

THE **alternative**

www.readingberksintergroup.org

NEWSLETTER OF THE READING-BERKS INTERGROUP OF ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS



**STINKIN
THINKIN?**

Think about *The Alternative*.

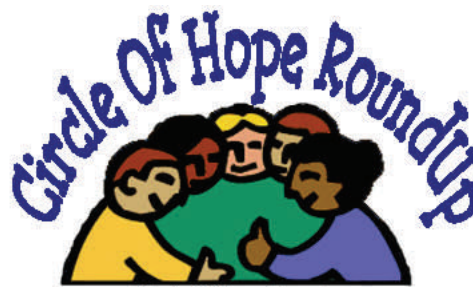
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 P.O. Box 12457, Reading PA 19612

**Circle of Hope Fundraiser
Well Worth Winter Wait**

The Circle of Hope Winter Dinner Dance Fundraiser held on January 30, 2010 was a huge success. After a snow storm dropped a foot of snow on the original date causing a postponement, the wait for the event was well worth it. The evening was filled with recovery, fun, food and fellowship.



www.CircleOfHopeRoundup.com

Dinner consisting of multiple pasta dishes, salad, fruit and rolls was expertly prepared by Clint's Catering. As always, Clint and his team did a fabulous job with preparation and presentation. The desert table was laden with a variety of fresh baked goods and sugary sweets for all to enjoy.

Our speaker, Stu B. traveled from Severna Park, MD through a southerly snowstorm to share his experience, strength and hope with us. Stu has been sober for 44 years and his story was inspirational. He carried a strong message of hope that took the crowd from laughter to tears. It was an absolute pleasure to have him as a guest at the event.

Dancing began after the speaker. Your Choice Entertainment provided the music.

There was a great variety of music played and the guests were able to request songs they wanted to hear. There were people on the dance floor at all times moving and shaking.

This fundraiser has been held for two years to support

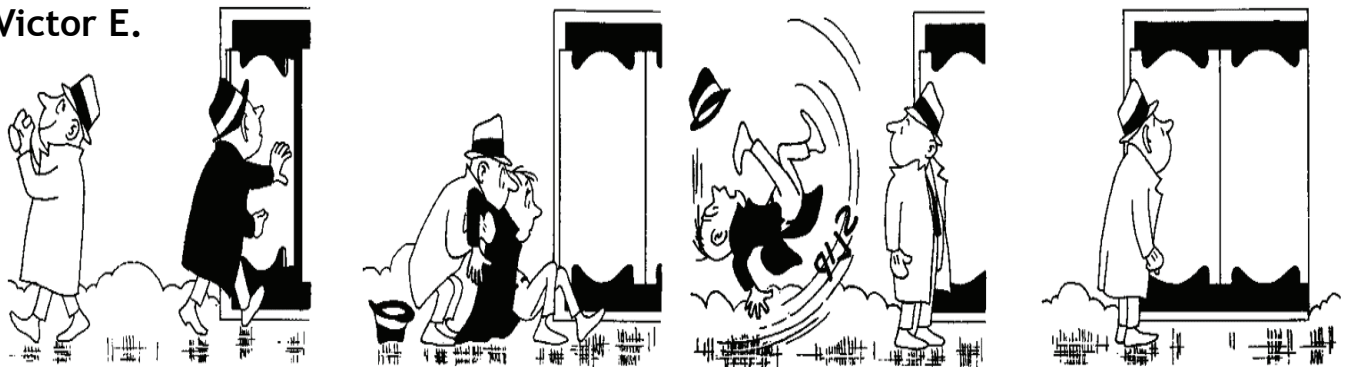
the Circle of Hope Roundup Speakers Conference held at Penn State University Berks Campus. This year's conference will be June 4 - 6, 2010.

There are five speakers confirmed for the conference from around the country. If you are interested in attending the conference, please watch for flyers at local meetings or call Beth B. at 484-880-8671 or go to www.CircleOfHopeRoundup.com for printable flyers.

The Circle of Hope Roundup Committee thanks everyone that came out to support the cause. As Chairperson of the conference, I would also like to thank the committee and volunteers for all of the hard work done to make this event a success.

By Beth B.
 Chairperson Circle of Hope Roundup

Victor E.



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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**

- Feb. 7 Caron Alumni
- Feb. 14 Robesonia Group
- Feb. 21 Shoey Group
- Feb. 28 Shillington Lifeline
- March 7 Caron Alumni

**Caron Adolescent
Extended Care - Women
Sundays 7 pm**

- Feb. 7 Caron Alumni
- Feb. 14 New Millenium
- Feb. 21 Wilshire Group
- Feb. 28 YASNY
- March 7 Caron Alumni

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

- Feb. 1 Robesonia group
- Feb. 8 Wilshire Group
- Feb. 15 Nolde Forest Group
- Feb. 22 8:15 AM Group
- March 1 Robesonia Group

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

- Feb. 1 Alpha Group
- Feb. 8 611 Washington St. Group
- Feb. 15 Walnut St. Group
- Feb. 22 Alpha Group
- March 1 Congo BB

**Reading Detox Unit
Every Other Tuesday 8 pm**

- Feb. 2 Jacksonwald Group
- Feb. 16 New Life Group
- March 2 Alpha Group

**Caron Foundation
Thursdays 8 pm**

- Feb. 4 Oley Group
- Feb. 11 New Berlinville Group
- Feb. 18 Boyertown Group
- Feb. 25 Shoey Group
- March 4 8:15 AM Group

**Reading Detox Unit
Thursdays 8 pm**

- Feb. 4 Sober @ Six
- Feb. 11 Alpha Group
- Feb. 18 Walnut St. Group
- Feb. 25 Alpha Group
- March 4 New Millennium

**Caron Foundation
Young Adult Female
Fridays 8 pm**

- Feb. 5 OPEN
- Feb. 12 Courage To Change
- Feb. 19 Sat. Morn. Women's
- Feb. 26 New Life group
- March 5 Hilltop Group

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.

The Alternative is published monthly by the Reading-Berks Intergroup of Alcoholics Anonymous. Serving Districts 33, 66, and 67 of Delegate Area 59—Eastern Pennsylvania. Reach us by mail at P.O. Box 12157, Reading, PA 19612, or you can email us at Alternative@ReadingBerksIntergroup.org

Subscriptions are available for \$12 a year.

STEP 2

Came to
Believe
that a
Power
greater
than
ourselves
could
restore us
to sanity.



'I Didn't Drink And I Didn't Run'

When I came to alcoholics Anonymous, all I wanted was to drink a little less. I did not want to find God, get spiritual, become a better person, or stop drinking. I did not have the power to change anything about my drinking, however. That's why I decided to try AA. That is also the summary of my twenty-five year experience with Step One.

Step Two baffled me. I understood all of the words in the Step but could not comprehend how or why any benevolent force would ever have any connection with me. I had no real religious background, and what I did know made me skeptical.

I was taught by my parents, teachers, and popular thought that I could control my destiny and achieve whatever I wanted--if I was willing to work hard enough. If I wanted something done, I should do it myself, they told me. There was no room for the divine in the picture I developed of the world. In fact, there wasn't room for anything or anyone but me.

My alcoholism helped me fail at everything important to me. I failed to achieve the status and recognition I thought was due me in my profession. I withdrew from my family. I had no close relationships--drinking buddies were the best I could do. Worst of all, I felt the emptiness that many of us know. Life had no meaning for me. I had nothing to connect with, nothing to engage me, nothing to make my life worth living.

This is the state I found myself in when I joined AA, a condition that turned out to be fortunate because it made me willing to consider ideas that I otherwise would have rejected immediately.

In the beginning, all I could do was not drink and not run away. When I listened to people talk about God at meetings, I didn't drink and I didn't run away. When I heard discussions at meetings about how God--or a higher power, or something--had come into the lives of members and done for them what they could not do for themselves, I didn't drink and didn't run away. I thought it was all nonsense but was afraid to dismiss it entirely. I had been beaten up enough to know that I would die if I drank again.

Because I did not drink and did not run away, I heard a lot of ideas about a power greater than myself that I considered--in spite of myself. I also saw that other alcoholics, who had been as desperate as I was, had stopped drinking and, as

a result, their lives had changed. Even if I did not identify with whatever power they said worked for them, I saw that something had happened to them. This gave me just enough hope to keep coming back to one more meeting, to listen to one more story, and to talk to one more alcoholic.

Because this program did not dictate the name, size, shape, or color of the power that works here, I was forced to find my own. My experience has been a gradual one. It was not anything specific that happened, because nothing really happened. It was not something special that someone said, because I don't remember much of what anyone says. I cannot point to a day or meeting or person or book that changed my thinking. That's not how I experienced it.

But little by little, over months and years, my thinking about other people changed. I started seeing them less in relation to myself--more than or less than me, useful or useless to me, or doing something to me--and more as people struggling just like I was to find a way to live.

I lost many fears and some insecurities, and that has made it possible for me to do things, say things, and go places I never would have considered. I can now think about something other than myself, and I don't complain that life is not interesting or engaging.

In those instances when I give up my idea of how something should work, my life changes in a profound and wonderful way. The most powerful example, is my marriage. It is nothing like I thought it should be, and yet it works quite well. When something really difficult has happened in sobriety--despite my feelings of grief or loss or hurt--I have behaved in a way that made me feel good about myself and at peace with the outcome. God is the name I call this power I have found, because that is the easiest way to express it to other people. If pressed to describe it, I say that I have found a power greater than myself that enables me to get out of myself and experience that rare and wonderful miracle of change.

**Nancy C.,
Coral Gables, Florida**

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SELECTIONS FROM THE GRAPEVINE



Lincoln on Sobriety

Insight of the great President into the dilemma of the habitual drunkard

"In my judgment such of us who have never fallen victims have been spared more by the absence of appetite than from mental or moral superiority over those who have. Indeed, I believe if we take habitual drunkards as a class, their heads and their hearts will bear an advantageous comparison with those of any other class."

"When one who has long been known as a victim of intemperance bursts the fetters that have bound him, and appears before his neighbors 'clothed and in his right mind,' a redeemed specimen of long-lost humanity, and stands up, with tears of joy trembling in his eyes, to tell of the miseries once endured, now to be endured no more forever: of his once naked and starving children, now clad and fed comfortably; of a wife long weighed down with woe, weeping, and a broken heart, now restored to health, happiness, and a renewed affection; and how easily it is all done, once it is resolved to be done--how simple his language! Human feelings cannot resist."

"I have not inquired at what period of time the use of intoxicating liquors commenced; nor is it important to know. It is sufficient that, to all of us who now inhabit the world, the practice of drinking them is just as old as the world itself--that is, we have seen the one just as long as we have seen the other."

"Those who have suffered by intemperance personally, and have reformed, are the most powerful and efficient instruments to push the reformation to ultimate success. It does not follow that those who have not suffered have no part left them to perform. Whether or not the world would be vastly benefited by a total and final banishment from it of all intoxicating drinks seems to me not now an open question."

"The victims of it [alcoholism] were to be pitied and compassioned, just as are the heirs of consumption and other hereditary diseases. Their failing was treated as a misfortune, and not as a crime, or even as a disgrace."

"There seems ever to have been a prone-



ness in the brilliant and warm-blooded to fall into the vice--the demon of intemperance ever seems to have delighted in sucking the blood of genius and of generosity. What one of us but can call to mind some relative, more promising in youth than all his fellows, who has fallen a sacrifice to his rapacity? He seems ever to have gone forth like the Egyptian angel of death, commissioned to slay, if not the first, the fairest born of every family."

"Happy day when--all appetites controlled, all passions subdued, all matter subjugated--mind, all-conquering mind, shall live and move, the monarch of the world. Glorious consummation! Hail, fall of fury! Reign of reason, all hail!

"And when the victory shall be complete--when there shall be neither slave nor drunkard on the earth--how proud the title of that land which may truly claim to be the birthplace and the cradle of both those resolutions that shall have ended in that victory. How nobly distinguished that people who shall have planted and nurtured to maturity both the political and moral freedom of their species."

"For the man suddenly or in any other way to break off from the use of drams, who has indulged in them for a long course of years and until his appetite for them has grown tenor a hundred-fold stronger and more craving than any natural appetite can be, requires a most powerful moral effort. In such an undertaking he needs every moral support and influence that can possibly be brought to his aid and thrown around him."

"It is an old and a true maxim that 'a drop of honey catches more flies than a gallon of gall.' So with men. If you would win a man to your cause, first convince him that you are his sincere friend."

"Is it just to assail, condemn, or despise them? The universal sense of mankind of any subject is an argument, or at least an influence, not easily overcome. The success of the argument in favor of the existence of an overruling Providence mainly depends upon that sense; and men ought not in justice to be denounced for yielding to it in any case, or giving it up slowly, especially when they are backed by interest, fixed habits, or burning appetites."

"Another error, as it seems to me, into which the old reformers fell, was the position that all habitual drunkards were utterly incorrigible, and therefore must be turned adrift and damned without remedy in order that the grace of temperance might abound, to the temperate then, and to all mankind some hundreds of years thereafter. There is in this attitude something so repugnant to humanity, so uncharitable, so cold-blooded and feeling less, that it never did nor ever can enlist the enthusiasm of a popular cause."

Editor's Note: From Lincoln's address to the Washington Temperance Society, Springfield, Ill. February 22 1842.

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