

# Sobriety Sentinel

JUNE/JULY 2021 - SERVING DISTRICTS 14, 19 and 20 of AREA 38 - TRICOUNTYAA.ORG

## As meetings reopen, Zoom attendance declines

by ANDREW H  
Group 968

The homegroup members of **Group 777** (Wednesdays, 8 pm, closed meeting) are back at Good Shepherd United Church, and they brought their Zoom connection with them, even though only three to four people are logging on each week.

**Group 124** (Thursdays, 7 pm, closed meeting) went back to Dardenne Presbyterian Church almost a year ago. Homegroup member and resident statistician Greg K told us they averaged 30 attendees a week pre-Covid, then 31 per week when they were Zoom-only, and now - as a hybrid meeting - attendance sits around 26 people in person, four on Zoom.

"We'll be asking the question of keeping Zoom open at our July group conscience," Greg said. "I have heard mixed emotions from folks on keeping Zoom up. Personally, our audio is not great, and live folks complain they can't see the Zoomers."

The Zoom connection may also soon be on the chopping blocks for **Group 1023** (Tuesdays, 7 pm) and **Group 968** (Mondays, noon), both closed meetings at O'Fallon Christian Church. Group 1023 has been back live for several months, while 968 won't resume in person until July 5.

**Group 589** (Mondays, 7:30 pm, 212 Club, open meeting) has already dropped Zoom. So has **Group 632** (Saturdays, 10:15 am, closed meeting). Their last week as a hybrid meeting brought three Zoom attendees.

632 has been back in person since last year, but only recently have they moved back upstairs to their pre-Covid meeting room. On a recent Saturday morning, the meeting drew 18 people.

This general trend seems to be playing out all over the Tri-County service area. Meetings that migrated to Zoom during Covid have either reopened or are reopening live, and are drawing steadily greater numbers of in-person attendees and fewer people on Zoom. Mask-wearing is trending toward optional rather than mandatory.

**Group 1103**, a closed women's meeting (Thursdays, 6 pm), went back in person to St. Charles Presbyterian Church a couple months back. They still run a Zoom hybrid but are considering dropping Zoom at the end of July.

"Zoom served us well for many months—actually, about a year," says homegroup member Michelle B. "However, as the weeks went on, we became very lonely for person-to-person contact, fellowship, and hugs. Also, we weren't getting a lot of newcomers which, of course, is our primary purpose."

Michelle added that Group 1103's meeting space has changed to the church auditorium since their return, but "we are looking forward to resuming our meeting in the parlor, where the couches are."

Newcomers are finding their way to Group 1103's meetings again, according to Michelle, and homegroup members have resumed their weekly practice of going out to dinner afterward to further their fellowship.

Another Thursday night fixture, **Group 762** (7 pm, closed meeting), has just returned to live meetings, but has migrated from Sophia House at Assumption Church to First Assembly Church in St. Peters.

"The church has been looking for opportunities to bring in AA," said 762 homegroup member Lisa S. "The church's addiction pastor got sober in AA. Let's just say we have been treated like royalty!"

After being on Zoom for almost 15 months, Group 762 experimented with a quietly announced hybrid meeting recently. They're going large on Thursday, July 8, with an official "Grand Reopening" double-speaker meeting. This open meeting will start at 6:30 and offer dessert.

Group 762 has been attracting five or fewer Zoom attendees each week since going hybrid, but Lisa told us their Zoom link will be around for some time to come.

"We will continue doing hybrid until there are no more Zoom faces, even if we're just helping one person," she said. "It's just not that hard to do."



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## No Place Like Home Getting back to *better* than "normal"

by MISSY R  
Group 632

Certainly, the Covid pandemic was difficult to adjust to. It forced us to disrupt our routines and stay in our homes as though under house arrest. It made us realize how unprotected, exposed and fragile our lives can be. In some situations, like going to the grocery store, it pushed us beyond the limits of our comfort zones.

But despite the fear and sense of loss many of us felt, some remarkably great things have occurred. People began caring for their neighbors, spending more time with family, focusing on being healthy, paying more attention to mental health issues and being more compassionate.

Hopefully, some of the lessons learned from our year in lockdown aren't forgotten as life returns to normal. Of course, I want to get back to normal,

but as we've seen, "normal" can also be *better*.

I doubt I'm the only person who noticed some positive changes in people, places and procedures. I saw businesses, churches, medical facilities and schools fly into action, devising ways to keep society from completely imploding. Their resourcefulness amazed me.

I learned how to use technology that I didn't know existed. I've been allowed to work from home, where I'm safe from the virus, have unlimited access to the kitchen, and don't have to share a bathroom with anyone else.

For me personally, the pandemic has not been terrible, maybe not even inconvenient. It has muddled my AA program a bit.

I'm excited and grateful to see my homegroup meetings starting to feel more like pre- March 2020 status. It warms my heart to see so many people who I love dearly and who I know love me.

This morning, I was smiling like an idiot the entire meeting.

Zoom has been a life-saver, but for me, nothing can replace the feeling of being in a room with 20 or so other people, all with the common goal of living a sober, meaningful life.

We've all heard the phrase, "You never know what you had until it's gone." This has been true for me.

Although I never completely lost AA, I lost AA the way I knew AA. It had never occurred to me that AA might not be available to me. (Or toilet paper, but that's another story.)

I have realized how much I need AA and how grateful I am for the fellowship I enjoy in AA. Now I truly understand that I have a crucial obligation to alcoholics who are still suffering, to make sure this program is available to them, never changes, but keeps getting better.

## Old me, new me: Starting over sober

by CASSIDY  
Group 1096

I look in the mirror and don't like what I see

That person in the mirror staring back at me

That person isn't me, it's who I became

Filled with guilt and so much shame

I look in my eyes and all I see is fear

It is then that my eyes fill with tears

How did I let myself get so bad?

The hatred for life and always feeling sad?

Filling my body with liquor and booze

Fighting demons in my head but I always lose

I'm staring at myself and can't recognize this face

I was meant to be better, not such a disgrace

Tears flowing down my cheeks, something had to give

Between life and death, I chose to live

Nothing in life is ever too far out of range

I just have to be open and committed to change

Remembering that life isn't just a test

That I'm the author of my life and I control all the rest

Chapter One was a bit rocky, but I can control Chapter Two

Change this way of thinking and my every point of view

Giving up for me isn't an option any more

And I sure the fuck can't wait to see what my future has in store

I was blind before and couldn't see

what I was worth

But now I see I do belong on this place that we call Earth

I take one last look in the mirror and stare

This me I am now has always been there

I didn't see it before and don't think I ever could

Until I had decided to put the bottle down for good

I once had hoped my life would end so quick and premature

But then I found within myself there really was a cure

I pray to God each day for helping me get on track

I pray for the strength within me that keeps me from turning back

### EDITOR'S NOTE:

Cassidy wrote this autobiographical poem shortly before leaving to serve a 120-day shock incarceration due to multiple DWIs. "I'm definitely facing the consequences of my alcoholism," Cassidy states. "I'm grateful to have not hurt anyone or myself."

### RESPONSIBILITY STATEMENT

When anyone, anywhere, reaches out for help, I want the hand of A.A. always to be there. And for that: I am responsible.

### BIRTHDAYS

#### GROUP 77

William H 26 years  
Chad Y 2 years  
Bob C 1 year

#### GROUP 484

Bill U 10 years  
Bill H 10 years  
Jeff H 6 years  
Luke P 4 years  
Pat D 30 years

#### GROUP 1023

Carrie D 2 years 5/17  
Amy M 3 years 5/28

#### GROUP 4094

Patrick B 11 years  
Ken K 26 years

#### GROUP 164

Donnie W 32 years 6/11  
Becky E 7 years 6/12  
Dale H 6 years 6/6  
Tim D 38 years 5/24

#### GROUP 5

Harold McC 31 years

### DECLARATION OF UNITY

This we owe to AA's future: to place our common welfare first; to keep our fellowship united. For on AA unity depends our lives, and the lives of those to come.

## Pray for Kristina M!



# DOUBLE WINNER

One woman's journey through AA and Al-Anon leads to a perfect merge of the two



Grapevine

by **BRENDA F**  
**Group 451**

For years, I had sponsors and others advise me - gently and lovingly - to give Al-Anon a try. I wondered, *How on earth am I supposed to attend more meetings, work more steps, have a second sponsor, and learn a whole other program?*

Many of us in AA feel we have plenty of first-hand knowledge about the disease of alcoholism. We might fail to realize that we could be in denial about another disease - the disease of codependency.

We might understand that the disease of alcoholism is what happens when alcohol enters our physical being or when we lapse into twisted thinking. But we have another layer of the disease and that is the *family* disease of alcoholism.

We may have grown up with alcoholic parents, siblings, aunts or uncles. We certainly all know someone with alcoholism in our circle of friends. We may have noticed, or not, that we

have trouble with relationships of all kinds. We might complain about others or blame "him" or "her" or "them."

Al-Anon helps us look at our own behavior - what we are responsible for - and what we didn't cause, can't cure, and can't control. I love the quote that goes something like, "There are two kinds of business. Mine and none-of-mine."

So, after many years in the rooms of AA, and a few false starts in the rooms of Al-Anon in 2011, 2012, 2016 and 2019 ("It takes what it takes"), I started working the Al-Anon program as its written in the book *Al-Anon's 12 Steps and 12 Traditions*.

It was at first challenging not to disclose in the rooms of Al-Anon that I was also an alcoholic. Because of Al-Anon traditions, they want a focused approach to living with the family disease. That was fine, and it worked for a long time. My life got happier, my relationships became healthier, and I was able to look at my part: *What behavior can I change, how am I reacting to anger, hostility and other perceived wrongs*

*done by others?*

But there is another option for consideration.

A friend recommended a type of meeting affectionately known as Double Winners. The one I found meets on Zoom on Mondays and Wednesdays at 9:30 am. Alternating Mondays is a reading out of the AA or Al-Anon 12+12. Wednesdays is a speaker meeting.

This is a mixed group of alcoholics, Al-Anons and "double winners." I felt at home immediately.

We are alcoholics first and foremost. But we also have trouble with relationships and codependency.

If you are ready to do some advanced studies, humor aside, it might be time to start looking at a program that can guide you to look at your part, improve your self-care, self-forgiveness and self-love, and teach you how to detach with love from alcoholics and those affected by the family disease of alcoholism.

For Zoom ID and passcode, contact this author at [sentinel@tricityaa.org](mailto:sentinel@tricityaa.org).

## UPDATES ON PAST SENTINEL ARTICLES

### Men's Float Trip attracts near-record crowds

This was my fifth or sixth year serving on the Friends of Bill W float trip committee. This year was the 45th annual float trip, after having to take a year off due to Covid. The float trip was the second weekend of June and had one of the biggest turnouts ever, at 145 people! We also hit record fundraising through our silent auction, 50/50 and raffle sales.

While the weather was hot, the river was nice and cool, and many enjoyed floating down the Courtois Creek at Bass River Resort in rafts, canoes, and kayaks.

During the Saturday night bonfire meeting, we listened to our two speakers tell us about how they helped start the FOB float trip 45 years ago. They shared some insight and experiences about when it all first started, and it was definitely one of the best parts of the weekend. During the meeting we also had the traditional sobriety countdown, where we had people with as many as 46 years of sobriety all the way down to two days.

Overall, the weekend was a success, with lots of great memories made with friends, fellowship, and great food! Everyone's effort are greatly appreciated and we hope to be able to continue this tradition for many years to come.

--Aaron F, Group 589

### Hawk Point potluck draws treatment center group

Our potluck and speaker meeting on Sunday, May 30, turned out great! We drew approximately 50 people, including a few I had not seen since pre-pandemic. Several there had 40-plus years, and the weather was excellent.

About 10 of our guests showed up from Aviary Recovery Center in Eolia, about 25 miles north of Troy. Several from that group had right at 30 days.

We announced and spread out the *Sobriety Sentinel* and sent extra copies home with attendees and back to the treatment center.

One person had four days, and I think one had 45 years, so a wide variety of messages.

All leftovers were taken that evening to a man with 32 years who could not make it.

One of the best moments was Justin saying grace and honoring our fallen military in respect of Memorial Day.

Our home group could not have asked for a better turnout, food, variety of people and perfect event.

--Robert, Group 392

### Zoom service study spawns Concepts study

The six-week series the delegates from Area 12, 28 and 29 put together - which started in January - was so well received by the fellowship that it was extended out to a nine-week service manual study including the Conference Charter, by-laws and discussion by a current trustee about putting the Traditions to work alongside with structured service.

There were 300-plus members from North America each week. Many attended every week and were encouraged to conduct their own workshop series.

I was asked to speak at 3 separate workshops, one of which was an International Convention, as a direct result of meeting new friends who attended these workshops.

All of this led to a *second* six-week series on the Concepts, which is just finishing up. There has been representation by all seven continents.

There is some talk about another 6-week series in November covering the new Service Manual.

Our virtual platform has allowed for participation from several states and countries. The intention is to continue to use the virtual platform for any upcoming workshop series offered.

--Nikki O, Area 28 Delegate, Panel 70

### Summer sun can enhance your labyrinth walk

The Summer Solstice may have already passed, but you can still celebrate its symbolic awakening, enlightenment and triumph of light over dark. Sounds like recovery from the "dark

night of the soul," doesn't it?

Feel energized and harness the energy of the sun by taking a gentle walk, enjoying sun worship through yoga, or walking a labyrinth.

Go online and look up a labyrinth nearby or at your vacation destination by utilizing [LabyrinthLocator.com](http://LabyrinthLocator.com)

One of the largest and most peaceful labyrinths in the St. Louis region is located at the Mercy Center on Geyer Road.

Bring your Fourth Step or an issue you are struggling with. Walk in silent meditation to the center.

Say a prayer to the higher power of your choice. Let it go.

Release all your tension to the sun. Feel the warm rays on your face.

Sigh a deep breath.

You are safe. You are loved.

--Brenda F, Group 451

### Lightning Round: 3 more quick follow-ups

April's **Spring Fling Convention** drew more than 400 people total, selling out its banquet dinner and Al Anon luncheon. The Spring Fling committee has resumed monthly meetings at Central Service Office (14 Sunnen Drive) each fourth Sunday at 1 pm.

**Group 589's** offshoot meeting at the Hub in Maryland Heights (140 Weldon Parkway) has voted via group conscience to break into its own separate District 3 homegroup. As of last update, homegroup member Jordan M reports the brand new group has not yet received back the paperwork from New York that would make their existence fully official.

Greg S from the **Missouri State Convention** committee reports that web registration is now open and available for the event, which will be held at the Capital Plaza Hotel in Jefferson City during the last weekend in July.

"Our delay was due to the hotel having to comply with new food serving standards issued by the Missouri Health Department as we emerged from the recent Covid-19 pandemic," Greg states. "We again thank you for your patience while we all waited."

--Andrew H, Group 968

## IN MEMORIAM

# Seven sober men pay tribute to 'Sponsor Steve' S

**BOB D:** Steve got sober on April 15, 1984.

**CRAIG W:** He was there the day I walked into the rooms. He spoke directly to me and told me, "Come back. Life gets better." He was there when I was at my worst and there for me at my best.

**JORDAN M:** Steve sponsored a lot of guys. He had at least 10 active sponsees that I know of.

**SEAN W:** He was known as Sponsor Steve.

**BOB D:** He helped scores of men enjoy a new freedom and a new happiness.

**JORDAN M:** He was my grand sponsor. I used to attend a Big Book study at his house.

**SEAN W:** He moved that house meeting to Zoom during the pandemic. Even his last day, he met with his sponsees via Zoom.

**BRIAN T:** Steve didn't even mention when he got diagnosed with cancer that it was stage 4 until the day he passed. That's the stuff legends are made of.

**CRAIG W:** He took me on a spiritual path that got me sober, keeps me sober, saved my life and gave me a life. He was a mentor, a friend and possibly the best human being I have ever met.

**SEAN W:** Steve was my go-to when my sponsor wasn't immediately available. He always answered the phone.

**BOB D:** He was always my first call.

**SEAN W:** Steve was a great example of how to conduct yourself in and out of the rooms. Hearing him gush over his wife is an example of the program at work in the home.

**DAVID B:** The first men's float trip I ever attended was with Steve. At one point, we were headed right for an overhanging limb and certain disaster. Next thing I knew, Steve had the offending branch, bear-huggin' it with his legs wrapped around it, all while remaining in the canoe. When the maneuver was completed, we were both facing backward in the canoe in tranquil waters, both completely surprised by the outcome. "There you go, God," said Steve, "doing for us what we could not do for ourselves!"

**SEAN W:** He would always quote, "What we really have is a daily reprieve contingent on the maintenance of our spiritual condition."

**CRAIG W:** It's not by chance he came into my life. It was only by God's good grace that not only did we cross paths but got to become more than friends.

**BOB D:** Six months into my newfound way of life, I came to St. Louis to surprise Steve for his 25th AA birthday. I always called him every year for his birthday, so as I approached, I got him on the phone to congratulate. Steve asked what I was up to, and I replied, "I'm just stopping by a friends house to pick him up for a meeting." Steve replied, "Excellent, get that guy to a meeting!" I got out of car, walked to the door and knocked. Steve yelled inside the home in recognition of the fact that *he* was the friend I was picking up!

**CRAIG W:** The ripple effect that Steve left has touched so many lives that it seems as though no one could ever fill his shoes.

**BRIAN T:** The bond you build with a sponsor can't be put into words. Steve taught me that honesty is one of the biggest tools I have in life. He taught me how to love and be loved, how to be present, and that communicating with God is what helps keep me grounded. I have a crazy wonderful life now, and Steve made sure I stayed on the right path to get there.

**Andrew H**  
**Group 968**

*All opinions expressed are those of individuals and do not necessarily reflect the views of AA as a whole. To report Tri-County AA news or events, submit articles, recommend your homegroup for a feature piece, or just to share your experience, strength and hope with us, please email [sentinel@tricityaa.org](mailto:sentinel@tricityaa.org)*