



East Central Illinois Intergroup of Alcoholics Anonymous

Quarterly Newsletter December 2005 Issue 4

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A Typical Grapevine Story

Give freely

of what you find and join us.

We shall be with you in the Fellowship of the Spirit, and you will surely meet some of us as you trudge the Road of Happy Destiny.

May God bless you and keep you until then.

Can I begin by saying I don't like most Grapevine stories? They are too pat, too predictable. They all seem to say the same thing: I got drunk, I sobered up, several things happened, and lo and behold, everything's great.

It wasn't that way for me.

I got drunk. I sobered up. Things didn't happen. I didn't have a job. I didn't have a place to live. I didn't like or trust anyone. I didn't have anyone to turn to. Most of all, I was too self-important to ask for help.

I fought to keep every onion skin that life managed to peel off me. About the only thing I didn't do was drink, and every once in a great while I would stop pontificating long enough to hear some wisdom.

I was an angry, miserable person. For the everyday misery, my sponsor suggested prayer. And no, this wasn't a prayer that God restore me to my rightful place at the head of all his creatures. Instead, I was asked to pray for my enemies.

My enemies! I thought that before I would pray for them, I had to get even with them. Then I noticed that my enemies were eating surf and turf, and I was working on macaroni and cheese. And what do you know? After prayer, I stopped planning attacks and assaults against the people who had hurt me.

This took a long time because I had to wake up to my own part in the fifty-year war I had waged with the world. Forgiveness required amends, whether others deserved it or not. It took a while.

I eventually got a job and a place to live, and my everyday life actually improved. My car stopped heading for the beer distributor every time I turned on the engine. I made friends and even had relationships (which I pretended wasn't a new experience).

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.

Newsletter

This is the fourth installment of the ECII quarterly newsletter.

What's New

Our staff has doubled in size since our last publication. We have several ideas and plans to increase the frequency of our publications. Contact our editors (or become one of us) to submit information about your home groups events. If you have an interest in contributing to this newsletter, please contact Hector at 217-390-5496 / ecinews@insightbb.com.

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

Our new answering service vendor has successfully provided services to our community for the past few months. Larry M. continues to work with this vendor to ensure these calls are handled quickly and that we are charged accordingly. This service continues to be one of ECII's single largest recurring expense. The phone number is (217) 373-4200. 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.

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

This quarter we launched a message board where members of our community can anonymously post on a variety of topics. Check it out at www.aa-eci.org/board. The website requires constant administration and updating to remain current. 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 at: intergroup@aa-eci.org or (217) 721-7419.

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.

What's New

October 2005 was our last publication. The current list is printed on a warm, light green colored paper stock.

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.

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.

Treasury

ECII continues to seek a volunteer to fill the position of treasurer. This position simply requires making deposits, paying a few monthly ECII bills, and submitting 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. 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.

Literature

Literature is available for sale locally. By contacting TJ at (217) 359-3457 you can avoid a three- week delay for literature that an alcoholic may need today. ECII currently stocks several thousand dollars worth of literature and can likely fulfil your groups order more quickly and easily than ordering from New York.

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?

Men's meetings occur weekly at the downtown and satellite Champaign County Jails. Men and women with more than one year of sobriety are invited to carry the message inside these jails. This is a unique service opportunity 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 (217) 355-9210.

Unity

Tuesday Night Newcomers Group Invitation

You are invited to attend this newcomers informational meeting. Our format is similar to other A.A. meetings but we rotate five topics on a six-week schedule. The sixth week is used for an open discussion meeting. The topics are:

- The Disease Concept
- Sponsorship
- Spirituality
- Steps And Tools
- Living Sober

A member of our group chairs each six-week sequence and selects another member of A.A. to give the lead on the topic for that week, after a short lead the group opens to discussion.

Cake & Ice Cream

The Tuesday Night Newcomers Group celebrates anniversaries on the first Tuesday of the month with cake and ice cream.

Our Business Meetings are held the third Tuesday of the month after the regular meeting. All are welcomed to attend.

Tuesday Night
718 S. Randolph St.
Meeting Hall
8:00pm to 9:00pm

Fellowship Recovery Events Recap of Soberfest 2005

It is the people who step forward that make an event a success. Soberfest 2005 was no exception. Jack H., Kieran G., Mark G., Jay S. John T. and Renee R. (the 2006 Chair) were especially instrumental in leading the event. Others, such as Judy F., Melanie S., Ali, Jill K., Steve K., Amy G., Rick K., Doug B., Norman T., Mike J., Wojtek, Marla and Howard came early or stayed late, quietly working throughout the day and, "doing their part" in the true spirit of humility. T.J., Stan and loyal and true "Grapevine Charlie" set up displays of literature, Corrections involvement and The Grapevine. We all agreed that the fantastic barbecue, beans, and brat meals initiated by Mark, Ernie, and Steve were our favorite Soberfest fare. Many others brought delicious snacks and desserts.

The speakers were Hector D. of Urbana, Cindy J. of Urbana, Georgia S. (Alanon) of Champaign and Raymond M. of Chicago. Each told a poignant story of the journey to their Programs. A panel discussion on Sponsorship consisted of Paula P. and Rod M. from A.A. as well as Diane L. and Pat M. from Alanon. Questions from many of the people in attendance proved to be very interesting and thought provoking.

Throughout the day, 150 people came to enjoy great discussions, fellowship and good food at The Elks Lakes Pavilion in Mahomet. And maybe the least overlooked aspect of the event were the people who attended and anonymously donated, "scholarship money" for those unable to pay. This was A.A. at its finest!

Post Your Groups Events

There are several ways to let our community know about the special events that your group plans. We also encourage you to submit information on upcoming events in our community which we don't already have posted on our web site or in this newsletter.

For publication in this newsletter, please contact Hector at (217) 390-5496 or newsletter@aa-eci.org.

For publication on the events page of our web site, contact Melanie at website@aa-eci.org or (217) 390-6742.

You can now self-publish events (and on other topics) on our web site at www.aa-eci.org/board

“A Typical Grapevine Story” Continued from Page 1

When the everyday problems cleared up, I still had big-day problems--like my birthday or Christmas. For reasons that were baffling to me, these good times were still bad times, very bad to me.

One day my sponsor asked when my AA anniversary was. I didn't know. I had originally stopped drinking after some random catastrophe and then, realizing that that my birthday was coming up (which I'd want to celebrate, of course), thought I'd better start drinking again since I didn't want that alcohol hitting my system all at once. It could have killed me! (If this logic makes sense, welcome!)

“Why not make your birthday your anniversary?” my sponsor asked. My parents hadn't wanted me, so making my birthday my anniversary meant that I wanted me. October 13 blossomed in my life. On my fifth anniversary, I rented a hall, hired a band, and threw myself my one and only, real-live birthday party. It was the best of times.

Next came the problem of Christmas. My sponsor asked me if the reason I didn't like Christmas was because I'd never gotten what I wanted as a kid. (If someone can explain how this guy became such a genius, I would like to hear it.) He told me, “Why don't you remember what you wanted, go out and buy it, then give it to a kid who doesn't have it?”

I did just that. The first year it was a baseball glove. You should have seen the kid's face. Every year it was something, until finally I couldn't remember anything more I'd wanted and hadn't gotten, and that cleared up Christmas for me. I may not be Jingle Bells today, but I'm not Bad Bart the Coal Baron who puts lumps of coal in your stocking either.

It still bothered me when people found the good in me. I'm not sure why this was because I was always promoting my sainthood. But when good people thought good things about me, that was bad. I was deep into the Second Step on this one.

“Maybe it's because you feel stupid that you can't see what they see,” the genius offered. So I looked. Actually, I peeked.

I learned to look for the value in others to find it in myself. I learned to stop trying to get everyone to recognize my brilliance. Finally, I learned to accept what my thoughts, words, and deeds were telling me about myself. At some point, I moved to the Third Step and figured if God loved me, I must have some value.

Looking back on what I have written, it seems like this story has turned into one of those typical Grapevine articles with the pat, happy ending. But I assure you--I didn't feel that way when I was living it.

Joe O.
Harrisburg, Pennsylvania

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Serenity Shack Speaker Schedule

On the 3rd Saturday of each month, the Serenity Shack holds its monthly Speaker Meeting at 8 PM

Serenity Shack is located at 117 N. Ohio St. in Rantoul IL

You are invited to join us for these upcoming speaker meetings

December 17th 2005
Todd C.

January 21st 2006
Kay S.

February 18th 2006
Angie H.

Christmas Weekend

Fellowship Circle
718 S. Randolph Champaign IL

will be open 7:45 PM - midnight
12/24 & 12/25

Christmas Day

Potluck at 2:00 PM

‘Tis the Season

The holidays used to be the hardest time of year for me. Once it gets dark and cold I start to isolate. Throw in bad memories of holidays in the past, company parties, better known as ‘drunk fests’ and a general feeling of loneliness and feeling out of place, and things can get ugly.

Last year I had just started a new job when the holidays rolled around. I came to work one day to find a tiny bottle of vanilla vodka in my box. I love vanilla and vodka had become my most recent favorite drink, when I had stopped drinking. I was totally freaked out by the bottle. I didn’t have a compulsion to drink, but I think just being around people that didn’t know me well enough to not do anything like that, and finding something that was so outwardly appealing scared me.

About a week later we had our big company party. It was about what I expected, free drinks and everyone was taking advantage. I felt like I needed to go because I was just getting to know these people, but I was scared. I’m always scared when I’m walking into drinking situations.

I did what I usually do, and planned the entire thing out. I talked about it in meetings, had my sobriety coin in hand, and gave myself a good excuse to not stick around long. I went to the party right after work and left less than an hour later because I had to go home and let the dog out. Such a great excuse!

The holidays have gotten easier every year since I’ve been sober and this year seems to be the best one yet. I’m still using a lot of the tricks I’ve found over the years. I’ve doubled up my meetings and rather than try and celebrate the way I think I’m supposed to, I do my own thing. I have never (even as a kid) enjoyed the holidays, so rather than trying to make an unhappy event into something fun and happy (I always fail at that) I just skip them. I work really hard on not isolating, even though it takes me way out of my comfort zone. This year, I seem to be focused more on how I can be of service to other people, rather than putting all my energy into boycotting the holidays. So far it seems to be working out pretty well.

I have that same company party again this year and I’ll still be going. Not because I want everyone to like me, but because I happen to know that’s when they hand out bonuses. But this year, everyone knows I don’t drink and a lot of them know I’m a recovering alcoholic, which is helpful. Rather than make up excuses for not sticking around long, I’ll be able to be honest about it. Chances are good that there won’t be any vodka in my box this year. (Thank goodness!)

So that’s the long and the short of my experience of getting through the holidays sober and somewhat (a little bit) sane.

- Anonymous,
Champaign IL

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.

Contributions - continued from pg. 6

Monthly Expenses	September	October	November
Answering Service	155.70	164.20	162.32
SBC Telephone	22.94	58.36	71.87
Rent (Sep-Feb)			240.00
Newsletter (copies)	70.03		
Total Expenses	178.64	222.56	474.19
Contributions	80	542	200

Contribution Detail

September	October	November
\$80.00 Thurs Step Study	\$100.00 Bondville 100.00 HOW group 150.00 ISCPAA (golf) 92.00 Joy of Living 100.00 Cellar Dwellers	\$100.00 Thurs Step Study 100.00 Unity Service & Recovery

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

A.A. Trivia

Tune in next month for the answers!

1. Fill in the blanks!

And finally, we of Alcoholics Anonymous believe that the principle of _____ has an immense spiritual significance. It reminds us that we are to place principles before personalities; that we are actually to practice _____, _____, _____. This to the end that our great _____ may never spoil us; that we shall forever live in thankful contemplation of Him who presides over us all.

2. What is the ‘founding day’ (to include the year) of A.A?

3. What year was the second edition of A.A. published in?

4. What’s the address of Dr. Bob’s home?

5. What was the name of the hospital in which Dr. Silkworth declared Bill W. a hopeless drunk?

6. What is the 2nd concept?

Recovery Word Search

M P N E R U A G Z I V W F C M H G Z X Y W R A P K
X E O E W A N W N J J P Z X I D N N A O A E C G N
V K E M Q I Y T V J S M Z P V E I X R U V P T R Q
N L A T L W E N P D B X A K G X N R W R Z X I N P
E B A F I R S N O I T I D A R T E M V E C T O C B
I G F U G N H R V R Q Z S E A R K V Y P B W N V O
N A D R T N G G T S N S D L Y G A I J R T S L B V
B R O U U I I S Y T E I R B O S W Y U E D U I G D
R U R H R K R N Y M R T Z J D H A S M T Y P F T E
P P Q X S T N I N P L J W R L D Q O S T T Y M S E
X R N E K G M F P U W Q K U N X V G Y Y X D R D G
D E Z A M A N J S S C O N E Y C D H V C I D M X E
J P D Z O D Z E A W J I R N Y M R S A L N T E E Z
A O L D A Q R K V L Q E Q I X B Z M Y E P M G B E
J H L Q B M Y K N U C J Q L U S I I W V O H N A G
D I S T R I C T E Z D H F T U U S T D E W O H C W
J A O U A H N T Q A M M Y O V R D B C R E J B L A
M H D Y Z D R G O D W O F H E V N F N R R L K Z J
L K F G N L N C U N D C F C W G E U Q L F A H C P
Z N M O J Z N J H K V Z O E R O M H N V U H A C Z
I Y W T S E R V I C E V I G C Q A W G I L Q R X S
P V T O Y M E M C O E N Z B L P S M Q E T Z C B I

Words

ACTION AMAZED AMENDS AWAKENING BAFFLING CUNNING
DISTRICT HOTLINE INTERGROUP MEETINGS MESSAGE
POWERFUL RECOVERY RESULT SERVICE SOBRIETY
SPIRITUAL STEPS TRADITIONS TRUDGE
UNIQUE UNITY WEBSITE