

The Voice Within

NHAA District 12 Newsletter

DECEMBER 2012

THANKSGIVING DAY TRADITION and GRATITUDE MEETING with FIRST LIGHT OF DAY GROUP ***NEW LOCATION FOR 2012***

On Thanksgiving morning, the First Light of Day Group dispenses with its regular Thursday format of a Big Book meeting. In its place is a tradition/ gratitude meeting with an extended time span of 1½ hours (6:30 – 8 am).

Born of an idea from the November 1949 Grapevine article "A Suggestion for Thanksgiving" by Bill W, the format consists of an opening prayer, the reading of Tradition One, the reading of How It Works, the reading of the Promises, the readings from pages 29 and 37 of As Bill Sees It, followed by a sharing by those present of their own personal feelings of gratitude.

Attendance at this particular meeting has grown over the years to fill the St. Andrew's hall to capacity- 2011 saw over 150 alcoholics present. Many of those who attend this special meeting are at a 6:30 meeting for the first time, but the Spirit is such that they "often return to us convinced." The heartfelt tributes to the fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous, the outpouring of the unconditional love that exists among us, and the "genuine gratitude for the blessings received" serve as the basis for "living this day successfully."

Please join us Thanksgiving morning, November 22, at St. Raphael's Church on Ferry Street in Manchester for this celebration of the heartfelt GRATITUDE for the way of life that has been afforded to us through the fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous and the program of recovery as outlined in our 12 Steps.

- First Light of Day Group

give thanks

NHAA DISTRICT 12 CHRISTMAS ALCATHON MEETING SCHEDULE

Along with joyous music, good food, and family fun, the holidays can bring other things: unrealistic expectations. Family squabbles. Stress. What's a recovering alcoholic to do? Call your sponsor and...

Come to the Alcathon! District 12 sponsors 24 hours of nonstop meetings from 6 pm Christmas Eve until 6 pm Christmas Day. The 2012 Alcathon will take place at St. Raphael's Church on Ferry Street in Manchester. There will be food, fellowship, a raffle table, plenty of coffee, and LOTS of meetings.

At the November 18th District 12 Assembly, a time slot lottery was held for groups volunteering to host a meeting at this year's Alcathon. After the groups' names were drawn and a certain amount of dickering took place, the time slots were set as follows:

6-7 pm	Original Happy Hour West
7-8 pm	Happy Hour East
8-9 pm	Lake Massabesic
9-10 pm	Sunday Serenity
10-11 pm	Pathway to Sobriety/We Stopped In Time
11-12 pm	Hard Hat
12-1 am	Women's Daytime Group
1-2 am	North End Group
2-3 am	Rainbow Big Book
3-4 am	Living Sober/Queen City
4-5 am	Clean and Serene Big Book
5-6 am	New Boston Tuesday Night
6-7 am	First Light of Day
7-8 am	Beech Street Big Book
8-9 am	Precise Method Group
9-10 am	Amoskeag Big Book
10-11 am	Courage to Change Group
11 am-12 pm	Joy of Living Group
12-1 pm	St Pius Noontime Group
1-2 pm	Sunday Morning Round Robin
2-3 pm	Mens 12 x 12
3-4 pm	Manchester Original
4-5 pm	All Together Group
5-6 pm	Keep It Simple

For further details, visit www.aadistrict12.org.

The End of Suffering and the Beginning of a Spiritual Life

When I was drinking, my entire soul was infested with chaos. I suffered, mind and body, and blamed everyone else for that fact. I can remember my first drink being so freeing, but not for long. Just a few months later, that free feeling I discovered stopped and total chaos began. I chased that feeling of elation day after day to no avail.

People whom I loved and who loved me backed away, shunned me, and began to hate me. I hated you and hated myself even more. No one seemed to understand my anguish. No one seemed to "get it" and it was YOUR fault!

I thought I had the answers to fix my suffering. If you just left me alone, if you just gave me more attention, if you just loved me more, or just loved me less. If you only gave me what I wanted and needed or if you only let me figure things out on my own. I was never to be satisfied by you, myself or the drinking. All this suffering by my own hand and I didn't know what to do. My answers to what I thought would fix me were not working.

I reached a point in my life where I couldn't drink and I couldn't *NOT* drink. The insecurity, the fear, and the continued suffering were becoming more than I could take. Suicide was, seemingly, becoming my only option. I'm so glad I didn't take my own life because, as I have learned, I would've killed off any chances to enjoy this newly discovered spirituality that blesses me today.

My life, for the most part, is very spiritual. I was told early on to stick with the winners. The winners in my life today live spiritual lives and practice Step 11 on a daily basis. They have taught me to constantly grow spiritually; otherwise, I could end up drunk. My constant searching for the God of my understanding is critical in continued spiritual growth.

The important things in my life today are about starting my day off with prayer, meditation and morning devotional reading. Throughout the day, it is important that I ask God for his guidance, pausing when agitated, and doing the next right thing. I ask myself, "What would you have me be, do and say today, God." Of course, no one's perfect. Like the Big Book of Alcoholics Anonymous reads, "We claim spiritual progress rather than spiritual perfection." I'd be lying if I didn't say that the old "me" rears its ugly head occasionally. Thank goodness for Step 10 and making things right with those around me as well as with myself.

Today, people love me again, I love others and, most importantly, I love myself.

Remembering where I came from with Step 1, giving my day to God as I understand God with Steps 2 and 3 are all important parts of my daily routine. Step 12 tells me that I have to give it away to keep it. Living a spiritual life and staying sober mentally and physically are the only ways I'm going to make it without taking a drink.

The promises that our text states would happen to us have happened to me. Yes, there are still bad days and bad things that occur, but, just for today, I do not have to drink over them. When bad things happen, they are usually issues in areas that, before this program, I didn't even have areas! So I consider myself very blessed.

Happy holidays to everyone and God bless this great program!

Bradley L.
Manchester, NH
Sobriety Date 10/20/1995

Add your voice to *The Voice Within*! Send your announcements, commentary, articles, poetry, and art to voicewithinnews@gmail.com. February's issue will have a **RELATIONSHIPS** theme. Deadline for submission is February 1st.

Paint the House!

I love the AA banners that hang around the meeting halls. There have been times when nothing seems to catch my interest at a particular meeting; not the fellowship and friends who greet me with a smile and we jibber-jabber until the chairman knocks on the table, not the smiling speaker up front telling the rhythmic tale of chaos and hope. I always listen for the message, even if I have to close my eyes to really hear it.

Some days it's just seeing those banners that carry the message to me. When I first came in the halls, I hated them. Between the prayers and the chanting dialogues, "We think not," I felt I was surrounded by the brainwashed, like in some kind of cult. I laugh thinking now, that you folks saved my life. It was the end of the way to misery and the beginning of hope.

Around here, these dark blue and yellow banners say the same thing at each hall, for the most part. I come from another state, and there is a banner that I never have seen up here in New England. It said "Paint the House" What the heck does that mean, you ask. Where is it in the Big Book? I don't know, I have never been one to remember page numbers for anything, no matter how many times you tell me. Maybe it's not even in there and the phrase is just a local colloquialism. What exactly does "paint the house" mean?

One of the laws of change is that in order for change to occur, it must be preceded by a vision. So if you think about pulling into your driveway and see the house needs to be painted, that's where you start. In days past, you thought about it a lot, but every time you went to buy paint, maybe you stopped for booze first and the house never got done. Now the spouse is on your back, your in-laws and neighbors have begun to tell you it needs to be done. Again you make your promises and head out, but again you fall short and disappoint yourself and others. Painting the house rolls around in your head; you become obsessed, but it never gets done.

When I came into the halls, the explanation of "paint the house" was that it

means you have to be willing. You might not necessarily have the skills yet, but if you stick around long enough, you can paint your house. You see pictures of other people's houses they have painted and it gives you hope that you can get what they have. There are several trips out you have to make in the community and if you haven't stopped it already, you eventually stop getting booze each trip.

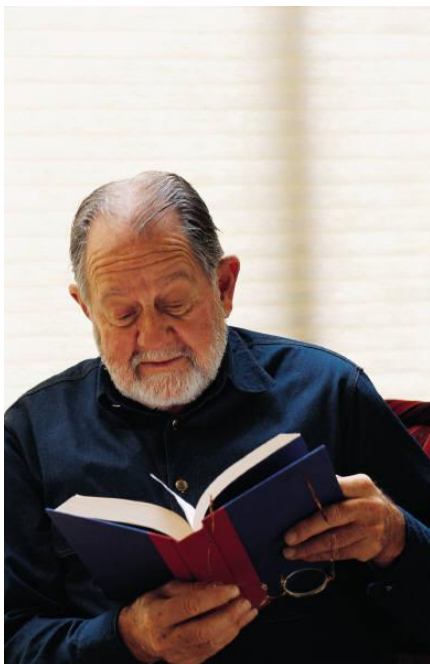
So the start of your vision is a color, say blue with yellow trim, just for giggles. Painting the whole outside of your house is a major job, as is changing your life. You'll need to clean and prep the surface, decide what type of paint to use, and apply the paint. A trip to the paint store gives you the swatches. What other tools do you need? Maybe you buy a tool box and begin collecting tools. You find someone who has experience to help you understand the directions of process.

You still have to exert your willpower enough to get up off the couch and do the work. Eventually, with consistent effort, your house is done. Ah, but now there is another chore list- the gardens, the tree out back that needs to come down, the cellar that needs cleaning. It is this way with sobriety also. You cannot just sit back and look at what you have done. You must work every day to maintain serenity.

This AA hall that was waiting for me to walk in, has given me a calm peaceful life so much different from the angry jailbird life I had. I have not only painted the house, but the interior has been refurbished. This was the beginning of many projects I have envisioned and successfully accomplished.

-Cindy C
Manchester, NH





VOICES OF EXPERIENCE

The First Light of Day Group has set aside the first Saturday of each month as a special "Long Timer/Old Timer" speaker meeting. Each person sharing their hope, strength, and experience will have been carrying the message for over 20 years.

In the Big Book, the preface to Part I "Pioneers of AA" says, "This group of thirteen stories shows that sobriety in AA can be lasting." These pioneers were sponsors of sponsors of sponsors who in one way or another have touched or shaped our lives in the miracle of recovery.

The 12 Steps of recovery are the basis for their success. "Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to alcoholics, and to practice these principles in all our affairs." These people have been given the gift of sobriety and been blessed with the "joy of living" longer than most of us have.

Whether you are celebrating a day, a week, a month, a year, or a decade or more, please join us in "the fellowship of the spirit" as we trudge the road of Happy Destiny...together...**today**.

Anyone who has managed 20 years or more of continuous sobriety and would be interested in sharing their message is asked to contact Grateful Don at 603-203-4104.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

The **St. Pius Noontime Group** has moved back home to its 575 Candia Road location.

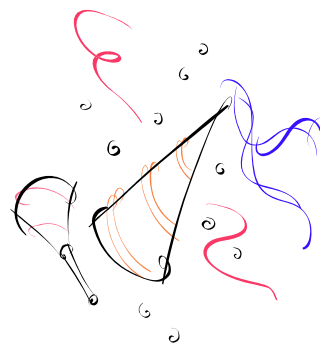
The **Women's Back to Basics Group**, which meets on Tuesday night at Easter Seals, will NOT be meeting on Christmas Day or New Year's Day.

Donate new or gently used home decorations, games, furniture, or electronics to the **District 12 Alcathon Raffle or Penny Sale!** Electronics should work. Also welcome are packaged gift sets (cheese, candy, gift boxes, etc.). No fresh food or used clothing, please. For more information, call Frank Z at (603)785-7973.

Time for personalities over principles! Musicians, story-tellers, poets, singers, magicians, and comedians are invited to share their talents at the **Open Mic Room at the District 12 Alcathon!** Call Jenn at (603)391-5829 for more information and sign up times!

The **District 12th Assembly Meetings** are held on the third Sunday of every month at St. Raphael's Church in Manchester from 6 to 8 pm. Get involved in a committee! Support your GSR! Find out how you, too, can be of service to still suffering alcoholics.

GET ON YOUR DANCING SHOES! IT'S THE DISTRICT 12 NEW YEAR'S EVE DINNER DANCE!



Pork Loin Dinner
Salad.Beverages.Desserts

DJ, Dancing, Raffles
Door Prizes

Monday December 31st
Parish of the Transfiguration Church Hall
305 Kelley Street, Manchester, NH
5:30 pm- 12:00 Midnight

Dinner and Dance Tickets: \$20.00 each
Dancing Only after 7:30 \$10.00 each
For Tickets, Contact Bob L @370-1282
Or Roger D @540-5720

For Special Dinner Plate Arrangements,
Contact Terry F @ 828-7932 before December 22nd.

