

NEWS & notes

New Group Reps

A warm RBI welcome was extended to the following new Intergroup Representatives at November's meeting:

Dawn—Oley; Eric—Shoey; Marty—Atonement; Mark—Robesonia; Stephanie—Walk The Walk; John—Walnut St. Recovery Group, and Danielle—Women Living Sober.

12th Step Kudos

It was noted with a round of applause at the recent RBI meeting that this was the forth consecutive month that the Intergroup's 12th Step Commitments schedule had been filled prior to meeting's end. Thank you all for your service.

RBI Elects New Officers, Chairs

New officers and chairpersons elected at November's monthly meeting:

RBI Chair — Beth B.
 RBI Alt. Chair — Mic
 RBI Treasurer — Steve W.
 RBI Secretary — Mark S.
 Hotline —Greg G.
 Archives —Henry
 Men's Prison —Terry C.
 Woman's Prison — Dianne
 Literature —Steve L.
 Schedules —Danielle B.
 Institutions — David
 Newsletter — Angelo B.
 Unity —Sharyn
 Bridging the Gap— Terry
 Website — Greg G.

'Tis The Season For Gratitude and Dinners

If it's December, it must be time for the RBI's annual Men's and Women's Gratitude Dinners.



The Men's Gratitude Dinner is set for Friday, Dec. 17 from 6:30 to 8:30 pm at St. Peter U.C.C Church,

Dwight and Curtis Aves. in West Lawn (Wilshire), and will feature a scrumptious dinner, speakers and of course, fellowship. Cost is \$5 per person.

The Women's Third Annual Holiday Gratitude Dinner and White Elephant will be held on Sunday, Dec. 19 from 6:30 to 8:30 pm at the same location. In addition to dinner and speakers, the women's evening will

feature a White Elephant gift exchange. Please bring a wrapped "gift" — usually something silly. Price for the evening is also \$5.

Appetizers, salads and desserts are welcomed at both dinners.

For further info or directions, please call or email Carrie C. at 3476-891-2122 or 610-404-1518.

An Evening of Discussion and Speakers at Alcathon

Usher in the New Year with an evening of speakers and open discussion at this year's New Years Eve Alcathon, the Reading Berks Intergroup's annual New Year's Eve celebration.

Set for the Atonement Parish Center in Wyomissing, the Alcathon will begin at 2 pm Friday, Dec. 31 and run to 3:30 am Saturday, Jan. 1.

Simultaneous Speaker and Open Discussion meetings will be held throughout the evening. Speakers Meetings will be held upstairs, while the Open Discussion meetings will be held downstairs. A variety of food and beverages will be available for New Year's Eve merriment between sessions.

There are still a few meetings in need of speakers, so if you are interested in sharing your story, call David at 484-334-1566.

A full meeting and speaker's schedule can be viewed at www.readingberksintergroup.org.

Alcathon Speakers Schedule

2:00 pm: Carter, 2 1/2 years
 3:15 pm: Willie W., 3 years
 4:30 pm: Willie C./Richard M.
 5:45 pm: Terry P., 17 years
 7:00 pm: Chris, 20 years
 8:00 pm: Don C., 30 years
 9:15 pm: David W. 17 years
 10:45 pm: James W., 9 years
 12:00 am: OPEN
 1:15 am: OPEN
 2:30 am: OPEN

Winter Dinner Dance to Benefit COH Conference

The arrival of the brisk winter's air and the possibility of snowfall can mean only one thing... The Circle of Hope Roundup Committee's Annual Winter Dinner Dance.

Benefiting the committee's annual speaker conference, the dinner dance will be held Sunday, Jan. 29 at the Recovery Community Center, 1300 Hilltop Rd., Leesport from 6 to 11 pm.

In the event of bad weather, a snow date has been set for Feb. 26.

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



only \$150. Groups are encouraged to sponsor a table or tables for their members.

Tickets can be purchased from any Circle of Hope Roundup committee member as well as many home group representatives. Dance go-

ers will get the additional benefit of being able to purchase tickets for this summer's speakers conference for only \$25 (\$5 off the regular price). And because the speakers conference is limited to 300 people, buying tickets early is encouraged.

The Circle of Hope Roundup Speaker Conference is scheduled for June 3-5, 2011 at Penn State/Berks and will feature a number of notable speakers as well as open AA meetings throughout the day.

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commitments INTERGROUP TWELFTH STEP

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

- Dec. 5 Caron Alumni
- Dec. 12 8:15 AM Group
- Dec. 19 Shillington Lifeline Group
- Dec. 26 Hilltop Group
- Jan. 2 Oley Group

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

- Dec. 6 Hilltop Group
- Dec. 13 Robesonia Group
- Dec. 20 Shoey Group
- Dec. 27 Alpha Group
- Jan. 3 Sunday AM Speakers Group

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

- Dec. 7 Leesport Group
- Dec. 21 Oley Group
- Jan. 4 Wyomissing Group

**Reading Detox Unit
Thursdays 8 pm**

- Dec. 2 Hilltop Group
- Dec. 9 New Life Group
- Dec. 16 Walnut St. Group
- Dec. 23 New Millenium Group
- Dec. 30 Hilltop Group
- Jan. 6 Happy Hour Group

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

- Dec. 5 Caron Alumni
- Dec. 12 Shillington Lifeline Group
- Dec. 19 8:15 AM Group
- Dec. 26 Congo Group
- Jan. 2 Courage To Change Group

**St. Joe's Hospital MH Unit
3rd Floor Reed & Walnut Sts.
Mondays 7:30 pm***

- Dec. 6 Walnut St. Group
- Dec. 13 Leesport Group
- Dec. 20 Walnut St. Group
- Dec. 27 611 Washington St. Group
- Jan. 3 Walnut St. Group

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

- Dec. 3 Women Living Sober
- Dec. 10 Robesonia Group
- Dec. 17 Women Living Sober
- Dec. 24 8:15 AM Group
- Dec. 31 Sat. AM Women's Mtg.
- Jan. 7 Women Living Sober

*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!!*

*Note New Time for St. Joe's Monday Meetings. Call 610-378-2000 and ask for Berkshire Pavilion before going.

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: 610-378-2000. *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.

Rekindling The Fires Of Shining Hope

The 12th Step is the climax of the other 11. Without the 12th Step, the conception formulated in the other 11 would be like faith without works and the body without the spirit.

Here is the plan put into action, and it is a two-way action. Through the 12th Step, one receives as he gives. He gives to another what he has learned and in so doing receives new strength for himself.

And it is through this two-way action that A.A. grows not only larger but stronger, for it is through the 12th Step that new members are made and old members extend the length and the quality of their sobriety.

When the 12th Step operates as it is intended to it precludes the development of the stultifying results of the ordinary debtor-creditor relationship. Although the A.A. engaged on a 12th Step mission may appear to be the donor--donor of a priceless gift which has helped thousands of others--and though the distraught recipient may feel grateful either then or subsequently, there is a powerfully restraining factor in the transaction. The A.A. cannot feel smugly virtuous as bearer of this gift when he knows that by giving it he keeps it and that 12th Step work is the way he helps to preserve his own sobriety. He is not likely to get a fatally righteous and inflated estimation of himself when he remembers that in 12th Step work one receives at least as much and usually much more than he gives.

He cannot well fancy himself becoming a saint when he remembers that through 12th Step work he helps to keep himself from becoming a drunk again.

Even for the newcomer who discovers A.A. by way of some member applying the 12th Step in his behalf, there is an equalizer. He may always feel grateful, but as he learns more about A.A. he realizes the necessity of the 12th Step work to the do-er as well as the receiver

and thus is relieved of any sense of imposed obligation. And he in turn can embark on 12th Step work knowing that he is doing it for himself more even than for others and certainly without the duress of paying off a debt.

By virtue of these factors, 12th

it is real. It is life in the raw. It takes care of any idle time that may have been dragging heavily. And it has given to many an A.A. experiences that yield the greatest happiness of a lifetime.

Finally, of course, 12th Step work is certainly one of the surest,



Step work is both inspirational and practical, often the spark that rekindles the fires of shining hope, and at the same time a completely realistic approach to a very tough problem. Few situations arise anywhere that offer a greater challenge to one's ingenuity, resourcefulness, perseverance and the best of his brains than those which arise commonly in 12th Step work.

Nor, it should be added, are there many things which man does that require more hard work than is so often needed in the completion of a 12th Step task.

In 12th Step work, one is dealing with the most exasperating, stubborn, conniving, prevaricating, baffling, unpredictable, twisted and messed-up human being at large --the drunk. Successful 12th Step work calls for practically all of the virtues and talents given man, and often, even if any A.A. had all of the virtues and all of the talents, they would not be enough.

Yet, 12th Step work also offers more drama, more comedy, suspense, thrills and excitement than one will ever find on any movie screen. And

if not the surest, way of keeping sober. The reason it is so effective is that it almost compels one engaging in it to keep thinking in the direction that preserves sobriety. It is, at the same time, a reminder of what has been and a warning of what could be again.

But, more even than its value as both a reminder and a warning, 12th Step work is the practice of the basic principle of a way of life. The principle has been voiced in many different phrases --as "Do unto others. . ." and "My brother's keeper," or "Brotherhood of man," and simply, "Helping others." So, likewise, is 12th Step work helping others, keeping the brother, doing unto others as we have been done unto.

And doing it without expectancy of repayment or bouquets.

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"Having had a spiritual experience as the result of those steps, we tried to carry this message to alcoholics, and to practice these principles in all our affairs."

He cannot well fancy himself becoming a saint when he remembers that through 12th Step work he helps to keep himself from becoming a drunk again.

My Name Is Ebenezer, and I'm...



My name is Ebenezer Scrooge and I am an alcoholic.

Surprised, eh? You shouldn't be. Confound it, any alcoholic should recognize that

story Charles Dickens wrote about me for what it is--humbug!

I told him the true story myself, one night in the Charing Cross station when we were both waiting for the Liverpool Express. A shrewd writer, Dickens. He knew no one would pay twopence for a yarn with a drunk as the hero--not in those straight-laced days of Queen Victoria, bless her--so he doctored it up, left out the parts that would offend the public sensibilities and turned it into a bedtime story. Humbug!

You want to know what really happened that Christmas Eve? It could happen to anyone--in fact, I'm sure it has; if not on Christmas Eve, then on other nights when the grog finally catches up with worn-out souls like mine.

It's our blooming London weather that I blame for the start of it all. In such frost and damp there's nothing can keep the chill out of a man's bones but a finger or two of whiskey. From the day Jacob Marley and I opened our counting house I kept a bottle of Queen's Pride behind the coal scuttle in my office so that every time I fed the stove I could have a little nip. Aye, you guessed it--before long I was visiting that coal scuttle when it was as hot as the hinges of Hades in the middle of July.

Now, Dickens makes me out to have been not only a miser but an unforgivable grouch. By the time Bob Cratchit came to work for me I'd been drinking morning, noon and night for thirty-seven years. What kind of disposition would you expect me to have?

And Bob Cratchit gave me the fidgets. He never touched a drop. I resented him, and when I came in on morning's with a head the size of St. Paul's dome, there was no one to take it out on but poor Bob.

Stingy? Of course. I wouldn't part with an odd shilling for fear I might need it some day for an ounce of spirits. I knew Bob Cratchit was underpaid, I knew he had a big family to support, I knew about his ailing lad, Tiny Tim. But an alcoholic never likes to think about those things and I went on trying to make his life as miserable as mine.

Well, I always felt lonely and sorry for myself when the holidays came around, and on Christmas Eve it was my custom to marinate myself in Queen's Pride and go to bed early.



"Ebenezer, it's too late for me but it's not too late for you."

That night I couldn't sleep, and at midnight when those infernal chimes started banging I was sitting in my nightgown in a chair by the fire.

You can use your own judgment about what comes next. Dickens says I was seeing "ghosts." They may have been ghosts, or they may have been figments of my addled brain, but take my word for it, they seemed as real as the candlestick on my bed table.

First it was Marley, my late partner. (He was an old toper like myself. One night he took a wrong turn staggering home from the Boar's Head Tavern and walked right into the Thames and drowned. Dickens left that out, too.) Marley seemed to walk right through my bolted door making a loud racket with something he was dragging behind.

Marley was so out of breath he could hardly talk, but he got his message through: in the Other World he was condemned to drag around every bottle he had ever emptied, and in his case, they stretched to Piccadilly and back.

The last thing Marley said before he faded

away was, "Ebenezer, it's too late for me but it's not too late for you."

Wouldn't that sober a man up? Not me. I had another belt of Queen's Pride and shut my eyes. But the tighter I shut them, the more I saw.

The Past. I lived through it all over again; how I treated my family so meanly, how I lost the girl I wanted to marry. (According to Dickens, she turned me down because she figured I was cold hearted and money-mad. The truth is, she was the vicar's daughter and her father finally noticed that every time I came to call I had booze on my breath.)

Then the Present. I could see into Bob Cratchit's house, the meager Christmas they were having there, Mrs. Cratchit calling me an old skin-flint, and that poor doomed boy Tiny Tim trying to cheer them up with his "God Bless Us, Every One."

I was feeling pretty unhinged by now, but the worst was yet to come. Yet to come. . . the Cratchit house somber and gloomy with an empty chair where Tim used to sit. . . my building boarded up and me out in front begging alms for the next drink. . . a funeral procession--my own, and not a mourner in sight.

And then, thank Heaven, it was morning, and I sat there with tears streaming down my cheeks wishing I could undo the damage of a lifetime, a lifetime spent in a bottle. I reached for the bottle out of habit but then I stopped.

"Queen's Pride--humbug!" I said aloud, and threw it into the fireplace.

Dickens sticks pretty close to the facts from that point on. I spent a glorious Christmas Day with people I had loved all along and who miraculously were still willing to love me. Bob Cratchit and his brood became my adopted family. I've been making anonymous donations to charity, and a lot of people would be surprised if they knew their benefactor was that infamous old cuss, Ebenezer Scrooge.

There you have it. Next time you take Dickens off the shelf you can read between the lines and get the real meaning of his "Christmas Carol." But we don't want to spoil it for non-alcoholics, so please remember to respect my anonymity.

R. Z.
Council Bluffs, Iowa
December 1961