



East Central Illinois Intergroup of Alcoholics Anonymous

Quarterly Newsletter August 2005 Issue 3

Unity

Upcoming Fellowship
& Recovery Events
in our AA community
Pages 3 & 6

Service

Getting Involved
Intergroup Service
Committees
Pages 2 - 4

Recovery

A local member shares
his experience finding
his Higher Power
Pages 1 & 5

One Night in September

From "My Name Is Michael..."

"Day by day, one day at a time, I have kept away from that first drink. A.A. has become my way of life. I realize that, paradoxically, I keep my sobriety by giving it away.

I am responsible whenever and wherever a hand reaches out for help. What freely I received, freely I must give."

c. 1976, Do you think you're different?

(A.A. Pamphlet P-13), page 21

I attended my first AA meeting on November 2, 1978, at the Champlain Valley Physicians Hospital (CVPH) in Plattsburgh, New York. I was nervous. I don't remember much about the meeting. I know that it was a step meeting, probably the 10th Step, because I remember speaking for ten or fifteen minutes at my second meeting on what I thought I knew about the 11th Step.

As the discussion went around the room at that first meeting, I learned what the format was. You said your name then identified yourself as "an alcoholic" (whatever that was). The other people would then respond, "Hi Ray" or "Mary" or "Bill". It all felt very warm, sincere, and welcoming. I wanted those feelings. If you were uncertain about identifying yourself as an alcoholic - which I was - and were honest about it - which I wasn't, others would remark, "Keep coming back" or, even more threateningly, "Someone will talk to you after the meeting".

I wanted to belong, so I acted "as if", a skill developed over my previous 41 years of life. "My name is Ray" I said "and I am an alcoholic". Although I didn't intend to say anything else and was going to pass, I instead blurted something that came from deep in side. I said "I need help".

Since then I have continued my journey in AA and have not had to take a drink while dealing with life's realities from at 41 to my current age of 68. My skill of acting "as if" helped me through the early days and years of my journey toward sobriety. I went to meetings. I got a sponsor after my first two miserable years in the program. I did the steps for the first time, and I continued to apply them to my daily life. I did service work. I amended my life. I explored various methods of prayer and meditation. I was doing "fine".

Continued on page 5

Service

We believe that the East Central Illinois Intergroup (ECII) fulfills an important function in our community.

We are responsible for making sure that the hand of AA is available for the local alcoholic reaching out for help. Our role differs from that of the district representatives for your group (GSRs) who are responsible for carrying your group's voice to the higher levels of AA as they participate in district, state, and national decision-making.

According to the AA literature and role descriptions, the intergroup is responsible for meeting local recovery needs. As intergroup representatives, we meet those needs in several ways. Those of us involved with the intergroup are interested in improving the services that we currently provide.

You are invited to participate in carrying the message by serving on any of the following Intergroup committees.

Treasury

First, thanks to Larry M. for filling in as treasurer for the last several months. ECII needs someone to fill the position of treasurer. This position simply requires making deposits, paying a few monthly ECII bills (see below), and turning in a treasurer's report to the ECII on the third Sunday of each month.

What's New

Our long time treasurer is taking-on new service positions and would like to turn this position over to a new volunteer.

What can I do to help?

Giving a few hours each month to volunteer as the Intergroup Treasurer will be a tremendous service to your AA community. You can expect to write about four checks a month and present a brief summary of our account activity at each of our monthly meetings. Come to an Intergroup meeting or call Jay (217) 721-7419 for information.

Telephone answering service

Your answering service is able to provide information about local meetings for the new or visiting alcoholic. It is also the lifeline for the desperate alcoholic requesting a 12-step call.

What's New

We have recently changed answering service vendors to help reduce our costs. The change was transparent to our users and we have retained our phone number (217-373-4200).

What Can I do to help?

As a member of AA who has been sober for more than one year and has experience working the 12 Steps, you are invited to join the calling tree. After joining, you will begin periodically receiving telephone calls from alcoholics who need help. This service work is considered the ultimate responsibility in AA. Contact Larry (217) 356-3794.

Newsletter

The intergroup newsletter is new this year. It provides information about services provided by intergroup, local events, and any other AA information submitted by groups or individuals.

What's New

In this edition as well as the last, we have published a submission from a member of our community. In the last issue, Bob shared an article about forgiveness and in this issue Ray shares about building a relationship with a Higher Power.

What Can I do to help?

In many communities, the newsletter is published monthly and contains information about happenings in individual groups, anniversaries, and local AA news. This requires submissions from the groups and a team of editors working collaboratively. If you have an interest in writing or laying out this newsletter, please contact Kay S. at 217-355-9210

Meeting Lists

Quarterly meeting lists provide up to date information on the where, when and type of local AA meetings. Hundreds of these lists are distributed each quarter. We need representatives from the groups to keep us updated on the status of their meetings. We hear rumors of changes, but without an official notification to Frank (217) 398-0714 by a group representative we are hesitant to revise the information.

What's New

July was our last publication. Look for a new meeting list in October.

What can I do to help?

As a member of your home group, keep in touch with Frank and Intergroup about any changes to your meeting format, time or location. Attend Intergroup or District meetings to pick up the latest version of the meeting list and circulate it at the other meetings you attend.

Literature

Literature is available for sale locally. By contacting TJ (359-3457), you can avoid a three- week delay for literature that an alcoholic may need today. Literature is sold at publication costs. (Group donations do not pay for literature; donations cover the cost of the answering service, website, intergroup events, and printing costs for the newsletter and meeting lists.)

Upcoming Events in 2005

September 2-4

Illinois State Conference;
Palmer House, Chicago

September 11

Assembly of Dist. Reps GSRs;
Bridgeport, Lanterman, Park

September 11

One Hole at a Time –
11th Annual Golf Outing

September 30-Oct 2

IL State Corrections Conference;
Bowlingbrook

November 4-6

EC Regional Forum;
Houghton, MI

November 24-27

Spiritual Homecoming
Conference; St. Louis, MO

December 4

Assembly of Dist Reps, GSRs;
Frontier Steakhouse, Chester IL



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Big Book Index

Acceptance: 14 449 452
Anger: 54 66 111
Attitudes: 449
Compassion: 108
Disease: 21-23 392 448
“Easy Does It”: 516
Fear: 67-68 115 116
Freedom: 553
Honesty: 58 115 481 482
507 550
Inventory: 64-69
Insanity: 57
Jealousy: 82 119 131
Meditation: 86
Patience: 82 90 111 118
123 126-127
Prayer: 63 83 85-87 504
Promises: 63 83-84 100
115-116 120
Resentments: 64 66
117-119 551
Recovery: 126-127
Self will: 60
Self knowledge: 7
Sex: 68 70 124 134
Steps: 59-60
Serenity: 68 554 551 552
Slips: 120
Understanding: 570
Willingness: 12-13 26 46-47
53 57 60 69 70 76 79 93 118
124 152 153 158-159 152 218
229 503 550

Corrections

The ECI District and the ECI Intergroup have been collaborating on the support of spreading the word in the Champaign Corrections Facility. The District has been very generous in providing financial support for desperately needed literature. Stan B. has tapped into the Intergroup resources for sober volunteers to actually attend the meetings in both the women's and men's jails. What's New

What's New?

Attendance at AA meetings in our local women's jails has been equal to approximately half of the capacity of the facility, suggesting that this service meets a strong need. Men's meetings occur weekly at the downtown and satellite facilities. Attendance at the satellite facility has been growing steadily to the point where inmates are requesting a second weekly meeting. At this facility, there is also an AA community inside, where inmates work the AA program together including sponsoring each other.

What can I do to help?

We need men and women with more than one year of sobriety to take the message inside the jails. This is a very rewarding service experience and you are always scheduled with one or two other sober alcoholics. You need not have been incarcerated to participate, and the inmates are typically very appreciative and respectful of your presence in these meetings as they can not occur without volunteers to facilitate them. Men can call Stan B. (217) 846-3246 for information and women may contact Kay S. (217) 355-9210.

Website

aa-eci.org provides current meeting lists, links to A.A. General Service Organization, chat rooms, as well as upcoming events.

What's New

In addition to District 12 AA and Al-Anon meetings, we now provide links to meeting lists for District 9, Springfield and Peoria areas.

What Can I do to help?

The website requires constant administration and updating to remain relevant. You could improve our web site whether you'd simply like to moderate a chat room occasionally, or would like to do advanced programming. If you have an idea or a vision of how to help us grow to better serve our community we would welcome your help and provide the tools to get involved.

Contact Jay intergroup_online@insightbb.com or (217) 721-7419.



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As I approached my 13th AA birthday in 1991, I attended my home group's Step Study Meeting on a Wednesday night. It was a meeting that changed my entire outlook on the AA program.

Recently separated from my wife (you can see how "fine" I really was), I was more interested in the attractive women at the meeting than the topic: the 3rd Step. I didn't want to hear about people "turning it over" to a Higher Power rather than applying the remaining steps to the problem at hand. I tuned out. My mind wandered. I would get through this hour just as I had so many others.

At least I was practicing patience and tolerance.

The round-robin discussion progressed around the room. After seven or eight people had shared, a man I had known for twelve years- who had always shared only his name and the slogan "Don't drink and go to meetings" - actually began to speak! I missed what he said, but it shook me out of my apathy. I was able to listen to the next speaker, a woman, who told a story that changed my life.

On one wall of the church basement where we met was a picture of the Lord, holding a lantern and knocking on a door. The speaker told how her sponsor had asked her, "Do you see anything unusual about the picture?" Her sponsor then pointed out that the door in the picture had no latch or handle. It couldn't be opened from the outside. Then her sponsor had summarized the picture's message: although God is knocking on the door, it must be opened from the inside.

All at once, in something resembling a vision or a deep psychic insight, I saw clearly that, over the past twelve years, the people I had met in AA had a single purpose: they were teaching me how to open the door. I had always wanted God in my life. I had even spent eighteen months in a religions order. However, I didn't know how to open my soul to God. Despite my intentions, I had failed, and I felt guilty at my failure. I blamed myself and questioned my sincerity.

The simple fact was that, on my own, I didn't know how to open my soul. The people in AA had taught me how, through the steps: surrender, belief inventory, allowing God to change me, amending my life, improving my conscious contact with my Higher Power, and serving others. These people had allowed me to begin at the beginning, because they knew that I didn't know. They knew this because, at one time, they didn't know either.

While I didn't know what help I was asking for in 1978, the people in AA then, and every day since knew what I needed. It was what we all need. "A relationship with a Higher Power of our own understanding."

One of the stories in the Big Book ends with the assertion, "... finding God is just about the best thing that can happen" I disagree. Finding the God of my own understanding is the greatest thing that has happened in my life. It is the members of the AA groups at the meetings I attend who remind me of that every day of my journey.

- Ray McD.

Old-Timers' Panel Discussion and Potluck Dinner

On June 11th, the ECII sponsored the Old Timers' Panel Discussion and Potluck Dinner. The food and fellowship were enjoyed by all. We had the largest panel ever. This is an indication of the strong recovery foundation in East Central Illinois. Twelve attendees with over twenty years of sobriety participated on the panel. John F. started the discussion by sharing some interesting local AA history in honor of AA's founding 70 years ago on June 10, 1935. Other panel participants shared on the importance of service, spirituality, and fellowship in maintaining and enriching a life of sobriety.

Recovery Ch@t

Join us for online meetings on your time at aa-eci.org

Week Days
8AM, 8PM, 10PM,
Midnight, 2AM

Weekends
Noon, 8PM, 10PM,
Midnight, 2AM

Unity

Fellowship Recovery Events

Soberfest has a long history of being one of the largest annual AA fellowship events in Central Illinois. Right now we are preparing for Soberfest 2005 and there is still time for you to get involved. We will need help with event planning as well as support on the day of the event, including registration, set-up / tear down and hospitality. To get involved call Jay at (217) 721-7419 or show-up at our monthly Intergroup meeting at 718 S. Randolph Street , in the house at 12:30, on the 3rd Sunday of each month.

The Old-Timers' Panel Discussion and Potluck Dinner was a huge success. Donations covered the cost of the food and generated an additional \$63 for the intergroup treasury. All of the beverages and the cost of the hall were also donated anonymously.

If your group is planning an event, please let us know for publication in our newsletter as well as our web site.

Contributions

The valuable services that Intergroup provides to our AA community depend on you. In addition to your participation in Intergroup events and committees, we depend on the financial support of your home group. Without the financial contributions of local groups we could not continue maintain the quality of services that we currently provide.

Here is a summary of Intergroup's operating expenses and recent contributions. Making a practice of disbursing regularly to Intergroup will allow us to better plan and grow sustainable services used by our AA community.

Monthly Expenses	May	June	July	August
Answering Service	205.21	151.62	172.35	161.91
SBC Telephone	22.82	22.82	46.60	80.22
Web Site	0	0	95 (1 year)	0
Meeting List (copies)	123.12	0	0	123.12
Newsletter (copies)	49.28	0	0	0
Old Timers' Meeting	0	200	0	0
Contributions*	0	0	1278	570

*Contribution Detail

May	June	July	August
\$0	\$0	\$500 Dist. 12 - answer svc.	\$100 Rantoul Area Cookout
		\$263 Old Timer's Meeting	\$145 Tuesday Night Savoy
		\$400 Early Bird	\$80 Oasis Group
		\$40 HOW group	\$100 Rantoul Area Cookout
		\$75 Tuesday Mahomet	\$145 Tuesday Night Savoy

Mail group donations to: E.C.I. Intergroup P.O. Box 3293 Champaign, IL 61826-3293