



The Voice Within

NH AA District 12 Newsletter

September 2012



ARE YOU READY FOR SOME INSPIRED RECOVERY?

September is Recovery Month. It's also Disaster Preparedness Month, the beginning of autumn, and the start of a new school year. It's time to get serious, make sure you're ready for storms and power outages, and do your homework. Recovery is like that. We put down the drink, work the steps, and come to meetings in order to stay alive and learn how to function without alcohol. We work to educate ourselves and change our ways.

But September is also full of county fairs, skies of a deeper blue, the bounty of harvest, leaves like fireworks, and the beauty of the mountains and ocean after the summer tourists have left. Recovery is like that, too. Our vision becomes clearer, and we realize that there is beauty in the everyday, and joy in living. One way to celebrate recovery is to join us in Inspired Recovery, which is being held at the New Hampshire Institute of Art's French Building at 148 Concord Street on September 14th from 6:00 to 10:00 pm. Inspired Recovery is a showcase of art, creative writing, and musical performance by artists in recovery. If you'd like to see what happens when creativity and recovery get together, just show up! Admission is free. For more details, including artist submission information, go to www.inspiredrecovery.org.

EVENTS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

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| Tues. August 21 | Manchester Original Group's 66th Anniversary Celebration , Brookside Church, 2013 Elm St., Manchester. Spaghetti Dinner 6 – 7 pm, Meeting 7 - 8:30 pm. |
| Sat. August 25 | NH and Kittery, ME. AA Area 43 Assembly and Business Meeting , St. Raphael's Church, Ferry Street, Manchester. 8 am- 4 pm. Continental breakfast and Luncheon will be provided. \$10 Luncheon Donation Gratefully Accepted. All GSR's are encouraged to attend. Visit www.aadistrict12.org for further details. |
| Tues. August 28 | Heard It Through the Grapevine Group's Celebration in Remembrance of Billy L. , St. Andrews's Episcopal Church, 102 N. Main St., Manchester. Desserts 6:45 – 7:30 pm, Meeting 7:30- 8:30 pm. |
| Fri. September 7 | Queen City Group changing their meeting time to 8 – 9:15 pm. |
| Fri. September 14 | Inspired Recovery! NHIA, 148 Concord St, 6 – 10 pm. |
| Sat. September 15 | Recovery Oriented Workshops , St. Raphael's Church, Ferry St., Manchester, 1-4 pm. |
| Sat. October 20 | District 12 Fall Dinner Dance . Assumption Greek Orthodox Church, 111 Island Pond Road, Manchester, NH, from 5:00PM to 11:00PM. Beef Tip Dinner, DJ, Dancing. Tickets \$20. A flyer is available for downloading at www.aadistrict12.org . |

Letter to a Newcomer

A beginner asks, "HOW DID YOU STAY SOBER??!!"

Well, I didn't meet you on your first day of sobriety, but I know you were angry, selfish, doubtful, willful, ignorant, egotistical, way too smart, rebellious, desperate, and afraid (just to name a few, right?). And you didn't even realize you had all these feelings (and more), just like most of the rest of us when new. So you went through the motions of dragging your feet, ignoring what was said, breaking the rules, and being nasty every chance you got. I mean, why not? A.A. was just so not cool, stupid, and lame.

As time went on, though, at some indefinable moment, while you were totally unaware, not likely even caring, really, you started changing. It was like the shallowest of breaths, entirely imperceptible. Your vision changed, too. You actually started seeing, **really seeing**, the faces of the people around you. You began to hear their words – maybe not ALL of their words – but some. You began understanding, ever so slightly, what they were saying. In fact, they began to make sense to you. And then, darn it, you were feeling what they were feeling. You actually began to feel good about yourself. **Finally**. And the loneliness was leaving.

All of this was frightening and confusing, yet you found yourself curious. Was it – could it even be possible - that you were just like these people- the guy who kept picking his teeth? that girl with the 1950's ponytail? Surprisingly enough, those idiot A.A.'s were starting to make sense.

Without your knowing it or even trying, your attitude changed. And you felt good. You **REALLY** felt good. Now, admittedly, this didn't feel normal, familiar, or at all comfortable, but you liked it. In fact, you wanted it. You became willing to do whatever it took to **keep** feeling good.

You began taking suggestions. You started opening up and talking about your feelings. You were reading the literature and understanding it – well, some of it, anyway. As difficult as it was, you probably even cried. In front of other people. Then,

WOW, you experienced that deep down, crazy, belly laugh. You were even sleeping better and seeing the positive and beautiful things around you. You were attending more meetings and talking to A.A.'s. Could this last? Could this become your new way of living?

Then, as all these things kept happening and you continued to feel better – and think better - something else happened. Something astounding that you never, in a million years, expected. You took a step toward a belief. Something or someone outside yourself. What was it? What did it look like? What did it mean? Did others feel this way? Were you crazy??? WAS IT REAL? Even worse, should you keep it a secret? Try to talk to it? Worry about every move you made or awful thought you had? You had too many questions! Yeah, WAY too many questions.

But then, wait a minute. Was it - really it couldn't be - but was it – GOD??!! Yup, no denying this. It was God. And you had read the literature which told you this was "the God of my understanding," no more and no less. And guess what? You didn't even need to call it God. You could call it XM^PY%& if you could possibly pronounce it. You learned to pray. You now knew that everything was being managed by XM^PY%& and no matter what occurred, you would be okay. What happened, my friend, was a miracle. YOUR miracle...

So now, please believe me when I thank you from the very deepest part of my heart for allowing me to be a part of your miracle even though I bet you don't even know how you've helped me. Congratulations on your sobriety. You've worked for it, you deserve it, and I love you.

And guess what the best part is? You will be there for the newcomers and you will love them, too.

Lisa K, Manchester



Anniversary Anxiety

Mark D, North End Group

Throughout my ten-plus years in recovery, I have heard about anxiety around the time of one's anniversary. One year, five, twelve, thirty-four years of sobriety- it makes no difference. It's as if there is an organ in our bodies that serve as an anniversary alarm clock. Days away from my presumptive (no rounding up!) anniversary, I am pensive at best. At worst it feels as if there is broken glass in my stomach.

This is not a case of jitters about standing up to get a medallion or being asked to share. This is personal. I think that it has to do with being a measured distance from the drunk I was. Because I think/act so differently now, it's hard to see that guy as me. The selfish, deluded mindset, and the amount of time and energy spent to peruse the buzz, the oblivion, are repulsive to me. It makes me wonder where I would be now had my life not been interrupted on the drunken march to my bottom.

I know, I know- "we will not regret the past" is one of the promises. In considering how I can help others, it's not a regret. But in my family life, in my work life, that's a hard sell. Had I been a loner, barhopping, out-front drunk, it would likely be different. But I was a man with a fully connected life: a husband, father, employee, manager who would sneak and hide in a bottle from all these things. Whatever time spent in that bottle was time robbed from all those responsibilities and joys. It is the sins of omission that have always caused such unrest in my soul.

What I've decided is that there is no way to accurately project these possible sober life paths any more that I can predict the future. It's easy to blame all of my issues on demon alcohol, but that's just not true. Much of what I could have/should have been was thwarted by my insecurities, biases, and general lack of awareness. These factors were modified greatly by the advance of my alcoholism. But they existed prior to my descent into the bottle.

I'm loath to quote song lyrics but one stands out to me now, as it did the first time I heard it: "Time may change me, but I can't trace time." I don't consider David Bowie a great philosopher but I think he nailed it in that phrase. The person I am now was formed by all my struggles. My struggle with alcohol is just the one that has been blessed with an ongoing solution of a distinct method of action and the love and help of so many.

I understand that it was not the man I am now I left for the bottle all those years ago, but one who still had considerable flaws as well as promise. On this particular anniversary, I celebrate acceptance of that over resignation. To quote someone I do consider a great philosopher:

"I yam what I yam and that's all that I yam."

– Popeye

NOT JUST ANOTHER PRETTY BOOK!

What do On the Road, Charlotte's Web, and Silent Spring have in common with Alcoholics Anonymous, also known as The Big Book? Among other things, all of these books have been included in the Library of Congress list of "Books That Shaped America."

At the July District 12 Assembly, our Grapevine/Literature Chair, Lisa B., announced the recognition of AA's basic text as one of the most influential of American books.

The following comes from the Library of Congress website:

The titles featured here (by American authors) have had a profound effect on American life... Some of the titles on display have been the source of great controversy, even derision, yet they nevertheless shaped Americans' views of their world and often the world's view of the United States.

To read the entire list and find out more about the "Books That Shaped America" exhibition, go to <http://myloc.gov/exhibitions>.

A Life Second to None

Cathy H, Original Happy Hour West

For a long time, I've listened to old-timers saying they have "a life second to none." Doesn't that sound good? And we all know what makes a life like that, right? Open almost any magazine, and you see what you're supposed to look like, behave like, and possess. Just turn on your TV, and you'll learn what the good life looks like, according to America's advertisers, talk shows, and sitcoms .

When new in sobriety, I believed that recovery would bring back all those external things I had lost or never achieved as a result of my drinking- steady employment, health, financial security, and status in my family and community. If I just didn't drink, all would be forgiven. All I had to do was not drink, show up at meetings, and wait for the wave of my sponsor's wand: "Ta-Da! You have now graduated into Real Life Success. Live Long and Prosper."

Well, that is NOT how it works.

The First Step says, "We admitted we were alcoholics and that our lives were unmanageable." The life I had been trying to live was unmanageable because I was proud, envious, fearful, angry, and lonely. I drank to soothe the pain I denied feeling in the first place. I was dishonest and had no idea who I was, trying to please those around me in order to feel some sense of purpose and belonging.

In the halls I learned how important it was that I stop trying to run my life all by myself. I began to have faith and trust in my higher power, and to take a serious look at my share of responsibility for situations in my life. I had to learn to stop measuring my insides to other people's outsides. I also had to learn to stop hiding in the back row, literally and figuratively. Today I do a much better job of reaching out to the newcomer, volunteering, and being open and honest with others

and myself. Much better, yes. Saintly, no. That's why I have a sponsor!

Doing the steps is work. Talking about my emotions is work. Sometimes just picking up the phone is work. But it's the work of a lifetime. It's how I become the person I was meant to be in the first place, even though I'm not sure how I'm going to turn out! I'm trying to stay connected to my higher power today, do the right thing today, and not worry so much about next year. I've learned that it's okay not to be sure of what's next.

There are a few things I am sure of. What other people think of me is none of my concern; how I treat others is my concern. When I'm wrong, I need to admit it, and make amends as best I can. All the money or status in the world isn't going to remove my character defects, keep me from drinking, or give me direction in life. My higher power will do that. But I have to ask.

My former M.O. was to run my mind at the speed of sound and keep it all top secret, no matter how mundane it was. I've been learning (sometimes slowly) how to share my thoughts and emotions, pay loving attention to the world around me, and *slow down*. One day at a time for me means staying right here, right now, and being grateful for all the beauty around me and inside me.

Today, I am grateful for the abundance in my life, even though my finances and health are not what I would like them to be. Although those problems are significant, they are not the defining lines of my life. And I know I'm not alone in any of it! Because of what this program continues to teach me as long as I continue to want to learn, I have courage, perseverance, faith, and the willingness to be "a channel of thy peace." **This is a life second to none.**

**Just one more thing....
The noontime group, which usually meets at St. Pius on
Candia Road, will be meeting at Grace Episcopal Church for
about two months, starting August 13th. The church is at 106
Lowell St. in Manchester. Metered parking is available.**