

Sobriety Sentinel

JANUARY 2022 - SERVING DISTRICTS 14, 19 and 20 of AREA 38 - TRICOUNTYAA.ORG

Alcathon returns for New Year's

by JOHN A
Group 164

After a one-year Covid hiatus, the Tri-County Intergroup Alcathon is coming back full steam on New Year's Eve.

The Activity Committee has been working hard in preparation to provide a quality, family-friendly, sober event. Our mission is to provide a safe place to be on New Year's Eve, where you can bring your children, family and friends to enjoy fried chicken, all the trimmings and dessert at no cost.

Being a no-cost event removes any barriers that could prevent newcomers with little or no financial resources from being part of the fellowship and celebration

of not only New Year's Eve but of sobriety itself.

We thank each group in advance that is donating a raffle basket. It's heartwarming how groups take pride in creative ideas for raffle baskets. Raffleing off baskets is a fun way to support the event.

The Alcathon will also feature a Sobriety Countdown, 50/50 raffle, amazing Al-Anon and AA speakers, and yes, a dance floor!

We look forward to seeing you from 7 pm to midnight on December 31 in the Celebration Room of Sts. Joachim and Ann Church, 4116 McClay Rd.

We will celebrate the past, look forward to the future, be grateful for recovery, fellowship, and the ability to dance while sober!



John A/Sobriety Sentinel

This is the Celebration Room at Sts. Joachim and Ann Church, which will be full of sober alcoholics, family and friends on New Year's Eve.

Sober holiday survival tactics

The *Sobriety Sentinel* asked some of our AA friends around the Tri-County service area for advice on how to make it through Christmas and New Year's with sobriety intact. Their individual remarks are listed below, but we want to state upfront what was said by nine of the 19 respondents, independently of one another. We're even going to utilize bold, italic and underlined type for you here:

If you are going to any type of party or event where there will be drinking or there exists the possibility of discomfort or disharmony, drive yourself and have an escape plan. Show up late and leave early.

"Nothing wrong with doing a quiet creep-off," as Kathy S put it.

Bring a sober support/accountability partner. Plan which reinforcements you will reach out to by phone if you need to take a quick break, clear your head and remind yourself that nothing is more important than keeping your sobriety.

Now, on with some individual suggestions:

KATHY D: We can go anywhere and do anything if we are in for spiritual condition, so get in spiritual condition before attending the event. Practice the second step. Take God with you everywhere. Take breaks and pray in the bathroom.

DALE H: I like to recall Jack L's suggestion that 95% of what you can control lies within yourself. How you react to others' behavior is all you can control. Oh, and any situation you encounter can only be made worse by adding alcohol to it.

DEB D: Watch out for hidden alcoholic ingredients in holiday treats being served at parties. Stay away from eggnog and rum balls or cake. Be true to yourself. Go meeting hopping with a group of friends.

For more, please see HOLIDAY, Page 2

Will it ever end?

Holiday anxiety...
Covid anxiety...
Weather anxiety... **and how to cope**

by MISSY R
Group 968

During the holiday season, there's so much shopping to do. Traffic is terrible. The stores are crowded with crabby people all trying to beat me to the cash register.

Not to mention, the cost of gas, groceries, and just about everything else is going up. News outlets are yelling frightening things about the "supply chain." I don't even know what the supply chain is, but the news dude has convinced me that I should be losing sleep over it.

The pandemic that my employer believed would last two or three weeks is apparently never going to end, with one variant after the next. I'm generally not the hypochondriac type, but it's in my face so much that now I'm actually kind of worried about it.

Even the weather is cause for anxiety, with deadly tornadoes having just torn through several states - in December! We shouldn't have to worry about tornadoes in December, but here we are.

Add these things to the normal, everyday stress of living, and it can be overwhelming. I keep hearing people use the phrase "new normal," but I don't feel like there IS a "normal" right now. Maybe with the passage of time

things will start to feel normal again, but for now we're dealing with the unusual and bizarre.

Alcoholics tend to be sensitive, anxious, and emotional. It's easy for a lot of us to get overwhelmed. It's an unavoidable part of life. But feeling overwhelmed, fearful and uncertain can trigger addictive behavior. When I was drinking, I paid little to no attention to what was going on in my tiny circle and completely ignored what was happening in the world. I didn't get overwhelmed because I wore blinders all the time by never being sober.

When you're drunk all the time, you just shut off anything that is the least bit emotionally uncomfortable. That may not sound terrible, but on the flip side, you don't have any good emotions, either. It's important for anyone who wants to stay sober through uncertain times to know how to navigate the alligator pits.

For me, the number one action I take is prayer. You can do it anywhere, at any time. Just tell your Higher Power exactly what is troubling you and ask for help.

Don't skimp on meetings. Even if your schedule is tight and you have many things to accomplish, don't do anything else at the expense of your AA

program. If you do, you are putting your sobriety at risk.

I don't know about you, but if I don't get any presents this year, I won't care if I make it to 2022 with my sobriety intact. (I'll admit that it's easy for me to say this because I already had received two presents by the end of the second week of December. But still...)

Don't forget about the AA Fellowship. Your AA friends are here for you, and we understand you more than anyone else could.

Meditation can be calming and grounding, so I think it deserves a mention, but I'll admit that it's not a skill that I possess.

Finally, try to remember that all the little, irritating things (people) that piled up on you probably didn't make you overwhelmed in a day. It probably happened little by little - you know, one day at a time? The same way you work on your sobriety every day, you'll also need to work on decompressing every day.

And it might help to remember that no holiday, family function, illness, traffic jam, boss or news story is worth losing your sobriety over.

I hope you and your families all have a safe and joyful holiday and that I see you again sober in 2022.



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

| | | | | | |
|-------------------|-------|----------|------------------|-------|----------|
| Henry B | 11/22 | 35 years | GROUP 5 | | |
| | | | Dan M | 11/11 | 8 years |
| GROUP 1023 | | | GROUP 484 | | |
| Kristi T | 12/20 | 7 years | Andy K | 12/4 | 4 years |
| Kathleen W | 12/26 | 16 years | | | |
| GROUP 164 | | | GROUP 77 | | |
| Kristen O | 10/26 | 1 year | Dennis T | 10/29 | 4 years |
| Emily E | 11/27 | 13 years | Holly C | 11/1 | 4 years |
| | | | Mark A | 11/4 | 3 years |
| GROUP 4094 | | | Jim A | 11/12 | 2 years |
| James D | 12/20 | 10 years | Russ S | 12/7 | 40 years |
| Bob W | 12/21 | 15 years | Matt G | 12/2 | 26 years |
| Mike K | | 11 years | Ed F | 12/8 | 3 years |
| Captain Bob | | 19 years | Bill M | 12/12 | 6 years |
| | | | George T | 12/19 | 14 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.

ARCH facility, a hidden community gem, is hoping to attract more AA meetings

The ARCH (Addiction Recovery Community Help) facility, at 502 S. Fifth Street, is St. Charles' best-kept recovery-resource secret. Each week, ARCH hosts AA meetings -- as well as meetings within other 12-step fellowships -- that are vital to Tri-County's sober community. ARCH has meeting space openings for

new AA meetings or existing AA meetings needing or desiring to relocate. Coffee is always provided by ARCH for AA meetings at no cost.

For more information about reserving a spot for your AA meeting, call Tim K at 636-627-9752.

-John A, Group 164

Holiday: stay busy and bring a friend

From Page 1

BECCA H: Always carry your coin in your pocket.

ANGELA G: Bring a fidget toy you can play with. I usually have a little squishy ball or something that I can fiddle with it if I need to.

SUE S: There is added stress during this season. Lean on your program. If you have to cut something from your schedule, put meetings at the bottom of your list.

KELLY W: Do not choose to be alone. We do this together. There is always a hand -- grab tight and go together toward whatever it is you are facing.

STEVE A: Try to plan out the day's activities so there are no gaps which could lead to temptation.

KATHY S: Get involved. Do the dishes, play games, offer to do anything service-related. Stay busy and smile. Count your blessings

CAROL P: Keep in contact with your sponsor and AA friends on a daily basis. Keep an attitude of gratitude.

JENNIFER F: When I first came into AA, I asked everyone in my sister tree if they had any New Year's resolutions, and I was told that in AA we don't do things like that. It puts unnecessary expectations on oneself and goes against the "one day at a time" philosophy. It made so much sense to me. And I've never made one since.

LISA S: Remember to "get out of self" by checking on others during the holidays. Could be something small like baking a tin of cookies for an elderly neighbor or volunteering your time to others who may be less fortunate. Despite what you might feel, there ARE others who are less fortunate than you! Also, it's good to remember that time with family members, especially during the holidays, can actually be a trigger. So if you can't respectfully decline invites, shorten the time you would normally spend with them. Make sure to hit a meeting before the event and even after if need be!

We at the *Sobriety Sentinel* would like to reiterate -- do not allow yourself the possibility of getting trapped at an event. It's almost like Cinderella; your magnificent carriage **will** turn back into a pumpkin after a certain amount of time. Do not still be at the event when that happens!

--Andrew H
Group 968



by **BRENDA F**
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When January rolls around each year, many people like to make New Year's resolutions and set professional goals. In the past, I taught vision board workshops that encouraged people to dream big and think of things they want to accomplish in the new year. By cutting out pictures and words from magazines, someone can create a vision for all the external things they want to accomplish and maybe imagine some of the positive feelings associated with those things.

However, the Big Book chapter "A Vision For You" takes a different approach to the word "vision" and what it might mean to those of us in recovery. Page 152 promises that, with sobriety, "your imagination will be fired," and that "your life will mean something at last."

Depending on where you are in your recovery journey, these promises will take on different meanings. However, our book suggests that our most satisfying years lie ahead. That's good news to all of us as we live through the deadliest pandemic our country has ever faced.

Rising prices, climate events and job insecurity are other outside issues we are likely tempted to put our focus on. "A Vision For You" suggests that the best treatment for our present worries - not to mention the only sustainable replacement for the miserable lives we all have prior to recovery - is the fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous, in the rooms of AA and with each other.

Most of us probably don't automatically think of the AA fellowship as the top priority when sitting down to formulate out New Year's resolutions. After all, only a small percentage of recovering alcoholics are fully active in service or within their homegroups. But this can be ground zero for witnessing and experiencing some true miracles.

When we get involved in service, we start thinking more about the still-addicted and still-struggling. We put our focus on them and take it off our own pity party. We make new friends. We find support on those dark days when we lose the job, the spouse, the favorite pet. When life throws a figurative or sometimes literal tornado at us, we can still find peace in the midst of the storm.

Here are some questions to ask yourself. Acting on the answers could not only improve your AA involvement but also "show you how to create the fellowship you crave."

1. Can you connect with someone after a meeting? Is there a newcomer present, or someone who just relapsed that you might be able to invite for a quick coffee date? Could you call this person the next day to continue offering support and encouragement?

2. Which service boards could use your help? Can you volunteer to answer the phones at Central Services? Can you join the Spring Fling committee? Can you help out at the Alcathon? Can you help clean up after the meeting or arrive early and set out the books?

3. Who is missing from your homegroup that was a

regular before Covid? Who can you call that you haven't seen in a while?

4. Do you like to write letters? How about volunteering for the Corrections Correspondence team who write letters to people in prison?

5. Do you have a *Grapevine* subscription? Have you ever considered sending in an article or a joke? Do you know your way around the website? How about giving a gift subscription to someone or leaving a copy in your doctor's office?

6. Who is at home recovering from surgery or can't drive? Could you bring this friend some cookies or soup and stop by for a visit? Wherever two or more are gathered, you can have a meeting.

The bottom line - be shoulder to shoulder with each other to begin your journey, or to deepen your program. The purpose is to give of yourself, so others will survive and rediscover the beauty in their lives.

The results will be plenty. We will find safety, clarity and fulfillment. We will know our purpose and place in the world. We will have comfort. Those sound like hefty promises to me, ones worth working toward. And perhaps a bit more appealing than a vision board made of corrugated paperboard with magazine pictures glued on it.

"We will lose interest in selfish things and gain interest in our fellows. Self seeking will slip away." And we will enjoy "the Fellowship of the Spirit" along the Road of Happy Destiny.

No longer alone: Marty M meets Bill W

by **ANDREW H**
Group 968

NOTE: This story is adapted from factual accounts in the book Pass It On and other historic documents. Creative license has been taken with recreating dialogue and emotional reactions I imagine Marty to have had.

Marty Mann was one of the pioneers of Alcoholics Anonymous and the founder of the National Committee for Education on Alcoholism. Henry Tiebout, her psychiatrist, was an early friend of AA. He was medical director of a sanitarium called Blythewood.

Marty found herself in Blythewood in 1939. She had attempted suicide and simply couldn't stop drinking. Tiebout gave her a manuscript copy of the Big Book, AA's basic text, at that time unpublished. Although Marty strongly resisted the book at first, it eventually brought her to a spiritual experience that produced hope and willingness to go further. She re-read the book, again and again.

Tiebout decided Marty was ready to take a field trip, all by herself. He handed Marty a small notecard. On it, he had written some numbers and a street name.

"Take the 5:00 train into New York," Tiebout told Marty. "Then catch a cab, and have the driver take you to this address. The people you find here will take you to your first meeting of a group of drunks like you."

Marty may have had a bit of budding faith, maybe some newfound trust in Tiebout's judgment and unconventional

methods. But I imagine it took no small amount of courage to leave the comfort of Blythewood — Marty was in the midst of what would turn out to be a one-year stay — and venture into this new, unknown universe. She was a debutante, born into old money and married into old money. What sort of secret society of brown-bag gutter drunks might she find on the other end?

Well, the cab pulled up and deposited Marty in front of an elegant home. A friendly, well-spoken older couple answered the door. They were at ease with each other. They were happy. The husband was a sober alcoholic; the wife was gracious and welcoming.

"I'm Horace, but you can call me Popsie," the man said. The woman introduced herself as Sandy.

They didn't go straight to the meeting. They went out to dinner first, in a fancy, high-class restaurant. A fourth person joined; he was a handsome blue-eyed young Irish A.A. member named Brian. There must have been plenty of people at that restaurant drinking wine and cocktails, which is what Marty was used to. But there was no alcohol at her table, not that night, and yet her companions still seemed to be enjoying themselves.

The subway dropped the group near their final destination, 182 Clinton Street in Brooklyn. This was the home of A.A. co-founder Bill Wilson and his wife Lois. When Marty got inside, she couldn't believe how many people were there. Several dozen. A few sober A.A. members had brought their entire families. Wives, kids, maybe even a dog.

"I was sent upstairs to leave my coat,"

Marty later recalled. She was anxious and overwhelmed. She stayed upstairs for awhile. I don't blame her. "I might never have come back down if somebody hadn't come upstairs."

It was Lois Wilson who came up to retrieve Marty, the guest of honor. "We have been waiting for you for such a long time," Lois told her. She had her arms around Marty's shoulders.

Marty felt a powerful love being transmitted from and through Lois. Marty said later, "I never felt such love as I had felt from that woman." She was feeling a power greater than herself. Greater than both of them. She couldn't deny it. So what else could she do? She went downstairs, "like a little lamb."

And there, before the meeting started, she had a one-on-one conversation with Bill W. I'm not sure at what point Marty realized she wasn't talking to just any old reformed drunk in any old brownstone. There had to have been a moment where the light went on, and Marty thought to herself, *This is the man who wrote the book that brought me hope, that changed my thinking. And I'm talking to him.*

"I had read the book about 20 times by then," Marty said later. "I knew whole chunks of it by heart, and I had a thousand questions."

She must've been talking a mile a minute, barely letting Bill begin to answer one question before launching into the next seven. But Bill looked at Marty, and he laughed, and he said something like, "Look, it's Tuesday night. You're not gonna have all this figured out by Thursday."

She had one thing figured out for sure,



Marty Mann

though — when she got back to Blythewood, Marty went straight to her friend Gennie, a fellow patient, a fellow alcoholic, and she told her, excitedly:

"Gennie, we are no longer alone!"

This happened a long time ago, more than 80 years. And it's happened millions of times to millions of people since:

We drink for months, years, decades. Our lives get worse and worse. We injure ourselves and the people around us. We reach bottom. We run out of choices. We come to AA. We have no idea what to expect.

And we discover, to our great surprise and ultimate joy, exactly what Marty Mann discovered. We discover that we are no longer alone.

All opinions expressed are those of individuals and do not necessarily reflect the views of AA as a whole.
To give feedback or report Tri-County AA news or events, please email sentinel@tricityaa.org

PRODUCED FOR ST. CHARLES COUNTY, LINCOLN COUNTY AND WARREN COUNTY IN EASTERN MISSOURI