

GREATER VANCOUVER INTERGROUP SOCIETY

PASS IT ON

A.A. Newsletter

February 2018

Safeguarding Anonymity in a Digital Age

There is a broad concern in the A.A. Fellowship that the explosion of social media in today's world may cause A.A.s to lose sight of one of the primary tenets of our program: the Tradition of Anonymity. According to Clay R., Public Information coordinator at G.S.O., the P.I. desk hears on a regular basis from alcoholics worried about the smartphones many of us routinely carry into meetings, conferences, conventions and forums. Callers voice their fears that the camera and video-recording software these phones seamlessly employ may be used to capture images and video that may find their way onto social networking sites such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube and the like, thus causing anonymity breaks. "It should be the privilege of each individual A.A. to cloak himself with as much personal anonymity as he desires," Bill W. wrote in *The Language of the Heart*. "His fellow A.A.s should respect his wishes and help guard whatever status he wants to assume." Although the disease of alcoholism is better understood and accepted today than it was when Bill W. and Dr. Bob founded A.A., there can be a stigma attached, in particular for people whose employment concerns sensitive material or has a public component. This is one instance where anonymity breaks on social media can have serious consequences. Andrew L., an Area 45 delegate who has spent two panels on the Conference P.I. Committee, says, "I have a very public job, so I am very cognizant of being careful on Facebook. Yet I always have people in A.A. signing me up 10 Box 4-5-9, Winter 2017 for A.A. groups or wanting to link me to a private group, and I just can't do that. The way people are interconnected on social media, a mention of your name in association with A.A. ripples outward fast." The Eleventh Tradition states, "Our public relations policy is based on attraction rather than promotion; we need always maintain personal anonymity at the level of press, radio and films." However, a generation ago in A.A., not many of us had the opportunity to break our anonymity in a public fashion. "My own experience, when I got sober," Clay R. says, "is that no one had to tell me about public-level anonymity breaks, because I had no access. But one of the things that has changed in terms of the Fellowship is our understanding of anonymity breaks at the public level in social media. Remember, we have members joining A.A. today who have spent a considerable amount of their lives on social media. It's as natural to them as breathing. To us, as defined by the General Service Conference in 2013, social media is 'on the public level.' Newcomers may not understand this." Since most of us (newcomers or not) are often the stars of our own personal social media shows on interconnected digital platforms, what constitutes a public anonymity break in this regard? Jason R., Area 13 delegate, has given some thought to this. "Recently, I asked some of my service mentors what they thought of posting online something as simple as a Roman numeral to

Office Hours of Operation

Mon - Fri.....8:00 am to 6:30 pm

Saturday & Sunday.....9:30 am to 1:00 pm

***Central Office will be closed for group services on
February 12th. Telephones will be answered as usual.***

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INTERGROUP CORNER

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Unity

Recovery

signify a sober anniversary. Nothing else. I was very surprised at their response. They thought something as simple as a number posted on social media was not in line with our Traditions. While only a few would know what it meant, the potential to comment and risk inadvertent 'outing' wasn't worth the post. While I disagree on the extent of the risk, I agree that I could probably find a better way to tell people about my anniversary." On the other hand, Jason had a recent experience where a friend asked him his opinion of posting a photo of himself and a fellow A.A. holding up their anniversary chips in celebration on a social media platform. His friend saw nothing wrong with it. What did Jason think? "I told him that I would not do it. You can zoom in and see the circle and triangle on the medallion. I told him that not only could his followers see it, but possibly, depending on his privacy settings, an ever-widening network could see it as well. Ultimately, I think he took it down." "Here's one of the things I think about anonymity," Andrew L. says. "I don't think we talk enough about how one person's anonymity, or lack of it, impacts the organization as a whole. You become a reflection of A.A. on social media to many people, like it or not. The Eleventh Tradition is designed to protect A.A. from its members. We can be dangerous." One way to understand your goal in posting about program-related events on social media, according to Jason, is to ask yourself, "What is my ultimate purpose? Is it self-promotion when I post something, even if only a limited audience will see it? When people talk about their anonymity, they are often talking about the Eleventh Tradition, but the Twelfth Tradition comes into play here as well. Am I practicing humility when I post on whatever platform? Am I placing principles before personalities, or just seeking as many 'likes' as I can get?" To Clay R., the key to safeguarding anonymity on social media is education. "One of the things the Fellowship needs to adapt to is how to educate our new members on the importance of anonymity and how that is reflected in public media. As sponsors, we can educate our sponsees. As A.A. groups, we can take the time in our group announcements to underscore the importance of the gift of personal anonymity that every group offers to all of its members, and how we all need to respect that. And as A.A. entities — groups, districts, areas — we need to be more attentive to education via workshops and Tradition meetings as to why this is important." Jason R. adds, "When you see an anonymity break, it's important to understand that you can't necessarily control it. My opinion may be that I wouldn't have done that. But my responsibility as a member of A.A. is to speak with other members

of the Fellowship in a loving and tolerant way and accept that they may choose not to change. I cannot be the Traditions police." With all the concern about social media anonymity breaks, the word is getting out. Many meetings, forums and conferences begin with an announcement along the lines of the 2015 International Convention's "Anonymity Statement," which began, "We respectfully ask that A.A. speakers and A.A. members not be photographed, videotaped, or identified by full name on audio tapes and in published or broadcast reports of our meetings, including those reports on the Internet." Despite the fact that people may believe "young people" are the chief offenders in regard to social media, the International Conference of Young People in A.A. (ICYPAA) also issues such a statement at its gatherings. There is also plenty of material at www.aa.org for people to read or direct others to on this topic, from A.A.'s Guidelines on the Internet to the General Service Conference-approved pamphlet "Understanding Anonymity." One thing that sometimes gets lost in the controversy over social media and the Internet is how valuable they are as Twelfth Step tools. Alcoholics find A.A. through intergroup websites, chat rooms and online meetings. G.S.O. may soon start putting up PSA videos on YouTube (with comments disabled). Meetings have private email lists that alert members to changes in schedules or group events. Even Jason R. held his conversation about how best to proclaim an anniversary online via text. While we need to be vigilant about anonymity breaks, we also need to acknowledge our vastly increased ability to use social media to bring hope to suffering alcoholics around the world.

Reprinted with permission from Box 4-5-9, Winter 2017

An exciting new event: The annual anniversary of the Greater Vancouver Intergroup! It all began on May 26, 1946 when a "Central Committee" was formed to address questions about A.A., extend the hand of A.A. to suffering alcoholics, distribute any written material available. Now 72 years later, planning is in the works to host a one-day event. But the planning NEEDS YOU! The committee will meet Feb 4th at Central Office at 12:30 pm. All are welcome to join.

DIRECTORY UPDATES February 2018

For a complete listing, check the website: www.vancouveraa.ca

New Meetings

Sunday: "2-Twenty" St John's Anglican Church, 220 8th St., North Vancouver –8:00 pm

Sunday: "2-Twenty Beginners" St. John's Anglican Church, 220 8th St., North Vancouver –6:30 pm

Wednesday: "Mandeville Marvels" Garden Works, 4746 Marine Dr., Burnaby –1:00 pm

Meeting Deletions

Sunday: "1044" & "1044 Big Book"

1044 St. George Ave., North Van –7:00 & 8:00 pm

Sunday: "Conscious Contact" 15302 Pacific Ave. White Rock –7:00 pm

Monday: "West End Group" 1002 - 5th Ave. New Westminster –8:00 pm

Tuesday: "Big Book Study" 659 North Rd, Gibsons –8:00 pm

Wednesday: "Way Out Big Book Study" VRC 2775 Sophia St., Vancouver –7:00 pm

Meeting Changes

Sunday: "White Rock Sunday Night Big Book" New location as of Jan 7 Elk's Hall (downstairs)

1469 George St., White Rock –7:30 pm

Monday: "White Rock Men's" new location

Cranley Hall, 2141 Cranley Dr., White Rock –7:30 pm

Mon, Wed, Fri: "Experience, Strength and Hope"

New location Elk's Club Hall, 1469 George St.

White Rock –5:00 pm

Tuesday "Bear Creek No Smoke" back to old location

Bear Creek Pav., 13750-88 Ave., Surrey –8:00 pm

Wednesday: "Wednesday Big Book" new format

No longer a Big Book meeting, just a regular open AA meeting now. 3456 Fraser St. Vancouver –7:00 pm

Friday: "Dealing With Alcohol" is ongoing; was accidentally removed from directories, our apologies.

Church, 16870 80 Ave., Surrey – 8:00 pm

Saturday: "Sunnyside Up Men's" new name & location

Now "Who Me Men's Step" at the Church at 2490 W. 37th Ave., Vancouver –9:30 am

RED ROAD RECOVERY

An AdHoc committee is gathering stories for a project titled "more of the story" regarding Canadian history in A.A. They are currently seeking stories from Indigenous, especially Inuit & Metis. If you or someone you know is interested in writing your story of your journey in A.A., contact dmo75aa@gmail.com or visit their website: www.aa75canada.ca

SUB-COMMITTEE TIME CHANGES:

Public Information, 7:00 pm, 4th Wednesday

Accessibility: 6:45 pm, 1st Thursday

Telephone 11:00 AM, 3rd Saturday

Treatment/Detox 10:00 AM, 2nd Saturday

Corrections, 7:00 pm, 1st Wednesday

Groups for the spare list to take phone shifts URGENTLY needed.

SERVICE OPPORTUNITIES

Accessibility Committee: members needed to carry the message in Sign Language, to housebound or challenged physically and/or mentally, URGENTLY NEEDED members to provide rides for physically challenged members to meetings.

Cooperation with the Professional Community: Members with a good grasp of the 12 Traditions and What AA is and is Not to speak with professionals who may have alcoholics in their work day experience.

Corrections: Members to carry the message inside the provincial institutions.

Detox: Members to carry the message and provide a link to outside meetings.

Hospitals: Members willing to be responsible for meetings held in hospitals and to bring members from their rooms to the meeting.

Public Information: Members with a good grasp of the 12 Traditions to carry the message to the general public.

Treatment: Members to share experience with clients in treatment centres

Chair people are also needed for many of these committees. See the last page for times and show up! Don't gyp yourself, get everything that is coming to you in sobriety—participate!

Bridging the Gap—shaky members/potential members needing help acclimatizing to A.A. outside treatment, detox, jail, or the hospital need your help. Call or email the office if you

UPCOMING EVENTS

Check the website for posters: www.vancouveraa.ca; For out of Area go to: www.aa.org and open Box 459.

GRATITUDE DAY, Jan. 27, Shannon Hall, Cloverdale Fairgrounds 6050A—176St. Call Patience 778-241-5049 or Bob 604-532-1306 for ticket info.

CONCEPTS FOR WORLD SERVICE Feb 3, 10, 17, 24; Mar 3, 10, 17 Kateri Centre, 887 Keefer St, Vancouver 1 -3 pm Jason 604-551-9739; Roger 604-618-0226

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S CONF., February 15 – 18, Phoenix, Az. www.internationalwomensconference.org

31ST ANNUAL HEART TO HEART Feb 24, Fleetwood Centre, 15996—84th Ave., Surrey.

www.district42aa.com

SOBERFEST Mar 3, Saint pat's Church, 22589—121 Ave., Maple Ridge. NO tickets at the door.

Craig, 604-862-3508; Fiona 604-499-9411

BURNABY ROUNDUP March 10, Operating Engineers Hall 4333 Ledger St., Burnaby . Tickets \$15

NORTH SHORE ROUNDUP, March 30—April 1, Vancouver Convention Centre East, 999 Canada Place, Vancouver www.northshoreroundup.com

CELEBRATE SOBRIETY, March 30—April 1, Holiday Inn Downtown, 1110 Howe St., Vancouver.

GIRLSTOCK, 3rd Annual Women's Big Book 12 Step Conference, April 27—29. 4 Points Sheraton Hotel, Bellingham, Wa. www.nwgirlstock.org

INTERGROUP AWARENESS DAY, May 26, Killarney Lutheran Church, 49th & Kerr. Watch for details.

CORRECTIONS ROUND UP, Oct. 20, Operating Engineers Hall, Burnaby

BIRTHDAY CONTRIBUTIONS

Gail C. 34 years

Phone Room Statistics

	December	November	October
General	837	787	1,183
12th Step	46	57	56
Al-Anon	4	10	5
Ans Serv	254	220	181
Total	1,141	1,074	1,425

Area Happenings

(check www.bcyukonaa.org for details)

PRECONFERENCE ASSEMBLY April 13-15, Kamloops

District 26 new meeting location: Oblate House, 1311 The Crescent, Vancouver, back lower door.

4th Sunday of the month at 10 am.

SUBCOMMITTEE MEETING SCHEDULE

Cooperation with Professional Community 1st Tuesday 7:00 pm

Hospitals: 1st Tuesday, 7:00 p.m.

Corrections: **1st Wednesday, 7:00 pm new day**

Accessibilities: **1st Thursday, 6:45 pm new day & time**

Detox: 2nd Saturday, 10:00 am; Workshop follows at 11:00 am

Finance: Thursday before Intergroup, 6:00 pm

Operating Committee: same night as Finance 7:00 pm

Intergroup 3rd Tuesday, 7:30 pm, Orientation at 7:00 pm (49th & Kerr)

Treatment: 2nd Saturday, 10:00 am

Telephone: 3rd Saturday, 11:00 am

Workshop: 3rd Saturday, 10:00 am

Public Information: 4th Wednesday, 7:00 pm

FEBRUARY

MARCH

6th

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1st

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21st

21st

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17th

17th

17th

17th

28th

28th

Subcommittee meetings are held at Central Office, 3457 Kingsway. All A.A. members are welcome.