

Sobriety Sentinel

NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 2021 - DISTRICTS 14, 19 and 20 of AREA 38 - TRICOUNTYAA.ORG

Turn it all over, A to Z

by **ANDREW H**
Group 968

Anytime I feel like my Higher Power has failed me, left me, abandoned me, I remind myself of my

Belief that, when God seems so far away, it's because I moved.

Clearly, I can walk away from what I know works, which is

Doing the work

Every day

From the moment I rise.

Granted, I'm not typically able to rouse myself and immediately muster the focus to ask for

Help, which I desperately need, whether

I feel like I've "got this" or not. It's

Just, it's easy to forget that

Kindness toward myself is not something I'm easily able to single-handedly provide. Rather, I

Leave that task to a God I believe is all-loving, all-knowing, all-powerful, all-forgiving.

"Maybe, just maybe," I tell myself, "if God loves me unconditionally, I can suspend some of these unreasonable self-expectations I'm

Never going to be able to fulfill," then I decide consciously to be rid of those mental

Obligations. To let go and let God. To

Pause. Pray. Proceed.

Quietly, when I make effort to calm the internal chatter, I can

Receive positive thoughts, messages, directions, reassurances, that for now - in this moment - will

Silence the negative voice, the wholesale selfishness that

Threatens to run the show.

Usually, I can get to this state pretty early in my day. Other times, I short-change the work, and I don't go to God until I'm

Vehemently restless. Venomously irritable. Verifiably discontent.

When I reach out for help, maybe not immediately, but at the God-determined time, I get

Exactly what I need. I spent so many

Years without this resource, and now I've had access to it for quite a few sober, happier 24-hour stretches. Yes,

Zen is achievable.



Always Go To the Funeral

Five recent examples of connection and appreciation at memorials

by **BRENDA F**
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I heard these words on an AA speaker tape: "Always go to the funeral." The speaker described how important it is in sobriety to show up for each other, as a living amends for all the funerals and important occasions we missed due to our drinking.

Over the years of my sobriety, I have gone to several funerals of men and women who I knew only from the rooms of AA. Whether I knew them casually or more closely, I always made an effort to go to the visitation time, and if possible, to attend the funerals. Here are a few recent ones:

Wayne

The cantankerous Wayne relapsed after his wife died and he was diagnosed with cancer. I had done a 12th-step call on Wayne the evening before Thanksgiving Day. I spoke to Wayne at length, snatched his case of beer from his house, and called a few guys in the program to come over and talk to him often. Wayne still continued to drink, yet these men and his sponsor did not abandon him. Many of his friends from Saturday morning group showed up at his funeral. It helped remind me we are part of one big family, like members of a Harley gang.

Larry

I missed learning of the death of Wayne's sponsor, Larry, due

to Covid closures. Later, though, the same Saturday group held an open meeting, complete with a potluck the size of any Irish funeral. Larry's wife and daughters attended, and they all said how much Larry's homegroup meant to him and his family. They got to enjoy sober Larry for many years as a loving husband, father and grandfather.

John

From the same Saturday group again, the husband of one of the home group members died. We all knew John because he attended our monthly first-Saturday open meetings. We loved his British accent and sense of gratitude he freely expressed. John's memorial was held in the backyard of his daughter's house in a peaceful neighborhood in University City. I enjoyed hearing stories about John's personal life from his daughters and from others who, like me, had met him through the rooms of recovery. One of the speakers at that memorial—Sobriety Sentinel editor Andrew H—became a close friend of mine as the result of our initial encounter at John's memorial.

Leo

Over this summer, I attended the funeral of Leo A. I was familiar with Leo and also know his wife from the rooms and elsewhere. Leo's memorial gathering drew a large turnout and showcased lots of great rock music from the '70s and '80s. I learned that Leo and his wife, Patty, had lived in New England at one time, not far from my home state. I also had a lovely

For more, please see **FUNERAL**, Page 2

Gratitude Meeting to be hybrid

Maybe you've met Deb D, the lady with the loving energy who leads off all her meeting shares with the phrase, "I gotta remember to keep an attitude of gratitude, with sobriety in the number-one slot."

It delighted, but did not surprise, the *Sobriety Sentinel* to learn that Group 164's annual Gratitude Meeting, now in its eighth year, was initially suggested by Deb D herself.

This year's meeting chairperson Mary M tells us there was a similar meeting in Springfield, Illinois, where Deb got sober. The group conscience of 164 decided District 14 and all its visitors would benefit from bringing one here as well.

The meeting will be held at St. Charles Presbyterian Church, at 131 Gamble Street, Wed. Nov. 24 - the night before Thanksgiving - from 7-8:45 pm. Meeting alternate chair Emily E explains further:

"We're holding it in the chapel portion of the church this year. Last year, we were entirely on Zoom, and this year we're going to be on Zoom and in person. All the speakers will be in person. Five AI Anon, five AA speakers. Each speaker shares five minutes worth of gratitude from their story."

Due to Covid protocol, the usual pie spread will be replaced this year by individually wrapped homemade and store-bought cookies. There will be coffee, though, which in this day and age, is no small feat.

-Andrew H
Group 968

EDITOR'S NOTE: Zoom ID for Gratitude Meeting on Wed. Nov. 24 at 7 pm is 843 2733 2507. Password: Gratitude.

Reflections on half-century of sobriety

by **KATHY F**
Group 698

My name is Kathy, and I'm an alcoholic. This is a true statement. But at age 27, when I first called AA for help, I told them my name was Lee. I felt the need to disguise myself; Lee happens to be my middle name.

I wasn't ready to give them my first name, but I gave them my address. Three AAs came to my house that evening in January 1971. My husband was out of town. I took the 20-question test and lied throughout.

They took me to a meeting the next morning. I was very drunk and don't remember much, but I remember being incensed when someone dared mention God. I got some literature, went home and mostly stayed drunk for the next six months. I'd drink first thing in the morning then throw it right back up, feeling depressed as all that "good booze" went down the drain.

I had three kids under age 5, a husband who didn't know I drank, and one car between us. I had to carefully secure and guard my supply. Running out was a crisis. One day, when my 2 year old, innocently playing in the kitchen, broke my only gin bottle, I gingerly retrieved the large, jagged fragments from the spreading puddle, soaked up the supply with a sponge, then squeezed it all into a glass. And, as carefully as I could, I drank it, shards and all.

On July 13, 1971, I finally got sick and tired of being sick and tired, and I went to my second A.A. meeting, sober this time. I stayed sober, and my life got "better" in a week! My husband was out of town again, so I cleaned the house top to bottom. Then I cleaned myself from top to bottom, put on makeup and clean clothes.

When my husband got home on Friday, I was too scared to tell him. I called my sponsor and she told me, "Do it NOW!" I did, and he got mad: Where was I getting the money? Who were these A.A. people? I took him to my

sponsor's home, where we spent the afternoon talking about alcoholism and A.A. When we came home, he was very enthusiastic about my new sobriety. He looked at me for the first time in months and could see the changes.

Despite my progress in early A.A., I still had one more drink, on October 12, 1971. I couldn't find my boots. Really, that was the "reason" I drank. The neighbors had my booze for safe-keeping. I had to go to their house to retrieve my bottle, and I cried loudly the second the booze hit my throat. Called my sponsor, got to a meeting, haven't picked up a drink since.

My life improved steadily every year after, though there have been thorns. I got divorced--happily; I got remarried--happily. My wonderful father died in 1979; my mother committed suicide a year later. That changed my life financially and emotionally. I was able to go back

For more, please see **50 YEARS**, Page 2

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

Robert C	5 years	11/6
GROUP 164 Susan G	2 years	11/4
GROUP 484 Rich E	6 years	10/20
GROUP 1023 Jeff H	5 years	10/2
GROUP 968 Kathy F	50 years	10/12
GROUP 130 Zac H	2 years	
GROUP 4094 Randy P	15 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.

It's Time To Get Active in Service!

The Tri-County Intergroup service committee will soon have four open chair positions. These are two-year terms and will introduce you to mature, collaborative, purposeful sobriety. And you'll get to have coffee and donuts at the monthly meeting with me, the anonymous author of this sentence and paragraph!

Technology Chair - helps create IT solutions for our website and helps carry the message to all the groups in Tri-County service area.

12th-Step Chair - coordinates a small group of male and female volunteers to answer phone calls from community members seeking the hand of AA.

Activities Chair - organizes and oversees execution of annual Tri-County Picnic and Alcathon events as well as workshops like the Seventh Tradition one you and all your friends surely attended on November 8!

Literature Chair - orders and provides AA conference-approved books and pamphlets for sale to homegroups and individuals.

Vice-Chair - performs duties of chairperson as chairperson requests or needs, and ideally will succeed chairperson position

The vice-chair position requires five years' continuous sobriety, while the other four require two. You know you want to.

Funeral: Showing up is a living amends

From Page 1

conversation with Patty's parents about Toastmasters. I was tickled to meet someone else's parents. (Most of my friends in their 60s and up no longer have parents who are still living.) That encounter was a surprise and not one I was expecting from attending Leo's funeral.

Amy

During Covid summer, while Group 451, Tuesday Candlelighters, was meeting on Zoom, I saw Amy G only a few times. This was the time period in which Amy received her cancer diagnosis. After this, I would receive updates from the site Car-

ing Bridge about Amy, posted by her family. The family would ask for prayers, share good news when appropriate, and ask for visits and Starbucks deliveries for Amy.

I brought Amy her favorite latte at one point, and I also included a card and a journal for her thoughts. Nothing major, just a simple act that someone was thinking about her. But she was too sick to see me at the door or to visit. We relied on a few text messages here and there, but I had changed meetings by the end of the summer. Amy got sicker, and I never had a chance to see her again.

There was some false hope for a time, as Amy had gotten stronger and was able to

travel to the beach with her family, but she passed away on October 8. We always think we have more time to tell people how much we care about them and how they have impacted our lives. But more often than not, we don't get the opportunity to say our goodbyes. Finding out that someone we cared about has died is still a shock, even after knowing of that someone's cancer diagnosis. How often we forget how short life is and how precious our days are.

I canceled plans for a massage and other personal appointments that suddenly seemed meaningless, and I showed up to connect with other sober women at the funeral home.

I looked at the photo collages from that last family vacation at the beach. I cried at the eulogy delivered for the beautiful and gentle spirit who was with us for such a brief time on earth. I thanked God for letting me know such a strong and courageous woman who overcame the near-fatal disease of alcoholism, then succumbed to another one.

I met Amy's children and Amy's mother, and Amy's husband thanked us for helping his wife have eight years of sobriety. He spoke eloquently of Amy's beautiful life and their meaningful times together. I realized this is the life that the 12-step program of recovery offers us. People who love us will be there when it's

our time to cross over. Especially if we have worked the steps and have experienced a transformation while living.

Sometimes we want what people have in the program, in life. And sometimes, we want what they have in death. It's the love we leave behind, not our accomplishments or professional identity. It is always about the love.

Every one of these five funerals mentioned was another reminder to me to show up for people while they are alive, to make a touch-base phone call, to send a card in the mail with a real postage stamp. And to remind each other the importance of showing up, especially at the funeral.

Meet Comedy Night performer Kathy Brennan

The Spring Fling Committee will host its annual comedy event on February 12, 2022, at Crestwood Community Center.

The Sobriety Sentinel, well-connected publication that it is, managed to wrangle an interview with one of the event's headliners, comedian Kathy Brennan of Springfield, Illinois:

Hi Kathy, and thank you for your time. What's the comedy scene like in Springfield?

It's actually very good. We've got probably three open mics going, and a very supportive group of performers.

Coming back from Covid shutdowns, are you getting steady work right now?

Yes, as much as I care to. I stayed active on Zoom comedy during the shutdown. It kept me writing and allowed me to meet people from all over the country and the world. I found out that I'm not alone in comedy, being a woman my age.

Did you go into comedy later in life?

I worked for the state, and then after I retired, I started comedy. I've been doing it for almost six years now.

How did you end up on the radar for Spring Fling Comedy Night?

It was through [2021 Spring Fling Comedy Night headliner] Mike McGuire. Mike knows I can do clean comedy, so he's asked me to do two or three different events. I can't remember now how we met. It may have been through Toastmasters. I started that after I retired as well. I did Toastmasters first, actually, before I hit the stage. I knew I needed experience speaking in front of an audience.

Could you give us some basic entry-level information about Toastmasters?

It's an international organization with clubs that meet regularly. Anybody can join who's interested in improving their speaking skills. There's also a leadership component to it, because we run our own clubs.

It's easy to imagine that each of those for you, comedy and Toastmasters, kind of feed off each other and help you improve.

They do! I had a comedy show last night. The host was sick and couldn't come. He was looking for someone else to host and run it, and I said, "Well, I can do that," because of my experience with introducing people in Toastmasters meetings. It's all practice for the real world.

The Toastmasters stuff would probably make it easier, too, to tailor your material for a specific audience. For instance, have you ever performed for a roomful of sober people?

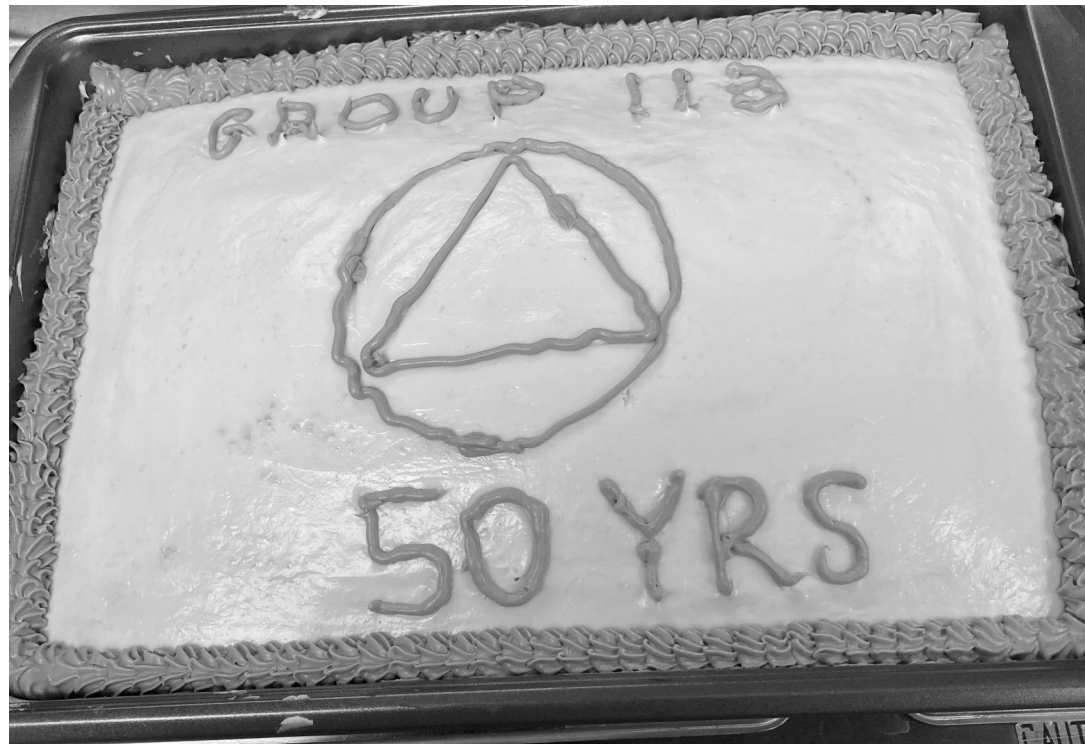
Well, anytime in your standard comedy club, when they put you first in a lineup, before people have even had time to get drunk, you're performing for a sober crowd. (laughs) It can be a challenge!

-Andrew H
Group 968

EDITOR'S NOTE: Tickets for Comedy Night are \$20, and they sell out fast. Contact Dave B at 314-346-4279 or Lisa H at 618-567-2347 to get yours.

Also, the Sobriety Sentinel has learned of a Toastmasters Club that meets Tuesday nights at Trinity Episcopal Church (a popular location for AA and Al Anon meetings) in St. Charles. This all ties together, folks!

EVENT PHOTOS



On October 29, Group 113 of Troy celebrated its fiftieth anniversary in October with a speaker pot-luck event. Says Jeff C of Group 77: "It was a rather wonderful time. Attendance was about 100. The atmosphere was great; they had fried chicken and all the fixin's. The AA speaker had been there from the beginning of the group itself."

On November 6, the Fall Classic Committee put on a bonfire speaker meeting at 370 Lakeside Park. Smilin' Dave B was there, and reports:

"There were only about 20 people there who I already knew on a first-name basis, so it was a real great place to meet new friends. The first speaker did a fantastic job, and didn't let the audio problems deter her. I had me some delicious - what do they call those things? - S'mores. And just look at how beautiful that fire was!"



50 Years: Peace, serenity, sobriety

From Page 1

to school, get two degrees and begin a career in higher education. I started as an academic advisor and eventually became the director of the program.

I changed schools, this time to a large university, where I had much success. I began to teach statistics.

I would often stop and realize that this woman - who

rarely bathed, who was always frightened and depressed, who had to ingest multiple drinks just to go to the grocery store - now was teaching, leading business meetings and A.A. meetings, and enjoying it. She had self-esteem. She wasn't scared anymore.

I recently celebrated 50 years of sobriety. I am 77 years old. I finally retired

from teaching 4 years ago. Life has been wonderful but certainly not perfect - progress, not perfection.

When I drank, I had no friends and no life except for my kids. Fortunately, they were very young when I got sober - 2, 4 and 6 - and don't remember my drinking. I know it affected them in spite of their young age, but they love me, and we laugh

and have fun now. They have children of their own whom I adore.

I also have a step-family that is super. We get closer as the years go by. I have married a wonderful man who loves me and has never seen me take a drink. What a switch! My best friend today is my sister. She got sober in 1984; we have a meeting every time we're together.

Prior to sobriety, I would find myself envying women I would see at the grocery store or just outside my window. Even though I knew nothing about them, I knew their lives had to be better than mine. I was scared of everything - I was afraid of being afraid. I thank God and A.A. for the peace and serenity that sobriety has given me.

Goodbye for now, Kristina M - your family is in our prayers.

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@tricountyaa.org