

# HERE'S HOW

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## *Restored To Sanity*

### *Are You An Alcoholic?* Dennis T.

Whenever I liked something, one was never enough. At 6 I snuck Coca-Colas and hid them like I hid Vodka bottles at 56. The first time I drank enough to get drunk, I had a warm glow that engulfed my entire being. To my surprise I found that normal people do NOT get that glow and do NOT like getting drunk; but in my world everyone did. I'd drink at a wedding with other guys, propped against the bar, thinking that everyone drank like I did. If I'd turned around to see the other hundred guests drinking a couple of drinks all night, I would have known better.

Both my parents died from alcohol so I set strict drinking rules for myself. As long as there were outside restraints, I kept control. However, when I did drink my allotted amount, I would drink every drop and then suck the liquor out of the ice cubes.

Divorce removed those restraints and gave me an excuse to drink daily with limits on quantity. Alcohol worked for a long time. I felt more energetic, confident and relaxed so I was better with women, dancing, being friendly and liking myself.

I started to get dry mouth in the morning. Then I got it all day, then all of the time and finally bad enough so I could barely talk in the morning. Headaches would last days and sometimes months. I got arrogant and nasty at the bars so I stayed home to drink. Alcohol was making my world small so I took an "Are You an Alcoholic?" test that I saw in a doctor's office. I can still pass that test with a minimal amount of rationalization. I now know that if you bother to take the test, you are probably an alcoholic.

As time passed my belly got

huge and hard, my nose reddened slightly and I carefully disposed empty liquor bottles so that my neighbors did not see how much I drank. Later my whole face became red and puffy and I developed bags under my eyes making them squinty. My morning regimen was throw up, brush my teeth and shower. I needed a few drinks to go to sleep and sometimes I woke in the middle of night needing a drink to go back to sleep. I had night sweats that soaked my pillow and I woke up feeling exhausted, no matter how much sleep I got. This is when I noticed that I needed a calculator to do the same math problems that I used to do in my head. People started to question my decisions and started to complain about my memory. Even when I was NOT drinking, my memory was failing me.

As I deteriorated physically and mentally, my life fell apart. Things spun out of control. I drank to escape rather than for fun. Life became dark and hopeless and depression became a constant companion. My skin felt so slimy that I had to wash the same areas several times to feel clean. I could no longer capture that warm glow.

One day I was walking down the sidewalk and a neighbor crossed the street to avoid me. I went home to see a monster in the mirror. My face was swollen and red. My nose was purple. Looking past the puffy slits of eyes with huge bags below, I saw a blank, glassy glare looking at me. I could have stopped any time but I waited until I had created this horrible, ugly monster that looked at me with utter, hopeless despair.



I went to AA and quit drinking. During the first five days of abstinence, I was completely unable to sleep for more than an hour all night. After about five days, I was able to sleep but had to urinate like a horse every hour. The fuzzy brain stayed quite a while. Ironically, I did not realize how fuzzy I was. I had gone from a fifth of Vodka a day to abstinence so I felt clear-headed. Unfortu-

nately, the rest of the world saw me as brain dead.

The mind and body is resilient so my head became clear and my body got healthy. I remembered the warm glow of alcohol that I used to feel at the beginning and forgot the dark depression of the last years. I do not like following directions, do not trust others and have a habit of blaming, denial, omission and rationalization. In short, I visited AA and refused to join.

I started binge drinking on weekends. That was like jumping off a cliff. In a few short weeks my brain and body deteriorated and things were worse than ever. I lost control of my body functions and sometimes soiled my clothing.

I kept going to AA meetings while bingeing on occasional weekends. Life became so bad that I wanted to die and went on a weeklong binge. I ignored AA calls and drank all of the time.

One morning a couple of AA friends broke into my place, forced me to eat, took me to a meeting, held me captive all night and told me they loved me. It was a true, pure love that gave me hope. I stopped pretending that my life was under control and became rigorously honest. I listened and did what I was told. I went to AA meetings every day. AA and sobriety became my priority so that life became good.

This time it took over a year for my brain and body to



heal. It was unbearably hard to quit. I had NO strength to fight the Program. AA showed me that the happiness I sought all my life was right at my feet and I just had not noticed it. I learned to enjoy what I have instead of deferring life until I achieve meaningless goals. For the first time in my life, I enjoy life. AA taught me how to have a life worth living.

### *Rowboats*

Anonymous

Do you remember the story about the fellow stranded on his rooftop during the flood? He's getting really worried as the water rises and implores God to help him. A man paddles by in a rowboat calling, "Come, get in the rowboat and I'll take you to safety." The fellow on the roof replies, "No thanks, I've asked God for help so I'll be okay."

As the rowboat floats out of sight, a man in a speedboat zooms up to the flooding house and yells to the stranded man, "Hurry up and hop in the boat and I'll take you to safety." Again, the fellow on the roof replies, "No, thanks, I've asked God for help so I'll be okay." The speedboat leaves.

As the water rises even faster, a helicopter suddenly hovers overhead and a voice on the bullhorn booms, "Climb up the ladder and get on board and I'll take you to safety." And yet again, the man on the roof replies, "No, thanks, I've asked God for help so I'll be okay. The water continues to rise rapidly and the man drowns.

The poor soul arrives in heaven and meets God. Immediately he launches into a tirade against God, telling him that he had prayed and implored and pleaded for his help and yet God let him drown. God pats him kindly on the head and says, "My son, I did help you, I sent you a rowboat, a speedboat, and a helicopter, and you rejected them all."

Where did I get unrecognized help toward ending my addiction to alcohol? Was the rowboat losing my job because I was physically unable to go to work any longer? Was the speedboat the aide in the general hospital who gently suggested that I stop drinking after a diagnosis of pernicious anemia because I drank alcohol instead of eating? My helicopter, ladder dangling, was the physician who diagnosed my condition as chronic alcoholism correctly, hospitalizing me for one month in a locked psychiatric ward and educating me about my disease. She strongly encouraged me to call Alcoholics Anonymous while there, which I did, and subsequently had two

wonderful AA women come to my home on a 12th Step call. Thank God I climbed that ladder!

I am a true believer in the adage that good things come out of bad. The things I considered “bad” at the time, losing my job, being diagnosed with anemia, and spending a month in a locked ward, were but the catalysts for the something “good” that happened in my life. It’s amazing how that pattern continues to be revealed.

I have the privilege of carrying the message to women in the recovery pod in our county jail and I speak about rowboats. Their jail experience could very well be their rowboat. What was your rowboat? Hospital, jail, divorce, child custody case, lost jobs, health, or simply showing up for work wearing yesterday’s clothes after an all-nighter with the boys?

Bless that boat, whatever it was.

### *Cunning, Baffling and Powerful as Ever*

Jim M.

I was in my forties and my problems were getting worse, despite ten years of psychotherapy and lifetime observance of my religion. The drunken abuse that I inflicted on my wife and children on Thanksgiving Day finally convinced me that I had become an alcohol addict. I had used alcohol as a performance enhancer since I was a teenager but I couldn’t recall ever drinking just to get drunk. My driving and arrest records were spotless.

Nevertheless, I called Alcoholic Anonymous for help with my problems. A few days of sweaty DT’s on my cold basement floor sobered me up for the first meeting in an apartment a few blocks from my home in an affluent suburb. The people seemed to know me better than I knew myself. They became my first home group and I dove into AA with both feet as a loyal group member and service worker. Thoughts of alcohol and drinking slowly went away. Leading meetings and sponsoring people became a new way of life.

My new happiness and freedom slowly created doubts about the power of just one drink to spirit away a proven member of the fellowship. It conflicted with my own experience after kicking my nicotine addiction ten years earlier. I could still smoke an occasional cigarette without backsliding. Were the AAs’ warnings about the first drink merely a bluffing scare tactic to help struggling newcomers?

Lack of current biochemical evidence of the first drink’s seductive power compelled me to conduct a scientific

## **WE NEED TO HEAR FROM YOU ABOUT SPONSORSHIP!**

Although sponsorship is a hallowed AA tradition, it is never mentioned in the Big Book. So the question is: What exactly is sponsorship?

It is defined in many different ways. Some see it as a relationship of equals, where an older member and a new member share their recoveries in a friendly give-and-take. Others see it as a mentorship while still others view the sponsor as a drill instructor shaping the newcomer into a sober citizen.

How do you view sponsorship? What makes a good sponsor? Should a sponsor be kind and understanding or firmly directive? What are the responsibilities of a sponsor? Of a sponsee? Is it demeaning to refer to a sponsee as a pigeon? How many people can one person sponsor effectively at the same time? How do lines of sponsorship come into play (or should they)? Why is sponsorship important—or is it?

Or tell us your story about a great sponsor or sponsee? How did you first connect? How have you worked together? What have you gotten out of the relationship? Or send us stories on any topic sobriety related!

**e-mail: [hereshow@chicagoAA.org](mailto:hereshow@chicagoAA.org)  
with submissions**

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experiment using myself as a guinea pig. I fabricated an elaborate system of virtual AA smoke detectors and safety nets to save me, if the first drink did actually kidnap me, as they said it would. I hired a co-worker as my downtown sponsor in addition to the one in the suburbs and attended daily meetings in both places. Leading a church basement meeting required me to recruit weekly speakers. My wife and children were enrolled in AlAnon, AlaTot and their Wagonmasters camping club. My defenses seemed to be bulletproof before I picked up that first drink.

The vodka martini in a bar on a Sunday in May totally misled me. It could have been tap water. No craving or even thought of a second drink was ignited. The following Sunday's second drink was different. It prudently suggested that bar drinking is much too expensive. Accordingly, a pint bottle of vodka was purchased for more affordable but secret drinking at home. There followed an imperceptible increase in the amount and frequency of my drinking for several months until it was exposed on the following Thanksgiving Day. New abuses of my wife and children again made me want to stop drinking, but this time I couldn't.

My wife promptly kicked me out of our house. So did my 85-year-old mother! Even my still-drinking alcoholic brother put me out on the street. As a newbie homeless person, I had no winter survival skills nor mail and telephone service. My Alano club kicked me out when it closed for the night and I slept in my car. Isolation made me feel as if I were an extra-terrestrial. Inability to stop drinking suggested suicide as the only solution. That failed when the driver of an eighteen-wheeler, who was tailgating me on the interstate, passed just as I slammed on my brakes.

"No matter what happens, Jim, keep coming to meetings," urged Jim R, a now-deceased police officer. "It's never too late until you're dead," he encouraged me. I brought a sponsee who was drunker than I was to a meeting in a kindergarten classroom. We tripped and fell on the tiny chairs and tables. There was only a mild rebuke for bringing someone so drunk to a meeting.

The bottom or moment of clarity came when my Alano club sanctuary was about to close for the night. My suburban sponsor, Joe L., said, "You won't be able to stay alive much longer. You'll most likely freeze to death, step in front of a bus or strangle on your own vomit, if you don't stop drinking." That message finally enabled me to recognize the fatal nature of my condition and was the beginning of my current recovery.

My new status as a low bottom drunk convinced me of the need to be a 24/7 AA participant. Fear of the first drink had me saying, "Please, Higher Power, please, don't let me drink today," before getting out of bed. I focused like a laser beam on news about long time members' relapses, wakes and funerals. Instead of drinking because of problems, they tended to be people who had acquired trouble-free lives and there were dozens of them. They were victims of a disease, not disappointments to the fellowship, and convinced me my alcoholism was as fatal and incurable as diabetes. Life in AA was again thriving and I felt on top of the world until another Sunday afternoon. It was mid-day and I had just returned from a rainy weekend Boy Scout camping trip. I was happy but hungry and tired. Alone, and making a sandwich in the kitchen, I discovered a brandy bottle in my mouth. Instead of swallowing, I put the bottle down on the table, suspecting it to be another drinking dream. Tears poured from my eyes when I realized that this was no dream. The bottle belonged to my father-in-law who was a weekend visitor.

It is now about thirty years after my first drink experiment. I've never had it so good as a retired, empty-nester in my seventies. Few of the reasons I had for staying sober in my sixties still exist. That's scary.

The authors of the Big Book suggest what I must still do to remain sober, happy, joyous and free--pass on what I know to those struggling to stop drinking. I try to live by that suggestion, vividly expressed at the end of the Forward to the Fourth Edition, and "In any meeting, anywhere, AAs share experience, strength and hope with each other, in order to stay sober and help other alcoholics." What I receive in return from the struggling alcoholic is twenty-first century evidence that the first drink is as cunning, baffling and powerful as ever.

### *Twelve Steps Before the Program*

Anonymous

- 1 - We admitted we were powerless over nothing; that we could manage our own lives and the lives of everybody else.
- 2 - Came to believe that we could restore ourselves to sanity if everybody else would just leave us alone.
- 3 - Made a decision to take ourselves very seriously so we could manage the will and lives of our loved ones.
- 4 - Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of everybody we knew, especially those we were convinced were out to get us.
- 5 - Admitted to our nearest and dearest the exact nature of their wrongs and if they didn't understand, that was their

problem.

6 - Became entirely ready to have others remove the defects in their character that offended us.

7 - Demanded that others admit their shortcomings and shape up or ship out.

8 - Made a list of all persons we were sure opposed us and became willing to make them do it our way no matter how long it took.

9 - Became entirely ready to make those people miserable, especially by staying angry, resentful and afraid.

10 - Continued to take the inventory of those around us and when they were wrong, promptly told them about it.

11 - Sought through complaining, nagging, and self-righteousness to improve others' relationship with us, demanding only that they understand us and do it our way.

12 - Having had a complete physical, emotional, and spiritual breakdown as a result of these steps, we tried to carry our message to those who would agree with us, blaming our troubles on others and getting sympathy and pity in all our affairs.

### *Rediscovering Why I Am Here*

Anonymous

I feel I have been given an extraordinary gift--the chance to rediscover my alcoholism without having to take a drink.

As odd as that may sound, I feel I am often given glimpses of life as it could be, if I were to choose the wrong path. I had a vivid dream once in which I lived out a decision I'd been considering that day. I was given a glimpse of potential devastation I hadn't even considered. When I woke up, I was so grateful to have the chance to not make that choice.

Now, like a waking dream, I am remembering what it was that made me start drinking in the first place. I decided to stop going to meetings after eight years, thinking that maybe I would be fine without them. At first I dwindled down to one meeting a week for a year, then finally decided to stop going all together. Things were great at first but then I began to experience the terrible anxiety, inability to look people in the eyes, the self-consciousness and nervous laughter, feeling out of place, the sense of shame, the inability to communicate--all the things that had originally led me to drink in the first place.

One day I smelled pot smoke on my way home from work and I wanted it so badly. Just the thought of being able to relax... relief. That was what I wanted. That was when I realized I was in over my head and maybe trying to stay sober on my own really wasn't working for me.

The complete inability to relax. That is what I had before I

started drinking. I hadn't realized how much of that AA had taken away from me until I stopped going to meetings and it came back. I had been hoping I would be okay without AA but then I knew for sure that I have alcoholism and it isn't going away. The alcoholism is there, with or without the drink, and I have to make a decision. Do I choose life or do I choose death?

If I want to live, free from insanity (or all-consuming anxiety), I NEED to go to meetings. It's so unfortunate that in order to truly realize just how alcoholic I am, I had to fall so far out of the habit of going to meetings that it now takes every ounce of willpower I have to get back to them. Strange how there could truly be something in your mind that doesn't want you to get better.

I'm writing this to remind myself that I want to live. I want to live and I want to remember. And I hope that my experience will be useful to the next alcoholic who wonders why they keep showing up to AA and listening to the same stories every week.

I remember feeling this way. Before. Before everything. From my earliest memories. Hiding from people. Wondering constantly what is wrong with me, why I can't connect with anyone. Not even a thought crossing my mind about how I could show up to anyone other than myself. I don't want to be that scared, terrified, lonely person anymore.

It's good to belong to a group of people who understand. Who know what that is like and are trying to help each other live "on the sunny of the street."

Quite often in AA, I had thought that things weren't working for me. It took rediscovering my alcoholism to make me realize just how much relief I had had in the rooms of Alcoholics Anonymous. It was so easy for me to take it for granted because the bar was being constantly raised. Thank you, God, for taking the blinders off. Please, now just help me to get back.



# 2011 Illinois State Conference

Hosted by Area 19  
August 5th, 6th, 7th  
Holiday Inn North Shore  
5300 West Touhy Avenue, Skokie, Illinois 60077

**Speakers:**  
Pam R. ECR Trustee  
Ana H. Chicago, IL  
Harold G. Annapolis, MD  
Rev. Ward E. Chairman GSB  
James L. Evanston  
Laura G. CASO Manager  
Phyllis H. General Manager GSO

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Coming from the North:  
Take I-94 Edens Expressway to the Touhy Avenue West Exit 39A.  
Travel West on Touhy Avenue 3 blocks Hotel is located on the Right Side.

Coming from the South:  
Take I-90/94 to the I-94 West to Milwaukee to Touhy Avenue West Exit 39B.  
Travel West on Touhy Avenue 3 blocks Hotel is located on the Right Side.

**\$95 Room Rates**

# CASO Corner

By Laura N Gonzalez



I recently read the Grapevine and I stumbled across questions I would like to share with you. "Where has Twelfth Step work brought you; what personal benefits have you received from reaching out to others?" There are so many gifts that this program has brought me and my family because someone conducted Twelfth Step work. If someone didn't reach out to me, I may not be here. If I stop reaching out, someone else may not be here tomorrow. I can go on and on about this but I don't want to bore you to tears. I would ask that you pause and ponder what twelfth step work has done for you?

If you have not had the chance to see your Chicago Area Service Office lately, this would be a great opportunity. See the fabulous Archives display, do some shopping, go to the AA meeting (12:10 M-F, 2:30 T & TH) or come in from the cool spring air to warm up with a wonderful cup of AA coffee. Nothing tastes better than coffee at your local AA meeting or office. It has a certain, special flavor.

The telephone lines are ringing and there is a sober member of Alcoholics Anonymous willing to take your call. If you have some time to commit to answer the telephones, please call me and I can help you be of service at your AA office. The next printing of the directory will be in May. Please note the deadline for changes in the next directory is Monday, April 18th. If you have any changes, additions or deletions of a meeting, we need to know by then.

If your group wants to be listed, please make sure your Group Contact information is current. We need a Group Contact so we can get in touch with someone from a meeting when questions arise. For example, we get calls saying, "The meeting's in the directory, but no one's there!" Without a contact we cannot verify whether a group is still meeting or whether the caller is lost. If the meeting is there and we do not list your meeting, AAs and potential members of the fellowship cannot find your favorite meeting. If your group does not meet anymore and we have the meeting listed, a newcomer or out-of-towner may be sent on a wild goose chase. Please help us keep your group information accurate. The forms to do this are on-line at <http://www.chicagoaa.org/forms>. I want to clarify that your group will not be removed from the directory, if your group does not send in contributions. This is a huge misconception in the Fellowship. We strive to maintain the most current information in our directories and need your help to do this.

A reminder about some upcoming events that need your support:

\* Area 19 is hosting the Illinois State Conference. This is a three day event being held August 5, 6 and 7, 2011. This conference will take place at the Holiday Inn North Shore Hotel in Skokie, IL. For flyers and registration, please visit our website [www.ChicagoAA.org](http://www.ChicagoAA.org)

\* The 72nd Annual All Chicago Open is to be held September 17th at the UIC Pavilion. This event commemorates the first A.A. meeting held here in the Chicago Area. There are usually over 5,500 attendees at this open meeting of Alcoholics Anonymous. Join and be a part of AA in Chicago history. We need volunteers to put this event on. The planning meetings are every 3rd Thursday at 7pm at the Chicago Area Service Office (180 N Wabash, Ste 305.) It takes lots of dedicated AAs to put this event together.

Below is the rest of the list of the groups/meetings that have contributed to the Chicago Area Service Office in 2010. Because of your support, we can continually carry the message of hope.

Laura Gonzalez  
Chicago Area Service Office  
Office Manager

- 13-5008 Phoenix  
 13-5048 Destination Success  
 13-5101 First Step Beginners  
 13-5102 Thursday Nite Steps Alexian Hosp  
 13-6294 12 & 12 Study Group  
 13-7770 Big Book Priority  
 13-7865 Thursday Noon Step Meeting  
 14-0174 Third Eleven Step Thursday Group  
 14-0176 Old School Speaker Meeting  
 14-0178 Amethyst Sunday Morning  
 14-0180 Thursday Night Step  
 14-0182 Mikes Place  
 14-0185 CASO Don't Go It Alone Tues 1210  
 14-0187 CASO Sobriety for Lunch Thur 1210  
 14-0188 CASO Steps 1210 Wed  
 14-0189 CASO Big Book Friday 1210  
 14-0192 Easy Does It  
 14-0193 Ft Dearborn  
 14-0194 401 Group Nightside  
 14-0195 401 Regency Big Book  
 14-0197 Michigan Bridge  
 14-0198 Noon Step Discussion Group  
 14-0199 One Illinois Center  
 14-0202 As Bill Sees It Responsibility  
 14-0205 Watertower  
 14-0206 Wrigley Group  
 14-0207 Sixty Minutes Group  
 14-0208 All Twelve Steps Group  
 14-0212 Wed Right on Track  
 14-0219 Time for Life  
 14-0228 Magnificent Mile BYOB  
 14-0237 Group 9 Men's  
 14-0239 CASO 12 & 12-Mon 1210  
 14-0245 Steps to Sobriety  
 14-0250 North Michigan Group  
 14-0253 12 x 12  
 14-0256 24 Hours A Day Women  
 14-0282 Mustard Seed  
 14-0322 Nooners Old Colony Bldg Group Con  
 14-0339 Bughouse Square  
 14-0345 Streeterville Gay Group Men  
 14-0348 Straight and Sober  
 14-1103 Sunlight of the Spirit Wanderers  
 14-1253 Hazelden Men's Group  
 14-1316 (LAP) Lawyers' Assistance Program  
 14-1499 The Working Step  
 14-2266 Board Mid Week  
 14-2343 Open to Change  
 14-2346 Thursday Speaker Meeting  
 14-3304 Keep it Simple Big Book  
 14-3748 Gratitude Mtg-One Day At A Time
- 14-3761 Twelve O'Clock High  
 14-3870 Ascension Beginners  
 14-3882 Monday Barometer  
 14-4018 11th Step Group  
 14-4021 New Beginning Women's  
 14-4028 Indoor Beach Step  
 14-4084 California Group Thursday  
 14-4212 Women's Big Book Step  
 14-4235 Chicago Board  
 14-4235 Tuesday Board  
 14-4239 Rigorously Honest  
 14-4338 Y-Not  
 14-4473 CASO Afternoon Step Tues 230  
 14-4502 Monday Open 12x12  
 14-4554 View of the Lake  
 14-4560 California Group Tuesday  
 14-4983 First 164 Pages  
 14-5013 The Promises  
 14-6067 The Rice Group  
 14-6135 Third Step Gratitude  
 14-6149 Step  
 14-6197 YMCA Harbor Light  
 14-6459 AA Beginners Share  
 14-6482 Chicago Beginners Group  
 14-6994 Came to Believe  
 14-7674 Women's Way  
 14-7765 CASO Big Book Thurs 230  
 14-7816 Chicago Open  
 14-7828 Central Station Step Study  
 14-7897 Never Took A Legal Drink  
 14-7975 715 Early Meeting  
 14-9853 South Side Sobriety  
 15-1506 60 Minutes  
 15-1508 Monday Night Twelve and Twelve  
 15-1512 Mt Prospect Big Book Study One  
 15-1516 Over Easy Breakfast  
 15-1519 Recovery Five  
 15-1520 S Curve  
 15-1523 Tuesday Night Beginners  
 15-1529 Northwest Nooners  
 15-1536 Wood Dale 12x12  
 15-1539 Sunday Men's 24 Hr Breakfast  
 15-1551 Sat Morning Early Risers  
 15-1556 Big Book  
 15-3580 SPAANS Step and Disc  
 15-4491 Elk Grove Nooners  
 15-6138 Maryville in the Morning  
 15-6316 Wanderers 2063  
 15-6501 Thanks for Sharing  
 16-0014 Big Book Study  
 16-0406 Bryn Mawr Steps and Traditions  
 16-0407 Claremont  
 16-0414 Group Eighty  
 16-0415 Group 7  
 16-0416 Inn Group  
 16-0420 North Shore Promises  
 16-0435 Rogers Park Traveling Men's
- 16-0441 Beginners Too  
 16-0591 Bryn Mawr II  
 16-0594 Wilson Avenue Group  
 16-0610 Early Birds  
 16-0623 Tues Night Gay Step Study  
 16-0643 Saturday Night Open  
 16-1232 Pilgrim Two  
 16-1246 Aladdin's  
 16-1247 Woman's Discussion  
 16-1305 Smoke Free Room Five  
 16-2135 The Ark  
 16-2474 1476 Summerdale  
 16-2479 Sick Ticket Society  
 16-3762 Action and Accountability Men's  
 16-3784 Gerties Group  
 16-3846 Reflections  
 16-4357 Between The Covers  
 16-4532 Lunt Lake Big Book  
 16-6272 Andersonville Saturday Big Book  
 16-6304 Lesbian/Women's 12x12  
 16-7767 Bryn Mawr Step and Tradition Stu  
 16-7769 Men's Discussion Group  
 16-7900 Andersonville Big Book Study  
 16-7989 Tuesday Night Meditation  
 17-0140 LaGrange Monday Night Step Group  
 17-1430 ABCs  
 17-1434 Seven O'Clock Step  
 17-1438 Grateful That It Works Four  
 17-1441 Spring Road Catacombs  
 17-1444 Excuse Makers Men  
 17-1446 I Am Responsible  
 17-1449 Quarry Rats Men's Group  
 17-1450 Resentmentville  
 17-1451 Splinters  
 17-1452 Seek & Help Men  
 17-1456 Elmhurst Non-Smoking Mt  
 17-1457 Monday Night 12 & 12  
 17-1469 Old Mayslake  
 17-1472 Monday Riverside  
 17-1475 Boiler Room  
 17-1476 Beginners & Discussion  
 17-1479 No Name III  
 17-1486 Gratitude Group  
 17-1487 Sat Morning Eye Opener  
 17-1489 Caring & Sharing  
 17-1496 Wednesday Twelve Step Group  
 17-2681 Design for Living Big Book Study  
 17-3724 Wed Night Step  
 17-3725 Fri Night Big Book-Hope Understanding  
 17-3934 Friday Night Step  
 17-4331 The Brookfield Group  
 17-4530 Friday Morning Big Book  
 17-5001 La Grange YMCA  
 17-5010 LaGrange Sat Morning Step

- 17-6319 Power of Now  
 17-7927 Time for Change  
 17-7969 Daily Reflections  
 18-1310 First Step Beginners  
 18-1312 Midweek Big Book  
 18-1319 8 O'Clock Monitor  
 18-1320 Foster Canfield  
 18-1327 Merrimac Park  
 18-1332 Norwood Park Men's Step  
 18-1335 Cellar Dwellers  
 18-1336 Richards Step Study  
 18-1337 Foster Oketo Group  
 18-1339 Back to the Woods  
 18-1342 United Faith Living Sober  
 18-1344 Unicorn Candlelight  
 18-1345 Whistle Stop  
 18-1348 Thursday Park Group  
 18-1419 Go to Any Length Men's  
 18-1420 RISE Open Disc  
 18-2195 Open Topic Meeting  
 18-2655 Windy City Ladies  
 18-3786 Chicago Beginners Grp 12x12  
 18-4951 Byrn Mawr Week Step  
 18-7697 How Too Group  
 19-1066 Men's 12 & 12 Study  
 19-1381 Niles Monday Big Book  
 19-1569 Men's Priority  
 19-1575 Group One  
 19-1579 Women's AM Big Book  
 19-1583 3 & 6  
 19-1584 7 East  
 19-1586 St Luke's Flukes  
 19-1587 Share & Care I  
 19-1589 Sunday in the Park NS Section  
 19-1590 Second Rose  
 19-1592 First Rose  
 19-1610 CRS  
 19-1614 O.D.A.T. One Day At A Time  
 19-1678 Get It Straight at Eight  
 19-3777 Women's Twelve and Twelve  
 19-3815 Women's Discussion  
 19-4104 Harvard Under Grads Women  
 19-4227 HOW Group  
 20-0857 Residence South  
 20-0875 Evans Ave Beginners  
 20-0882 Evans Ave Early Birds  
 20-1137 Into Action 12&12  
 20-1139 Blackstone II  
 20-1140 Bethune Plaza  
 20-1145 Women's Hyde Park  
 20-1147 Kings Workshop  
 20-1152 Not Just Sober Only  
 20-1154 On Campus  
 20-1157 Park Your Manor  
 20-1159 Jack Sunshine Group  
 20-1163 Total Abstinence 12 & 12  
 20-1168 Twelve Steps Across from Jimmys  
 20-1182 Gargoyle  
 20-3702 Wanderers 221A  
 20-3713 Wanderers 70E  
 20-3803 Wanderers 070D  
 20-3809 Daily Reflections  
 20-4091 Gratitude & Humility  
 20-4411 Dousing the Fires  
 20-4469 Women's Reflection  
 20-6131 Evans Ave Wed Early Birds Down-  
 stairs  
 20-7916 You Are Not Alone Twelve and  
 Twelve  
 20-8016 Residence Big Book Study  
 21-0357 Winners Circle II  
 21-0360 Lady of the Ridge  
 21-0368 You are Not Alone  
 21-0369 Active Women in AA  
 21-0375 Sharing & Caring  
 21-0379 Arena  
 21-2162 Living Sober  
 21-2488 Silver Slipper II  
 21-2628 Pathway Breakfast  
 21-3912 Women's New Dimensions  
 21-4038 How It Works  
 21-4219 Door Of Hope  
 21-4483 New Horizons  
 21-4484 Sober Tuesdays  
 21-6276 Top of the Hill  
 21-7732 Bring Your Own Big Book  
 21-7981 Door of Hope  
 22-1304 R&D Round Table  
 22-2065 Morning Eye Opener  
 22-2078 Reaching for Recovery  
 22-2079 Zodiac  
 22-2086 Group I  
 22-2088 No Name Group  
 22-2090 Its Great to be Alive  
 22-2116 Arrowhead Action  
 22-2117 Back to Basics  
 22-2119 Friday Night Speaker  
 22-2121 TGIF Group  
 22-2122 Lemont Oaks  
 22-2454 12 & 12  
 22-2680 Young People's Big Book  
 22-3718 Thu Night Big Book  
 22-3790 Tuesday Night Lights  
 22-3944 Truth Seekers  
 22-4050 Path To Recovery  
 22-4358 Tuesday Ladies  
 22-4958 St Boniface 12 Steps  
 22-5003 Recovery Group  
 22-5087 Torn Curtin  
 22-6252 12 Step Women in AA  
 22-6427 Friday Night Zodiac Mtg  
 port  
 22-7487 Carry This Message  
 22-7671 VILTIS (Lithuanian)  
 22-7710 A Wing and a Prayer  
 22-7771 South Side Big Book  
 22-7847 Carry This Message  
 22-7858 The Way of Live Group  
 23-4056 The Salt Creek Group  
 All Wanderers Annual Meeting  
 Clean Air Club of the Northshore  
 Convención Estatal de AA del Estado de IL  
 Evans Avenue Banquet Fund  
 First Step House  
 Grateful Dinosaurs  
 Greenlake Soberfest Committee  
 ICYPAA  
 Illinois State Conference  
 Jolly Time  
 SALY Beginners Meeting  
 Korean Intergroup in Japan  
 Midway Fellowship Club  
 North Shore Alano Club  
 Now and Here - Polish  
 Old Fashioned Compassion  
 Quo Vadis Fellowship-Klub Abstynencki  
 Ritzema-Sat Morning Twelve Step Group  
 RPAC 7123 Group Contributions  
 Search for Serenity Wanderers  
 South End Alano Klub  
 Southern IL Area 21 IL State Conf  
 Swinging Sobriety Sisters  
 The Recovery House  
 Thursday Night Discussion  
 Tuesday AM Women's BB  
 Twelve Step House  
 West Suburban 12 & 12 Center  
 Wicker Park Alano Club



## Service Committee Reports... Keeping You Informed

### Website Committee Report

George M.,  
Ad Hoc Website Committee Chairperson

I'm an alcoholic, the Area 19 Ad Hoc Website Committee chairperson and the Webmaster for the Chicago Area website (<http://www.chicagoaa.org>). This Committee, until recently, was inactive; however, in November it was reborn and I became the chairperson. The function of the Committee is to maintain the Area's website policy and to oversee the day-to-day technical website operation which includes the content and source data, website appearance and the editorial aspects affecting it. All of these activities should and will continue to be carried out in full compliance to the General Services Office A. A. Guidelines for the Internet.

We are currently working under a local website policy which is outdated (October 2003); therefore, the Committee's initial activity has been to prepare an updated policy for consideration by all the groups within the Area. This policy, as approved by the Committee, was distributed at the March Chicago Area Service Assembly (CASA) meeting so it may be considered for approval at the May CASA meeting.

During our November, December and January Committee meetings, we prepared a list of goals for the Committee to address. It became clear that funds to achieve these goals would be needed. Since the Committee had not been active during the normal 2011 budget cycle, we approached the Area Finance Committee with a request for funds to proceed with the work to complete these tasks. That request was also presented at the March CASA meeting to be considered by the groups for future approval at the May CASA meeting. Our task and goals list includes the following main items:

- Cosmetic facelift/redesign of the Area website
- Upgrading the sourcing data base software which feeds the website
- Training two CASO staff members and the Webmaster in on-going website maintenance
- Enabling eCommerce (online bookstore ordering and online donations in alignment with current GSO practices for online donations)
- Translation of the website into Spanish and Polish

- Enhancing/refining/repairing time-specific and neighborhood search criteria
- Adding Cooperation with Professional Community Committee and Special Needs Committee features to the website
- Allowing for District websites

We have even been discussing the possibility of having a mobile application developed for smart phones and other mobile devices! If funding is approved, the Committee will then proceed to the professional community with a Request for Proposal (RFP) and the work will commence once a vendor is chosen.

This is an exciting time for the Committee and we encourage anyone who is interested to join us at our monthly meetings. Dates and times for all remaining 2011 meetings have been posted on the Area Service calendar. If you have further interest or if you have any questions, please contact me by clicking on the Webmaster link at the very bottom of the initial page of the Chicago Area website and complete/submit the form. I look forward to your participation on this Committee should you decide to join us and to any questions which you may have.

Thank you for allowing me to be of service.

### CASA Chairperson Report

Eric B.  
([CASA@chicagoaa.org](mailto:CASA@chicagoaa.org))

I am an alcoholic who was recently elected to serve the fellowship as its Area Chairperson. This is an honor I don't take lightly. I have quickly realized with deep humility what a privilege it is to serve in such a capacity.

For nearly twenty years, I've listened to people share their AA stories. One common thread is that we all got here because someone, somewhere took time out of their lives to extend the hand of AA to each of us. In my case it was a gentleman named Bud who came to a treatment facility in an Evergreen Park hospital. He said that after being sober for a few months, he was cutting his lawn one day and it dawned on him that he hadn't thought about drinking for almost a whole day. I was floored. I didn't believe such a thing could happen. This little glimmer of hope kept me going for a while. Bud happened to be bringing that meeting to that facility through our HTF (Hospitals and Treat-

ment Facilities) committee. As each of us looks back, we can find someone working in a committee who brought us the message of hope.

From the person whose doctor, psychologist, clergyman or other professional person referred us to AA (CPC – Cooperation with the Professional Community) to that person who drove hundreds of miles to come into prison and tell us their story (CFC – Correctional Facilities Committee), we identified with them. We have heard references about AA from friends, co-workers or on the radio. We have looked up information on AA at the Library (PI – Public Information) or on the internet (Website Committee). Luckily, when our “moment of clarity” came through at two in the morning, there was another alcoholic answering the phone (24-Hour Answering Service Committee).

How could I forget my early days in AA when my sobriety hung perilously in the balance? I awoke each day not sure whether I would go to sleep that night sober. I would devour, read and re-read our publications (Grapevine and Here's How) the minute they came in the mail. Events like the All Chicago Open (Committee on Conferences) let me know that I wasn't alone anymore. Such things carried me for days. I did non-stop reading of anything to do with helping me to stay sober (Literature Committee). I dove into the history of AA (Archives Committee) trying to figure out what made this thing work. I remember when I was unable to give much more than a few bucks, they would pass the basket to collect money for meetings for the hearing impaired (Special Needs). Being able to give even a little made me feel a part of the program. I also felt a little better for trying to help someone else.

As I got a little steadier on my feet in my own sobriety, I began to wonder how all this happens (Structure), who pays for it (Finance), how it is run (CASA – Chicago Area Service Assembly, CASO – Chicago Area Service Office), and who keeps track of it (Area Chairperson, Area Recording Secretary). This is just Chicago. I thought, What about the rest of the world (GSC – Delegate to the General Service Conference)? How selfishly I looked at this, not realizing how many people, people whom I'd never met, played vital and crucial roles in my staying sober!

This is how I discovered the importance of everyone's work on every committee in every role and how this work is vitally important in someone's life and to someone's story. This makes me meet my task as the Area Chairperson with deep humility, as I am only one man with a career, three dogs, a home and friends. There is no way one person can

do all that is necessary to continue the work of AA, work that must be done in order to carry the message that Alcoholics Anonymous is alive and well in the Chicago Area and that there is a way out for those who still suffer from this “spiritual malady.”

We need you, as many of you as are willing, to help us in this endeavor, This work is difficult to do, even impossible, when only two volunteers show up to help organize a meeting for 6,000 people. Or when our website gets over 3,000 hits a month but only two other people join me at the committee meeting to discuss its content.

If there's something we need to change or there's something we can do differently, let us know about it. I personally gave up on mind-reading early in my sobriety, when I realized I was no good at it. We need the fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous to come and participate in its program. And if there's anything we can do to make participation more feasible and/or to increase participation, my ears are open. I'm listening, my friends. Without your help we miss the opportunity to let hundreds of people know we are here and have found a way out that works each and every day.

So it is with a great amount of gratitude, respect and with a deep humility that I ask for your help and participation. I look forward to meeting with, hearing from and working with as many of you as possible over the next two years. If any of these committees or the challenges we face over the next few years interests you, just go online to the service calendar, find the next meeting date and show up. And if all else fail, please feel free to contact me directly.



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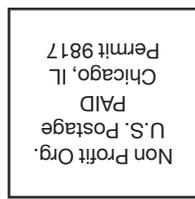
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