

## DISTRICT 12 ANNOUNCEMENTS

### MAY 18<sup>TH</sup> – 4<sup>TH</sup> Step Workshop

District 12 will be sponsoring a workshop titled "Demystifying the 4th Step", featuring a presentation and discussion on the process as outlined in the Big Book, by Dave R. The workshop will be held on Saturday May 18 from 2PM to 5PM in the [St. Raphael's Church Hall](#) on the corner of 3rd and Ferry Streets on Manchester's West side.

### June 2<sup>nd</sup>- Bill Wilson House Bus Trip.

Once again this year, District 12 is sponsoring a trip to the Bill Wilson house in East Dorset, Vt. on June 2nd, 2013.

We have reserved a motor coach (not your old school bus for sure) for the day. We will be leaving Manchester from the Macy's in Bedford at 7:30AM, arriving at Bill's house at 11. There will be time to see the house, a visit to Bill's gravesite and attend a meeting at the house. We will return to Manchester at about 6:30PM.

Tickets for the day are \$30.00 and will include the trip plus snacks during the trip.

You may want to pack a bag lunch. Movies will be shown on the way up and back.

Tickets are limited to the number of seats on the motor coach and they all must be sold by April 20th in order for the trip to happen, so if you are interested don't delay.

### July 20<sup>th</sup> Summer Outing, Pawtuckaway State Park.

### October 19<sup>th</sup>- Fall Dinner Dance

District 12's Function Committee is sponsoring the annual Fall Dinner and Dance, honoring our "Old Timers" on October 19, 20123.

The event will be held at the Assumption Greek Orthodox Church on 111 Island Pond Rd, Manchester, NH, from 5:00PM to 11:00 PM.

The Voice Within needs your announcements, articles, and news! Send them to [Voicewithinnews@gmail.com](mailto:Voicewithinnews@gmail.com). Deadline for the next issue is June 1<sup>st</sup>. The theme for that issue is The Joy of Living.

# The Voice Within

NHAA District 12 Newsletter

APRIL 2013

## SOBRIETY IN DISASTER: RECOVERY AND RESPONSE

– Cathy H, Manchester

In his article "The Next Frontier: Emotional Sobriety," Bill Wilson wrote about struggling with depression:

I kept asking myself, 'Why can't the Twelve Steps work to release depression?' By the hour, I stared at the St. Francis Prayer... 'It is better to comfort than to be comforted.' Here was the formula, all right. But why didn't it work?

Suddenly I realized what the matter was. My basic flaw had always been dependence- almost absolute dependence- on people or circumstances to supply me with prestige, security, and the like. Failing to get these things according to my perfectionist dreams and specifications, I had fought for them...

There wasn't a chance of making the outgoing love of St. Francis a workable and joyous way of life until these fatal and almost absolute dependencies were cut away...

I found I had to exert every ounce of will and action to cut off these faulty emotional dependencies upon people, upon AA, indeed, upon any set of circumstances whatsoever. Only then would I be free to love as Francis had. Emotional and instinctual satisfactions, I saw, were really the extra dividends of having love, offering love, and expressing a love appropriate to each relation of life...

This seems to be the primary healing circuit: an outgoing love of God's creation and his people, by means of which we can avail ourselves of his love for us... the real current can't flow until our paralyzing deficiencies are broken, and broken at depth. Only then can we possibly have a glimmer of what adult love really is.

([The Language of the Heart](#), 236-238)

The last week (April 15-April 19) has been filled with public and private disasters. In New Hampshire, the unprecedented outrages in nearby Boston have shown us not only the depths of human evil and degradation, but the nobility in human hearts. As Boston was locked down, closed to outside traffic and outside help, we listened for news, prayed, and waited.

In the world of disaster relief, the first responders (fire, police, the Red Cross, EMTs, the National Guard) are charged with preparation and response. These are the stages before a disaster hits (if you know it's coming, like a blizzard), during, and immediately afterward. Preparation includes Red Cross First Aid classes, firefighters teaching fire safety, police patrols. Response includes streets being evacuated, sandbags being placed along a river, soldiers ferrying people to higher ground during a flood, firefighters responding to an alarm. Professional first responders are highly trained to accomplish their mission in a certain way. They have their own language, too: *call numbers, operations, logistics, staging area, NIMS*. This makes communication easier and faster.

In a disaster, witnesses are often moved to help, to do whatever they can without regard to their own interest. We saw people carrying and wheeling injured Boston marathon runners and supporters to safety. These helpers drop whatever agendas they might have in order to be of service. It is true that sometimes they get in the way of the first responders, and the professionals know how to handle this. But in the immediacy of disaster, people drop the kinds of faulty dependencies Bill Wilson wrote about. They serve as channels of outgoing love. Think about Red Cross volunteers serving meals, handing out blankets, finding motel rooms for survivors. Think about the Salvation Army setting up soup kitchens. Any volunteer will tell you that there is happiness in such service.

In AA, we know how to respond to disasters, too. Our preparation consists of going to meetings, going on commitments, working with our sponsor, and serving our group, district or state organizations. Being active prepares us to meet any life situation we might encounter in sobriety. We drop what we're doing to drive someone to a meeting, answer the hotline, band around the tearful newcomer who is sure life is over. Alcoholism creates disasters in human lives and communities. We who have been walking disasters have unique, priceless expertise in this kind of preparation and first response.

The third stage in disaster relief is called recovery. In this stage, helpers assist with rebuilding

homes and lives. Trauma counselors, physicians, nonprofit organizations like Southern Baptist Disaster Relief, AmeriCorps, Habitat for Humanity, Catholic Charities, and others work the long road to recovery. This stage can take months or even years. You rarely see stories about disaster recovery on TV. And yet this effort requires the same kind of selflessness, the same kind of professionalism.

One of the vital parts of recovery is teaching survivors that they are NOT alone, that they will NOT be abandoned, that they can rebuild their lives. They will need to exert themselves, but their lives will have purpose and meaning once again.

In AA, recovery from the disaster of alcoholism is a lifelong endeavor. In order to make a new life, we act as our own first responders and recovery workers every day. We do this with the help of our sponsors and the fellowship. We work the steps to remove the old addictions to material things. In cutting away our dependencies on outside markers of success- the promotion, the “ideal” romance, or knowing the “right” people, we are able to act with love. This love is unconditional and opens us up to the unconditional love and energy of our Higher Power. This is the healing circuit of love and power that Bill wrote about.

In the aftermath of any disaster, people may choose to return back to their accustomed paths after the incident or crisis is over. On the other hand, being engaged in disaster response may truly change the direction of a life. As alcoholics engaged in recovery, we change our direction in order to have a life.



**CHRONIC PAIN and PAIN MEDICINE: AA’S LAST FRONTIER?**

This article is not a research project; it is just a point of view expressed by a fellow Alcoholics Anonymous member with 26 years of consecutive sobriety. For over 60 years, AA has been successful at teaching alcoholics how to make an effective life through abstinence from alcohol. During the years that I have been sober and clean, I have seen AA struggle with some tough and controversial issues like dual diagnosis, mental illness, street drugs, and medication. For instance, in the early 80’s, drugs were apparently lowering the bottom of younger people who started to enter AA in mass numbers. This was quite an adjustment for many of the AA members who had got sober without facing the issues now confronting newer members and their home groups. There was a tension and sense of unease when these new members entered the halls. It took quite some time for discussion of these problems to make any headway without heated arguments and hurt feelings.

Since the late 70’s and early 80’s, AA has gotten much bigger and more diverse, thus bringing with it an assortment of issues the older members didn’t have to deal with. These topics can still cause a certain agitation among some AA members, but the real truth is that to be in AA, the only requirement is still the desire to stop drinking. In the end, AA has made great strides coping with all of the issues I have brought up, except one: chronic pain and pain medicine.

I personally find the issue of pain and pain medicine to still be a taboo subject that most seem uncomfortable talking about. This topic involves personal choice, honesty and communication, like most of the challenges we face as AA members. I do not claim to have any answers; I merely am bringing the subject to light. There seems to me to be a stigma and judgment involved when it involves this issue. I have come to my own conclusion that this stigma and judgment has the same core as in any other case- fear.

In all of our lifetimes we are more than likely going to face the issue of chronic pain, because physical pain and disease are part of the human condition, especially as we age. I have found that most people who take pain medicine are very quiet about it and share it mainly with their sponsors, and at this time, for good reason. I have seen people suffer unnecessarily from not taking medication and I have seen people abuse the medication when it is given. In my own experience, I had a sponsor who died from pancreatic cancer and refused pain medicine. I personally do not want to die that way, nor do I have to.

I will use my own issue with pain as an example. Like a lot of us, I have had to deal with the issue of chronic pain. In my case, it was Shingles in my left eye that turned into Post Herpetic Neuralgia, a very painful affliction. I saw the quality of my life decline and at times didn’t want to live. Like many, I suffered unnecessarily, but eventually took the medicine and took all the precautions I could when doing something that could jeopardize my sobriety. I involved my sponsor and my doctor and close loved ones. I had no secret agenda; I just wanted to stop hurting and gain some control of my life back. Being spiritually sound and working a solid program with a sponsor made the transition much less dangerous for me. Personally, the medicine taken as prescribed has been life altering for me and has brought me much better quality of life. However, I rarely told anyone for fear of what they might say. I know today that I made the right decision for me. It is a choice I do not regret. I have many friends sober a long time who take pain medicine, yet it is not discussed for the fear of the controversy it creates.

My favorite quote in AA is “To Thine Own Self Be True” and I use this as a gauge for most of my difficult decisions. There will be many who disagree with my discussion of this topic, but I am not here to make friends, I am just bringing up an uncomfortable topic. In years past, I remember clearly being told not to talk about depression or medication. I was even told (by older AA members) not to take my medication while I was suicidal. Like many alcoholics, my personality is one that is black and white with no middle ground, but I feel that there is a middle ground for the use of pain medication. I try to have an open mind and listen to my intuition, which is really hard to do when you’re in chronic pain. In recent years, this subject does not paralyze me like it once did. I live an honest life and I have chronic pain and I addressed it in a mature and sober manner which has worked for me and countless others. I understand the fear attached to the subject of Pain medicine but do we have to be so black & white about it? What do you think?

Timothy John D., Manchester

**GROUP ANNOUNCEMENTS**

**Tuesday, May 7, 2013- the Heard It Through the Grapevine Group celebrates its 9<sup>th</sup> Anniversary.**  
**6:45-7:30 Pizza**  
**7:30-8:30 Meeting**  
**St. Andrew’s Episcopal Church**  
**102 North Main Street**

**Friday May 10<sup>th</sup>, 2013- the Living Sober Group celebrates its 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary from 8:30 to 10:00 at the First United Methodist Church, 961 Valley Street in Manchester.**

**Friday, May 17<sup>th</sup>- the Women’s Daytime Group will celebrate its 24<sup>th</sup> Anniversary with a Potluck from 12:00-12:45 pm and Meeting with special speaker from 12:45-1:30 pm. Food donations are welcome, but no food that needs to be heated, please!**

**Sunday, May 19<sup>th</sup>- the Sunday Serenity Group will celebrate their 36<sup>th</sup> Anniversary with a meeting from 10:00 to 11:00 am and brunch and fellowship from 11:00 am to 1:00 pm. Food donations are welcome.**

**Monday, June 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2013 the Joy of Living Group will be celebrating their 34<sup>th</sup> Anniversary with a gathering at St. Catherine’s Church at 207 Hemlock and Webster Street in Manchester.**  
**7-8 pm Coffee Social**  
**8-9 pm “Promises of AA” Large Screen DVD showing Father Joseph Martin**  
**9-10 pm Snacks, soft drinks, countdown, raffles.**

**Saturday June 15<sup>th</sup>, the Saturday Solution Seekers will celebrate their 3<sup>rd</sup> Anniversary with a meeting from 4:30 to 5:30 and food/fellowship from 5:30 to 6:30.**

**NEW GROUPS:**  
**Sunday Beginner’s Meeting from 4 to 5 pm at the Bedford Hills Nursing Home, 30 Colby Drive, Bedford. (Behind Walmart)**  
**Friday Night Live meets at St. Raphael’s Church, 3<sup>rd</sup> and Ferry Streets, from 7:15 to 8:30 pm.**