

THE

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NEWSLETTER OF THE READING-BERKS INTERGROUP OF ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS

Dinner Dance To Benefit Speaker Event

Tickets are still available for the Circle of Hope Roundup committee's Winter Holiday Dinner Dance, benefiting the committee's annual speaker conference.

Slated for Saturday, December 19, the dinner dance will be held at the Recovery Community Center, 1300 Hilltop Rd., Leesport.

Individual tickets are priced at \$20 and a Table of eight can be reserved for only \$150.

Tickets can be purchased from any Circle of Hope Roundup committee member as well as many home group representatives. Tickets are also available by calling Beth at 484-880-8671 or Steve at 610-750-4019.

Seating is limited to 25 round tables of eight and are available on a first come, first serve basis. If seating permits tickets will be available for purchase at the door the evening of the event.

The night's holiday festivities will begin at 6 pm with a hot buffet dinner complete with a more than tempting dessert table. Coffee and punch will also be provided.

Following dinner, guest speaker Stu B. of Severna Park., Md. will share his experiences with those attending at 7 pm.

Music and dance will follow from 8 to 11 pm with music provided by DynaMike Entertainment.

The Circle of Hope Roundup Speaker Conference is scheduled for June 4 - 6, 2010 and will feature a number of speakers as well as open AA meetings throughout the day.

Report On Eastern PA General Service Assembly

This year, Reading Berks Intergroup voted to send all Intergroup Officers and Committee Heads to the Eastern Pennsylvania General Service Assembly in Lancaster, PA in November. This conference is fully dedicated to service in Alcoholics Anonymous. Throughout the weekend, there were many different workshops and seminars that were devoted to service.

Assembly Discussion:

The most vital piece of information was brought up during the **Assembly Discussion** on Saturday. The topics were:

1. If we continue to use literature profits to partially fund services (at the General Service Office in NY), should there be a limit?
2. If there is a limit, how do we continue to pay for services if there is a shortfall in contributions?

The General Service Office in New York is struggling financially. GSO is the central nervous system of AA. There was much discussion about how we as members can better help GSO. Some of the key points brought to the table were:

- If the price of literature continues to rise, it may become more cost effective to sell our copyrights and have an outside publisher (Hazelden) supply our literature.
- We as AA members must carry the message to our groups that GSO is struggling. The groups then must make a responsible decision on how much of their 7th Tradition money should be sent to GSO.
- There was discussion on changing the pie chart for the suggested amounts of contributions going to GSO, Area, District and Intergroup.
- It was suggested that we as members stop forming new meetings. There is an abundance of meetings in most urban areas and when we create a new meeting, we are creating more rent. That is more money that is not making it to GSO.
- Homegroups spend quite a bit of money on coins from outside entities. Again this is money that could be sent to GSO.
- In the 1950's, the general contribution to the 7th Tradition basket at

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Report On Eastern PA General Service Assembly

Continued from page 1

meetings was \$1.00. Why are we still only donating \$1.00 in 2009?

- Carry message to groups that in the AA pamphlet "Where Money and Spirituality Mix", it is a good practice for individual members to make "Anniversary Donations" to GSO in whatever amount they desire.

Please do your part as a member of this fellowship and carry the message to your groups that GSO is in need of contributions.

Video Meeting: Your AA General Service Office, The Grapevine and the General Service Structure:

This meeting gave an overview of the following:

- The structure of AA is an inverted triangle with the ultimate authority being the groups and its members.
- General Service Reps carry messages from the groups to their Area Delegate. The Delegate then attends a General Service Conference where policies are voted on. GSO then has the responsibility to carry out the new policies.
- GSO approves and handles all literature for the fellowship worldwide. The newest piece of literature is the Big Book and Twelve & Twelve in American Sign Language on video.
- Box 459 is the communication between GSO and the groups.
- The Archives located in the GSO office is one of the most popular visiting places in the General Service Office.
- GSO handles Remote Communities and answers thousands of letters from inmates and the professional community.
- The AA Grapevine is a meeting in print and began publication in 1944.

Panel Discussion: Topic – Should we develop Conference approved literature that focuses on spirituality and includes stories from atheists and agnostics who are successfully sober in AA?

Presenters gave their pros and cons on this matter:

Pros: Providing these pamphlets to newcomers so they are not scared away by the "higher power" concept.

Providing these pamphlets to non-believers so they can see how other non-believers can still stay sober with the AA steps.

Cons: All of these concepts are covered in the Big Book and the Twelve & Twelve.

Utilize the literature in place.

Keep it simple, do we add more information than is needed or already covered in other literature.

What is your opinion on the above topic??

Fun Facts From The Conference

- There were 936 people in attendance at the conference.

- \$1713.52 in 7th tradition money was collected at the banquets and will be donated to GSO.

- Cumulative sobriety in attendance at the banquet was 3532 years, 2 months and 13 days.

- The most sobriety was 63 years and the newest member attending had 18 days.

- 222 gallons of coffee consumed throughout the conference.



commitments

INTERGROUP TWELFTH STEP

*I am responsible, when anyone, anywhere reaches out for help
I want the hand of AA always to be there, and for that...I am responsible!!*

Caron Adolescent Extended Care - Men Sundays 7 pm

Dec. 6 Caron Alumni
Dec. 13 Shoey Group
Dec. 20 Robesonia Group
Dec. 27 Happy Hour Group
Jan. 3 Caron Alumni

Wernersville State Hosp. See Guard in Building 34 Mondays 7 pm

Dec. 7 Jacksonwald Group
Dec. 14 Shoey Group
Dec. 21 New Life group
Dec. 28 Robesonia Group
Jan. 4 Robesonia Group

St. Joe's Hospital MH Unit 3rd Floor Reed & Walnut Sts. Mondays 7 pm

Dec. 7 Hilltop Group
Dec. 14 Walnut St. Group
Dec. 21 611 Washington St.
Group
Dec. 28 Congo BB Group
Jan. 4 Alpha Group

Reading Detox Unit Tuesdays 8 pm

Dec. 1 Twin Valley Group
Dec. 8 ----
Dec. 15 Walnut St. Group
Dec. 22 ----
Dec. 29 Walk The Walk Group
Jan. 5 Wyomissing Group

Caron Adolescent Extended Care - Women Sundays 7 pm.

Dec. 6 Caron Alumni
Dec. 13 Springview Group
Dec. 20 New Life Group
Dec. 27 Walk The Walk Group
Jan. 3 Caron Alumni

Reading Detox Unit Thursdays 8 pm

Dec. 3 New Life Group
Dec. 10 Shillington Lifeline
Dec. 17 YASNY
Dec. 24 Springview Group
Dec. 31 Springview Group
Jan. 7 Leesport Group

Caron Foundation Thursdays 8 pm

Dec. 3 YASNY Group
Dec. 10 New Life Group
Dec. 17 New Bernville Group
Dec. 24 Springview Group
Dec. 31 Boyertown Group
Jan. 7 Walk The Walk Group

Caron Foundation Young Adult Female Fridays 8 pm

Dec. 4 Sat. Morn. Women's
Dec. 11 OPEN
Dec. 18 Springview
Dec. 25 OPEN
Jan. 1 OPEN

events

CALENDAR

Friday, December 11

Men's Holiday Gratitude Dinner. St. Peter's U.C.C. Church. Dwight & Curtis Aves., West Lawn. 6:30-8:30 pm. \$5 per person. Enjoy a scrumptious and fun dinner with speakers and fellowship. For more info or directions call Carrie C. at 610-404-1518 or 374-891-2122. Feel free to bring an appetizer or dessert.

Sunday, December 13

2nd Annual Women's Holiday Gratitude Dinner & White Elephant. St. Peter's U.C.C. Church. Dwight & Curtis Aves., West Lawn. 6:30-8:30. \$5 per person. Enjoy a delicious and with fellowship. Bring a wrapped "gift" – typically a silly gift that might even be too lame to be considered for a re-gifting pile! For more info or directions call Carrie C. at 610-404-1518 or 374-891-2122. Feel free to bring an appetizer, salad, dessert. Babysitting available.

Saturday, December 19

Circle of Hope Roundup Winter Holiday Dinner Dance. 6 pm. Recovery Community Center, Leesport. Dinner, dancing, speakers. See story Page 1.

Thursday, December 31

ALCOH-THON at Atonement Center, Penn Ave. & State Hill Rd., West Reading. 3 pm–2 am. Open meetings on the hour–Step Meetings on the half hour. (1-12). Food, fun & fellowship! All are welcome!

If you take a commitment for your group, make sure the person agreeing to go has a substitute if they can't make it. If you would like to go to the St. Joe's meeting, contact the hospital first to see if there are any alcoholics there: 610-378-2092.

When sending group members to commitments, it's great to double up! Send a newer and an older member, and everyone will benefit!! PLEASE make sure that someone honors the commitment that you take for your group. These may be the only meetings that the patients may have. Remember, "You Are Responsible", when you commit your time. PLEASE don't let these commitments go unattended.

If you cannot make your commitment please notify Steve at 610-750-4019.

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SELECTIONS FROM THE GRAPEVINE



The Holiday Spirit Who's got time to go to a meeting?

Why I decided to go to an AA meeting that Christmas Day in 1988, I don't remember. I didn't make a conscious decision about it; I just kind of murmured to my wife that I thought I'd catch a noon meeting and that I would be home shortly afterward, never expecting the events that lay ahead.

Now, it wasn't as if I had nothing else on the fire, so to speak. Our children and the grandkids were due to arrive for dinner at two in the afternoon, my mother was bringing the usual sweet potato casserole, and I wanted to visit with her. Besides, I love professional football and television programming was going to be full of it that day. There were a lot of things to occupy my time besides AA, and yet noon found me climbing the steps at my home group.

Evidently, several others had gotten the same idea; the hall was full, and there was even an Al-Anon meeting in the big back room. The AA meeting was about to start when the door opened and there were two red-headed ladies: One was leading, almost dragging, the taller of the two.

"My name's Rachel," she said to no one in particular, "and this is my friend, Melinda. She needs a First Step meeting!" This last statement seemed unnecessary, as it was apparent, even to the untrained eye, that this creature was in a bad place. Her baggy jeans and tattered sweatshirt were filthy. She wore no socks and her dirty canvas sneakers had no laces. Her arms were covered with open sores and bruises and her dark red hair was matted with what appeared to be dried blood. I still remember her ashen complexion and sunken eyes. She was horribly thin. And she smelled--her clothes reeked of dried urine and other, less unidentifiable, odors. She seemed embarrassed about it, preferring to stay by the door.

Someone asked for volunteers for the First Steps meeting. I raised my hand as I always did. I enjoy First Step meetings, since they help me reflect on my past and remind me of how far I have come and just how fragile this thing called sobriety is. Experience has taught us that there is nothing more effective in dealing with the alcoholic than one drunk talking with another.

At any rate, someone handed me the basket, and four or five other people joined me and the two red-headed women. The newcomer, Melinda, was chain-smoking, and someone brought an ashtray from the big room for her to use. I opened the meeting with the AA Preamble and reminded everyone that this was a First Step meeting and suggested that Melinda listen to the others tell of their past experiences and see if she might relate to something they said, and then we'd like to hear from her if she wished to talk.

One by one, the others began to share their experience, strength, and hope. When it was my turn to speak, a sudden, overwhelming thought came to me: "If this lady doesn't get help here and now, she will surely die!"

Urgently, I began to try to convince her to give AA a try. I remember explaining that we suffered from a disease; that we weren't bad people needing to be good, but rather sick people who needed help recovering. I talked, I pleaded, I almost begged. Finally, when I had said everything I could think of, I concluded, "You know, you're just going to have to learn to trust someone one of these days!"

Things were quiet for a second and then she said something I'll never forget. If I close my eyes, even now, I can see her saying, "I'll trust you." That hit me like someone had punched me in the chest, and it took awhile for me to respond.

"There are some things we can help you with," I finally told her, "and some things we can't. You have some physical problems that need to be addressed first and then we can work on the rest." It turned out that her husband, because he was in the Air Force, had good health insurance, and I was able to convince her that it would be best at this stage to seek professional help for both her physical and emotional problems.

We took her to a local treatment center without much difficulty, and I told her I wasn't going to just drop her off and forget about her. If she needed someone to talk to besides her friend, I'd be available for her. I gave her my home phone number.

Thinking no more about it, I went home and relaxed with the family. At 3:00 A.M., the phone rang and it was Melinda. She was lonely and scared. She said she thought she was making a big mistake. After much urging from me, she decided to stick it out that day. She called the next day, and the next. When she stopped calling, I became concerned.

A few weeks later, while attending a Big Book meeting, I looked up and there she was. She appeared to be a completely different person. Dressed neatly, her hair combed, she had a fresh-scrubbed look about her. She beamed when she saw me.

She told me that she and her husband had worked things out; she'd been busy getting reacquainted with her little boy and starting a new job. Several weeks later, she told me that the Air Force was transferring them to a base in Alaska, and she was excited, although saddened at the prospect of leaving family and friends.

A good many years have passed since that episode, but it is the first thing I am reminded of when the subject of Christmas comes up, rather than memories of family or childhood. I find it absolutely fascinating that I had to come to AA to find the true spirit of Christmas and be reminded not of anything I might have done for her, but what she did for me.