience As Corrections Representative For My Home Group

At my sponsor's suggestion, I took the commitment to be my home group's corrections representative, and I'm really glad I did. The first order of business was to attend meetings of the New York Inter-Group Manhattan Corrections and Treatment Facilities Committee meeting. With the help of the committee's chair & co-chair, I selected the prison to which I hoped to carry AA meetings. I brought a recommendation to my home group's business meeting, and it was made group conscience. The group conscience was to have co-chairs who would alternate in taking the monthly AA meeting to the facility. At that very meeting, two group members volunteered to undertake the commitments.

I had to do some research to figure out how to fulfill the prison's requirements for volunteers. Before a volunteer can bring a meeting into this prison, they're required to get a tuberculosis test, which requires two trips. You get a skin prick one day, and go back exactly two days later for the results. If you're negative, you can go on to the next step. Group conscience was that I find a clinic that gives free tests, and I did.

Then, volunteers go to the prison to get fingerprinted and fill out the forms so the prison can run a background check, which can take as much as two weeks. Once volunteers have been cleared, and have completed a two-hour orientation, they can start taking AA meetings into the facility.

My commitment eventually required me to find volunteers by posting flyers and making announcements at AA meetings. I had to find an organization that offers free TB Tests, and schedule the fingerprinting and orientations, which are done at different locations.

The prison I work with is very AA-friendly, which is not always the case. No matter how supportive the institution is, we have vastly different goals. Our priority is to "carry the message to the still suffering alcoholic" and, at the end of the day, theirs is to wind up with the same number of prisoners that they started with. By this time I had done the hard part, and replicating my effort seemed pretty simple, so I asked my group if they'd be open to two meetings, one on the first and one on the second Thursday of each month. My home group and the prison gave me the go-ahead, which meant two more co-chairs were needed--and needed to go through this entire process.

Before my year-long commitment was finished, the prison administration asked if my group would bring in two additional meetings on Mondays and Tuesdays, so every inmate would have an opportunity to attend an AA meeting. I took this request to my home group's business meeting, and providing the additional meetings became group conscience. I then needed four additional volunteers who needed to go through all the steps required for orientation. Everyone who takes it on loves this service. We recognize that "there, but for the grace of God, go I," because we, too, could have ended up behind bars. One of my volunteers was once incarcerated in the correctional facility to which he now brings meetings.

So many of the suggestions we're given in AA carry with them hidden benefits. It's said that: "AA is talk therapy." That's why it's commonly suggested that we get numbers and call several sober alcoholics every day—and some may then become part of our support group. This commitment required me to call eleven other alcoholics regularly—my volunteers, my alternate and New York Inter-Group's Manhattan corrections chair and co-chair. It's not a coincidence that my mental state and spiritual condition

were improved by the inevitable "talk therapy" that found its way into our conversations. Add to that the benefit of having eleven solidly sober people's numbers, which I wouldn't have had otherwise, in my cell phone - and it's clear how valuable this service has been for me: I doubled the number of members of my support group.

It's been a lot of work, and I couldn't have managed it, or maintained a presence at all the meetings, without the invaluable help of my alternate, Danielle. And guess what? She's become a good, sober friend!

By accepting a commitment I sent myself a clear message that I was committed to my own recovery. It boosted my self-esteem to perform esteemable acts, and it placed me in the rooms of AA more often—to give my volunteers packets of literature for their prison meetings, and to find new volunteers as they were needed. And, best of all, I was able to give back what was so freely given to me, by carrying the message to the still-suffering alcoholic, which is important enough to be half of our Twelfth Step.

Lord C., Manhattan

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Volunteer Committee's Annual Holiday Party

December 18th

10 A.M. until 9 P.M.

@ New York Inter-Group Office, 307 7th Avenue, @ 27th & 28th Streets, Room 201, Manhattan, 10001.

Food, beverages and snacks will be served throughout the day.

All are welcome.

Corrections and Treatment Facilities Committee's 3rd Annual Conference

Saturday February 13th 9am to 2:30pm

PS 41, 116 W 11th St @ 6th Ave.

Panel discussions

Lunch will be served

Open to everyone

A caller asks:

I am newly sober...

IG volunteer: AA, can I help you?

Caller: I've been sober for a year and a half and I am so bored - no clubs, no parties, no fun. My sponsor said I should call you and find out what's going on. Can you help me?

IG volunteer: Yes, I can. We have a full calendar of events, all aimed at carrying the AA message through New York Inter-Group's service committees. It has been our experience that doing this kind of service lets us meet more AA members and have a much more interesting life.

Caller: Last year was my first sober holiday season, and it was awful! What should I do this year?

IG volunteer: NY Inter-Group keeps a list of holiday activities put on by the area AA groups. Activities include alkathons, dances, group-anniversary celebrations, parties and open houses. Call the inter-group office and simply ask what special events have been planned.

Caller: Ever since I stopped drinking, I feel so self-conscious at any kind of social event

IG volunteer: Most of us felt that way at first. It helped to find out that other people feel the same way. We felt safe and we found that it got easier to go to social events.

Caller: What else can I do?

IG volunteer: Volunteers are needed to answer the phones at NY Inter-Group 365 days a year. There are likely to be more calls at this time of year. It is vital that there always be a sober AA member at the other end of the line to offer help and hope. Every day, about a dozen volunteers are needed to fully staff the phone lines in three shifts which run from morning until 10 PM.

Caller: What do I do – just walk in?

IG volunteer: Visitors are always welcome – this is your inter-group. Volunteers need to attend an orientation and sign up in the phone-volunteers' scheduling book.

Caller: Is anything special planned for New Year's Eve?

IG volunteer: Yes. There's an open house at NY Inter-Group on New Year's Eve, and all-night alkathons – in English and Spanish. Many AA groups hold special events, as well. The phone volunteers maintain and update the list of events planned for the holiday season.

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

Service: The Gift That Keeps Giving

On Tuesday evenings, I take an AA meeting to Arthur Kill Correctional Facility on Staten Island. This is a medium-security facility under the New York State Department of Correctional Services (familarly known as DOCS). This is a men's facility, so imagine my amazement when I was invited to join the New Birth Awareness Group AA Meeting! There are meetings on Sunday (open discussion), Tuesday (Big Book), Thursday (12 Steps and 12 Traditions). The facility would like to open a Saturday-afternoon meeting, too, whose format has not been formalized. Last Tuesday, I was waiting for the "count to clear," which allows time for head count of all inmates before "movement" is called, when it is time to walk to designated areas (like in the old days of school when the bell rang between class periods). I started reading "AA Around the World," one of the several books I was bringing to the group. The stories are truly inspirational. It was when this book was first introduced at the 2000 International Convention in Minneapolis that I purchased it. At the meeting, we read all of the prefaces, up to the "Doctor's Opinion" of AA from the Big Book. Then we opened the meeting for what was lively and enlightening discussion. The energy these folks bring to the meetings is uplifting. I become the only female member to claim the New Birth Awareness Group as a second home group. What a joy and a privilege! On my way home from these meetings, whatever was bothering me on the way to the meeting has long since ceased to matter. For a priceless gift that keeps on giving, I recommend getting a second home group! I am right-sized, with my fellow members of the New Birth Awareness Group!

*Amylynn K., Staten Island;
SENY-Intergroup Liaison*

NY Inter-Group belongs to you:

Has your group considered inviting speakers from New York Inter-Group to lead your meeting? You'll hear a great story; a little about how the volunteers at New York Inter-Group make life-saving connections with the still-suffering alcoholic; and what kind of service opportunities are available at New York Inter-Group. For more information or to schedule New York Inter-Group speakers to come to your group, please contact Sean K. at the New York Inter-Group office at (212) 647-1680; or Dorothy D., Group Relations Committee Chair, at (212) 683-3779.

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New York Inter-Group Calendar of Events, Dec 2009; Jan-Feb 2010:

Office Telephone and Call-Forwarding Volunteer Orientation, **New York Inter-Group**, 307 7th Ave, @ 27th & 28th Sts, Rm 201, Manhattan, 10001. Orientations are held Mon morning; betw. 9 A.M. and 1:30 P.M.; Wed, Thu, Fri betw. 6 P.M. and 9 P.M. and Sat afternoon betw. 1:30 P.M. & 6 P.M. No appointment is necessary for those time periods. If you cannot attend one of the listed times, contact a NY Inter-Group staff member at (212) 647-1680 to arrange a convenient orientation time. One year's continuous sobriety is required to answer phones at NY Inter-Group.

December 16th: Manhattan Area Forum, 7 P.M., New York Inter-Group Office, 307 7th Ave, @ 27th & 28th Sts, Rm 201, Manhattan, 10001. Meets every other month, same time/location. Call New York-Group for the date.

December 17th: Manhattan Corrections & Treatment Facilities Committee Mtg, 6:30 P.M., New York Inter-Group, 307 7th Ave, Rm 201, @ 27th & 28th Sts, Manhattan, 10001. Meets 3rd Thu each month, same time/location.

December 17th : Queens Corrections and Treatment Facilities Committee Mtg, 7 P.M., Christ Congregational church 85-27 91st St, @ 85th Rd Church Hall on Grnd Floor Woodhaven, NY 11421. 3rd Thu each month, same time/location.

December 17th: Staten Island Area Forum, 7:30 P.M., Immanuel Lutheran Church 2018 Richmond Ave Betw. Rockland Ave & Signs Road Staten Island, N.Y. 10314. Meets every other month, same time/ location.

December 18th: Volunteer Committee Annual Holiday Party, 10 A.M. - 9 P.M. @ New York Inter-Group Office, 307 7th Ave, @ 27th & 28th Sts, Rm 201, Manhattan, 10001. Food, beverages, snacks will be served throughout the day. **Newcomers are always welcome.**

December 18th: Bronx Corrections & Treatment Facilities Committee Mtg, 7:00 P.M., St. Nicholas of Tolentine, @ Fordham Road & Andrews Ave, University Heights group mtg place Bronx, 10468 Meeting is held on the 3rd Fri each month, same time/location.

December 26th: Brooklyn Corrections & Treatment Facilities Committee Mtg, 1 P.M., 103 Quincy St, betw. Franklin & Classon Aves, Basement, Daily Reflection Workshop group mtg place, Brooklyn, 11238. Meets last Sat each month, same time/location.

December 28th: Staten Island Corrections & Treatment Facilities Committee Mtg, 7:00 P.M., How Club 552 Port Richmond Ave, Staten Island, N.Y. 10302. Meets 4th Mon each month, same time/location. Orientation at 6:30pm, mtg starts at 7:00pm.

December 31st: New York Inter-Group New Year's Eve Alkathon, 10 P.M. until 9 A.M. Open discussion mtgs will be held in English & Spanish @ New York Inter-Group Office, 307 7th Ave, @ 27th & 28th Sts, Rm 201, Manhattan, 10001. If you are interested in answering phones or chairing a meeting during the Alkathon, please call the New York Inter-Group office at 212-647-1680

January 4th: Telephone Volunteers Committee Mtg, 6:30 P.M., New York Inter-Group Office, 307 7th Ave, (@ 27th & 28th Sts), Rm 201, New York, NY 10001. (Meets every other month; call New York Inter-Group for date & time.

January 9th: Corrections & Treatment Facilities Literature Packing, 10 A.M., @ N.Y. Inter-Group Office, 307 7th Ave, @ 27th & 28th Sts, Rm 201, New York, NY 10001. Literature packing is done on the 2nd Sat of each month, same time/location. Newcomers always welcome.

January 9th: Spanish-Language Corrections & Treatment Facilities Committee Mtg, 3:00 P.M., Spanish Intergroup Office, Oficina Central Hispania de A.A., 2234 First Ave @ 120th St New York, NY 10029. Meets 2nd Sat each month, same time/location.

January 12th: Westchester Corrections & Treatment Facilities Committee Mtg, 7:30 P.M., @ Immaculate Conception Church, 199 North Broadway, 2nd floor, Tarrytown Pocantico Hills: 1 meeting place. @ College Ave, Rte 9. Sleepy Hollow, NY 10591. Meets 2nd Tue each month, same time/location.

January 15th: Bronx Corrections & Treatment Facilities Committee Mtg, 7:00 P.M., @ St. Nicholas of Tolentine, @ Fordham Road and Andrews Ave, University Heights group meeting place, Bronx, NY 10468 Meets 3rd Fri each month, same time/location.

January 16th: Westchester Area Forum, 9:30 A.M., First Baptist Church, in the Wilson House, Bryant Ave and North St, enter parking lot on Bryant Ave, White Plains, NY 10605. Meets every other month, same time/location.

January 16th: Bronx Area Forum, 11:00 A.M. to 12:30 P.M., Bedford Park Congregational Church, 3008 Bainbridge Ave, Gunhill group mtg place, Bronx, NY 10458. Meets 3rd Sat every other month, same time/location.

January 16th: Brooklyn Area Forum, 2:00 P.M., Queen of All Saints Church, 300 Vanderbilt Ave, betw. Lafayette & Dekalb Ave Brooklyn, NY 11205. Army Plaza group mtg place. Meets 3rd Sat every other month, same time/location.

January 16th: Queens Area Forum, 4:00 P.M., Good Shepherd Methodist Church, 30-44 Crescent Street Astoria, NY 11102. Enter on 30th Road; mtg is in the bsmt. Meets 3rd Sat every other month, same time/location.

January 21st: Manhattan Corrections & Treatment Facilities Committee Mtg, 6:30 P.M., @ N.Y. Inter-Group Office, 307 7th Ave, Rm 201, @ 27th & 28th Sts, New York, NY 10001. Meets 3rd Thu each month, same time/location.

January 21st: Queens Corrections & Treatment Facilities Committee Mtg, 7 P.M., Christ Congregational church 85-27 91st St, @ 85th Road Church Hall on Grnd Floor Woodhaven, NY 11421. 3rd Thu each month, same time/location.

January 25th: Staten Island Corrections & Treatment Facilities Committee Mtg, 7:00pm, How Club 552 Pt Richmond Ave, Staten Island, NY 10302. Meets 4th Mon each month, same time/location. Orientation, 6:30pm, mtg, 7:00pm.

January 30th: Brooklyn Corrections & Treatment Facilities Committee Mtg, 1:00 P.M., 103 Quincy St, betw. Franklin & Classon Aves, bsmt, Daily Reflection Workshop group mtg place, Brooklyn, NY 11238. Meets last Sat each month, same time/location.

Jan TBA: Group Relations Committee Mtg, New York Inter-Group Office, 307 7th Ave, @ 27th & 28th Sts, Rm 201, Manhattan, 10001. For more information regarding this mtg, call the New York Inter-Group at (212) 647-1680.

Jan TBA: 2010 Big Mtg Planning Committee Kick-Off Mtg, @ New York Inter-Group Office, 307 7th Ave, @ 27th & 28th Sts, Rm 201, New York, NY 10001. For more information, call New York Inter-Group at (212) 647-1680.

Jan TBA: 2010 Bill W. Dinner Planning Committee Kick-Off Mtg, @ New York Inter-Group Office, 307 7th Ave, @ 27th & 28th Sts, Rm 201, New York, NY 10001. For more information, call New York Inter-Group at (212) 647-1680.

February 9th: Westchester Corrections & Treatment Facilities Committee Mtg, 7:30 P.M., @ Immaculate Conception Church, 199 North Broadway, 2nd floor, Tarrytown Pocantico Hills: 1 group mtg place, @ College Ave, Rte 9, Sleepy Hollow N.Y. 10591. Meets 2nd Tue each month, same time/location.

February 13th: Corrections & Treatment Facilities Literature Packing, 10 A.M., New York Inter-Group Office, 307 7th Ave, @ 27th & 28th Sts, Rm 201, Manhattan, 10001. Literature packing is done on the 2nd Sat of each month, same time/location. **Newcomers always welcome.**

February 13th: Corrections & Treatment Facilities Committee's 3rd Annual Conf, 9:00 A.M.-2:30 P.M., @ PS 41, 116 W 11th St @ 6th Ave, Manh, 10013.

February 13th: Spanish Language Corrections & Treatment Facilities Committee Mtg, 3:00 P.M., Spanish Intergroup Office, Oficina Central Hispania de A.A., 2234 First Ave @ 120th St, New York New York, 10029. Meets 2nd Sat each month, same time/location.

February 18th: Manhattan Corrections & Treatment Facilities Committee Mtg, 6:30 P.M., New York Inter-Group Office, 307 7th Ave, Rm 201, @ 27th & 28th Sts, Manhattan, 10001. Meets 3rd Thursday each month, same time/location.

February 18th: Queens Corrections & Treatment Facilities Committee Mtg, 7:00 P.M., Christ Congregational church 85-27 91st St, @ 85th Rd Church Hall, Grnd Floor Woodhaven, NY 11421. 3rd Thu each month, same time/location.

February 18th: Staten Island Area Forum, 7:00 P.M., Immanuel Lutheran Church 2018 Richmond Ave betw. Rockland Ave & Signs Road Staten Island, N.Y. 10314. Meets every other month, same time/location.

February 19th: Bronx Corrections & Treatment Facilities Committee Mtg, 7:00 P.M., St. Nicholas of Tolentine, @ Fordham Rd & Andrews Ave, University Hghts group mtg place Bronx, 10468. 3rd Fri each month, same time/location.

February 20th: Westchester Booking Mtg, 6:30 A.M., Memorial United Methodist Church, 250 Bryant Ave, betw. North & Mamaroneck Aves, White Plains, N.Y. 10605. Booking mtgs will also be held on 5/15, 8/21 & 11/20/2010.

February 22nd: Staten Island Corrections & Treatment Facilities Committee Mtg, 7:00 P.M., How Club 552 Pt Richmond Ave Staten Island, N.Y. 10302. Meets 4th Mon each month, same time/location. Orientation. 6:30pm, mtg 7:00pm.

Feb TBA: 2010 Big Meeting Planning Committee Mtg, @ New York Inter-Group Office, 307 7th Ave, @ 27th & 28th Sts, Rm 201, Manhattan, 10001. For more information, call the New York Inter-Group Office at (212) 647-1680.

Feb TBA: Manhattan Area Forum, 7 P.M., New York Inter-Group Office, 307 7th Ave, @ 27th & 28th Sts, Rm 201, Manhattan, 10001. Meets every other month, same time/location. Call New York-Group for the actual date.

Feb TBA ; 2010 Bill W. Dinner Planning Committee Mtg, @ New York Inter-Group Office, 307 7th Ave, @ 27th & 28th Sts, Rm 201, Manhattan, 10001. For more information, call New York Inter-Group at (212) 647-1680.