

Sobriety Sentinel

MARCH 2022 - REPRESENTING DISTRICTS 14, 19 and 20 of AREA 38 - TRICOUNTYAA.ORG



Robert H/Group 392

This meeting room, in the basement of Christian Center Church in Troy, is home to a new open discussion meeting on

Saturdays at 7 pm. The coffee is hot, the room is sanitized before and after, and attendance has become steady.

Treasure Hunt

The months-long process to bring a Saturday evening meeting back to Troy

by **ROBERT H Group 392**

For a good handful of years, Troy in District 20 was home to a Saturday night meeting at Lincoln County Medical Center. Then the pandemic hit, and for 18 months or more, there was no Saturday night meeting in Troy. So I decided to start one.

I began a search for a local location - with proper facilities - that would approve use of their space for a new AA meeting. I found out that certain potential spaces didn't have fellowship halls or didn't have tables and chairs available.

It was a chore, needless to say. The Saturday-night specification was a particular challenge - in the Covid era, churches are leery about possible germ remnants making their way to their Sunday-morning attendees.

After two to three months of hunting, I remembered a specific church - Christian Center Church - that had held a parking lot sale a few years back

to benefit a local ministry. The pastor's name was on the sign out front. It was a shot in the dark. I called him.

The pastor and I had several one-on-one conversations. He didn't have much prior knowledge of AA - he kept referring to our "Ten Steps," or our "Eleven Steps."

I came to find out, the pastor had lost his sister to alcoholism, and with time, he was glad to help us.

Next, I gathered numerous fellow AA members, and we met with the pastor and other church members to discuss specifics. They agreed to let us use their church on a trial basis.

I gathered pamphlets, totes, cleaning supplies and other materials from the old Saturday night meeting in the hospital. I also bought books, cups, coffee and a coffee maker, among other necessities.

Our first meeting was October 16, and four-plus months later, the meeting continues. We use the basement, rear entrance, behind the building. An

AA sign shows the way to all our meeting's newcomers. Don't get lost or discouraged on the way in - the parking lot lights are typically turned off, but there is a meeting back there!

I keep record of attendance, meeting topics and finances. We average five to 10 people per meeting and had totaled 74 people by the end of December. We have shuffled through a few formats but currently are a popsicle-stick topic meeting. It seems to be working out well. When a newcomer shows up, we will typically turn the topic of discussion to Step One.

Two weeks ago, I was sick and canceled the meeting. The next week, three people stepped up to say, "If you ever can't make it, we'll take care of it." This is now greater than me! When we successfully reach the six-month mark, I plan to get us registered regionally and with New York.

We are a one-hour open meeting Saturdays at 7p. Christian Center Church is located at 510 S Lincoln Dr in Troy. My phone number is 636-667-7723. Come see us!

Music takes on deeper meaning in sobriety

Here at the *Sobriety Sentinel*, we think often about what music meant to us in our active alcoholism. While intoxicated, we would spend hours damaging our hearing with songs played too loud in headphones, get the cops called for blasting music at 3 am, sink five-dollar bill after five-dollar bill into the bar jukebox. The other bar regulars called us "the Music Nazi," because upon arrival, we would stack the jukebox with hours' worth of our favorite tracks before anyone else could make a selection. In short, we loved music, and we needed lots of alcohol to properly enjoy it.

When we got sober, we feared we would never enjoy music again. *Sobriety is boring*, we thought. *In sobriety, music will be boring too.*

What a relief, then, not just to realize with time that these songs sounded even better than they had when we were drunk, but that with our spiritual awakenings and new outlooks on life, music actually took on new, deeper meaning.

We had a revelation early in AA, while hearing the Lifehouse song "Hanging By a Moment," which had been played on the radio and over supermarket speakers so many times it had just faded into the background for us. Not this time, though. This time, in sobriety, we heard the song and were suddenly astounded to realize it was describing at least five of the Twelve Steps. We turned it up, we sang along, we had a happy-cry, we went

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

Service work saved circuit speaker Chris R's life

by **BRENDA F galaforce@msn.com**

"Alcoholics drink. That's what we do. I was in and out of the rooms of AA for seven years until I met a group of guys who showed me *how* to do this program. One of the biggest mistakes some people make is to think they can just show up at meetings, check in, say how it's going, then leave. They never get into the real gift of the program. That's *service*. That's what saved my life."

So says Chris R, the scheduled Friday night speaker for this year's Spring Fling Convention. Chris is one of the most renowned current AA circuit speakers. Search his name on YouTube, and dozens of videos will pop up, with combined views in the millions.

Chris has a little under five years' sobriety, but he has 12 years of experience within the rooms of AA.

A self-described "shy guy" and Texas boy from birth, Chris grew up northwest of San Antonio in an area known as Hill Country. Even though it's not too far from the Gulf of Mexico and the ocean, Chris would rather be out on the flat land near the farms to bike ride and rock hunt.

"It all started with my father, who loved geology. He passed that love onto me," said Chris. "My 'happy place' is rock hunting."

For the last 28 years, Chris has worked at a treatment center. He went from clerical work to a spot on the leadership team, working intensively with program "alumni" - in other words, newly sober guys transitioning from the treatment center to outside living. Chris has ample continual opportunity to help newcomers adjust to living sober.

Before working at the treatment center, Chris worked as a chef in the food service industry.

"It was too many hours," he said.

Ironically, he spends the majority of his present life near the rooms of AA and working hands-on with the recently sober, which must certainly also add up to a lot of hours.

Chris and a few friends started a recovery clubhouse as they were outgrowing then-existing meeting rooms. Their clubhouse is a small nonprofit, with a board of directors, that hosts AA meetings in District 12 of Area 68.

Any group can rent a room at the clubhouse and start a meeting, as long as it is "literature-based."

"We also host meetings for Drug Addicts Anonymous," Chris stated.

DAA, formed in Sweden in 1997, exists separately from Narcotics Anonymous and works from the AA Big Book. Its fellowship has 157 meetings in the US.

"Most of the attenders are people who got sober in AA but who also had drug is-

sues," Chris explained.

Chris was the main speaker at the First Annual South Central Texas Area DAA Unity Event, held this past January.

Chris firmly believes in the power of the Big Book and is affectionately known as a "little thumper." A "thumper" is someone who can quote the Big Book and follows it literally and closely.

During the Covid pandemic, the clubhouse closed for a period of time, which led Chris to attend Zoom meetings all over the world.

"I still do meetings in UK, Iceland, India and Australia," he said. "There are minor regional differences, but basically it's the same recovery program all over the globe."

Chris got his start on the speaking circuit by talking locally. His talks were taped, and those tapes were shared and passed around.

Chris's recovery has flourished because

he works with others, sponsors a lot of guys, and stays active in and outside the rooms.

"It's just not enough to just attend meetings, as some people think," Chris said. "A lot of alcoholics are dying because they are not working the steps. Some people may think that those folks don't want to stay sober. That's not it at all. They just don't know *how*."

Fellowship audiences and YouTube viewers agree this "little thumper" knows what he is talking about.

Chris R's passion for the Big Book and for working the program as it is laid out in the book, shows that "it works if you work it." Which is the theme of this year's Spring Fling Convention this year.

EDITOR'S NOTE: The Spring Fling Convention will be held at the Airport Hilton between April 22-24. You can register today at springflingstl.com.

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	NAME	DATE	YEARS
GROUP 484	Nathan B	2/3	1 year
	Brian G	2/7	13 years
	Mike B	2/20	4 years
GROUP 164	Brenda D	2/17	2 years
GROUP 4094	Randy P	2/16	16 years
GROUP 77	Dan S	2/7	2 years
	Aaron H	2/25	1 year
GROUP 392	Rod C	Nov	5 years
	Tom H	Nov	9 years
	Bob T	Nov	5 years
	Jeanna	Jan	6 years
	Tracy K	Jan	9 years
	Robert H	Jan	30 years
GROUP 124	Pete R	1/22	2 years
	Denny C	1/29	31 years
	Art S	2/3	40 years
	Bart O	2/13	8 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.

Another comedy night, an emotional sobriety retreat, a weekend Big Book study

Several AA events are coming to the St. Louis region near Tri-County soon:

On March 19, NCO Intergroup Office is hosting a benefit comedy night. Three comedians will perform, all of them with recovery experience, including current Sobriety Sentinel editor Andrew H. Call Brian B at 314-513-8025 for info.

On March 25-26, Jerry G of O'Fallon and

Harold L of Hillsboro are hosting a weekend-long Big Book workshop at Central Baptist Church in Quincy, Ill. Call Tina D at 847-812-8976 for info.

And from April 1-3, Mercy Conference and Retreat Center in Kirkwood is hosting What's the Point!!!! Wayne B of Inglewood, Calif., will be the main speaker. Call Bill E at 314-807-0923 for info.

Music: Often intersects with spirituality

From Page 1

searching for interviews of the songwriter describing his process when writing it.

"Yeah, that song can mean whatever you want it to mean," the songwriter essentially said, brushing it off. "I wrote it for my girlfriend, or a pepperoni pizza, or whatever you think I wrote it for. Buy my album."

You can't fool us, Lifehouse! You were chasing after God in every word of that song!

We've since heard newcomers in AA meetings describe similar experiences. One young lady excitedly described hearing the Rascal Flatts song "Broken Road" with her new pair of ears: "This song is me, and my journey, and the God that I have finally connected with! I've heard this song a million times, but I'll never hear it the same old way again!"

With this in mind, the *Sobriety Sentinel* asked some of our local AA friends to tell us what songs strengthen them spiritually and emotionally these days, and what songs hit differently since arriving at AA. This is what they told us:

DEB D: When I was new in sobriety and living in Springfield, Ill., a young woman who was way more sober than me, Sarah, turned me on to 91.1 FM there. I loved that music, as it was like hearing the AA program all the time. My Higher Power spoke to me through the radio, sending me answers and messages all day long, just as 99.1 JOY FM does for me here in the St. Louis area today.

I also went to my first-ever AA karaoke night 22 years ago at the Easy Does It club in Springfield. It was my first karaoke, period. I had never even done karaoke when I was drinking! I kept coming back, and I would get up to sing only if Sarah and my other friend Patricia would join me. This is a "we" program, after all! We would sing my favorite of all-time, "Amazing Grace."

It is all about grace for us, for sure!

MYKE A: Kxng Crooked's song "Menace II Sobriety" has hit me so different ever since I got sober. He breaks down his acceptance of his alcoholism and admits he's powerless. Crooked's song is a constant reminder that this disease doesn't discriminate. Every line is great, just like in the Big Book!

ANGELA G: Tim McGraw, "Better Than I Used to Be," to me says a lot about how we're always going to be works in progress. We will never achieve perfection, but we are better than we once were. No matter how bad we were, as long as we keep trying, keep getting up and dusting ourselves off, we will continue to grow into our authentic selves.

I also love how it talks about, "I can finally stand the man in the mirror that I see." There was a time that I hated looking in the mirror. I didn't like the person looking back. But thanks to this program and the steps that we have learned, I can look at that woman in the mirror and be proud of where she is now.

And I can see an even-brighter future, as long as I continue on the path that has been so graciously blessed upon me.

DALE H: Elton John's "Where To Now St. Peter?" is a song I've contemplated. It was written after a mescal trip ("I took myself a blue canoe, and I floated like a leaf"), but basically he asks his Higher Power, after the madness is over, *where to now?* ("I've done all one man can... show me which road am I on...")

JENNIFER F: I never really listened to country. Was never a fan. When my sister died, a dear friend suggested we play Alabama's "Angels Among Us" at her funeral. I was only 14. My vision of an angel was some white porcelain sculpture placed in a flower garden for scenic decoration. So I thought the song was "cute."

But oddly enough, just the other day, I heard that same song on the radio for the first time in 25 years. And I just had tears pouring down my face. Not necessarily because it brought up the pain of losing my 17-year-old sister in a tragic car accident, but also because I felt something so different this time. I felt that there truly *are* angels walking with us every day on this earth.

I struggled with loss, which in turn led to a quarter-century of pain, loneliness, isolation, anger, resentments and, of course, active alcoholism. Like many, I'm lucky to be alive.

In that moment, the other day, listening to that song, I noticed how far I've come as a human on this planet. That hurt, implanted in me at age 14, spiraled out of control, from a tornado of self-destructive abuse into a beautiful



Hans Memling/Five Angels Playing Music (c. 1485)

"Maybe we are entertaining angels unaware," is the refrain of a track from Michael W. Smith's *I/II Lead You Home* album, which also includes a word-

by-word musical adaptation of the Lord's Prayer. Music, spirituality and Alcoholics Anonymous converge in ways specific to each member.

world of hope, love, patience and happiness today. It was because angels were in my life all along.

They or "she" never left.

Those angels saw in me what I could not see in myself. They brought me into the rooms of AA. For it was then that I came face to face with the battle of alcoholism. My feelings - from hearing that song the first time to hearing that song present-day - prove to me that anyone can heal, no matter how far down the scale they have gone.

The feelings associated with the song "Angels Among Us," from 25 years ago until now, prove growth.

Today, I cry tears of joy, because those angels graced me with their mercy in my time of need. Through honesty, open-mindedness and willingness, they gave me peace.

Today, my spiritual growth has allowed me to change my vision of that white porcelain sculpture into everyday people like you and me, just trying to make the world a better place by doing God's will, not ours.

You know what's beautiful? Is that the AA program writes itself. It's just so beautiful. The Promises come true!

KATHY D: I worked from a playlist of 27 songs for an AA music meeting I would attend. We ran a 12-

week series at one point, with one song per week representing each of the Twelve Steps, in sequence. We would play the song then talk about how the lyrics reflected that week's step.

Some of the tracks included Led Zeppelin, "Nobody's Fault But Mine"; the Rolling Stones, "You Can't Always Get What You Want"; the Avett Brothers, "Tell the Truth"; and "Day By Day" from Godspell. It was fun.

KATHY S: My song when I first came in the program was by "Breathe" by Jonny Diaz. I would get wonky in my head and a little anxious, but that refrain would calm me: "breathe, just breathe... the peace of God that overcomes..."

Now, Sidewalk Prophets' music gets me pumped. My favorites are "Come To the Table" and "I Believe It Now." It's music that makes me get on fire for AA and God. I like songs that remind me throughout the day how I should be living my life. Music has always been a big part of my life it's just changed a wee bit.

I still enjoy AC/DC and the like, but I'd rather encourage myself with spiritual music. Don't get me wrong, "You Shook Me All Night Long" is classic, but it reminds me of someone I *used* to be.

JORDAN M: "Psalms 40:2" by the Mountain Goats builds me up spiritually. Before recovery I dismissed the entire *The Life of the World To Come* album because of its religious themes, even though it's one of my favorite bands. Now, with an open mind, I can identify with the spirituality in the lyrics and receive a message that, despite my past, my higher power has a plan for my future.

BECCA H: Phillip Phillips' "Home" came out when I first got sober, and it still resonates with me. I have always considered it my sobriety song. The lyrics describe the beginning of the recovery process to me. When I finally *truly* surrendered, that first meeting back, I truly knew in my heart I was home!

DAN F: XTC's song "We're All Light" talks about how the human spark or spirit originated from light from an emerging star as the universe was being formed. I find that concept hopeful, comforting and not incongruous with science or the creation story. I think the idea of holding onto an inner, universally genetically programmed light is more poetic than "ashes to ashes, dust to dust" is. Especially coming out of a period where I thought there was no light inside.

Anyone, Anywhere: Further extend the hand of AA

by **MISSY R**
Group 632

One weekend in early February, in the span of about 48 hours and within a two-block radius in St. Louis, nine people overdosed on fentanyl. Seven of those people died. A woman who lived in one of the apartment buildings was arrested and charged with distributing fentanyl and crack cocaine "resulting in serious bodily injury to another person." This woman admitted to investigators that she was selling drugs to her neighbors to support her own habit. It seems none of the people involved in this nightmare intended to sell, buy or use fentanyl. They thought they were buying crack cocaine.

What difference does it make, and what does this have to do with Alcoholics Anonymous? I'm glad you asked. The substance that killed these people - whether it be crack cocaine, methamphetamine,

heroin, fentanyl or alcohol - doesn't make any difference. Their lives are over.

However, the reality of the untold numbers of people living in and suffering with alcoholism or addiction has *everything* to do with those of us lucky enough to be living in recovery through our AA Program.

I call your attention to the Responsibility Declaration: "I am responsible. When anyone, anywhere, reaches out for help, I want the hand of AA always to be there, and for that I am responsible." This is very plain and simple language, nothing ambiguous about it. This doesn't mean we have to save the world, but we should be willing to help anyone who reaches out to us.

Alcoholism and drug addiction are more alike than they are different. Alcohol and drugs are both mind-altering chemicals, highly addictive, create serious health-threatening physical withdrawals, and are very

often used by people who want to feel good, feel normal or cope with everyday life. People like me who eventually find themselves unable to live life on life's terms.

When I was an active alcoholic, vodka was my tried-and-true remedy. Alcohol was socially acceptable, readily available, affordable and legal. Many other drugs are none of these things, which can lead to the perception that the alcoholic's situation is somehow "not as bad" as that of the drug addict. I think that concept is a pile of denial.

I'm an alcoholic simply because alcohol was the substance I chose to help me hide from my problems. If I had tried something else first, I know I would have become addicted to whatever that something else was. Admittedly, I have tried many things over the years that I could easily have become addicted to, but alcohol was just easier for me. I guess I was too lazy to put in the effort to obtain anything else when

alcohol was always no further than a block away. My laziness paid off, for once.

The point is, I never want to think of myself as being better than, not as bad as, or fundamentally different from any other alcoholic or addict. The way I see it, we are the same. All our lives have value, and we all deserve to live happily and productively.

When I heard about the February overdose deaths and the woman's arrest, I was disheartened. Sad. I felt a little hopeless. I thought, *Who can help these people? What can be done to make people believe they are worthy of living clean and sober, and that their lives are important?*

Then I remembered the Responsibility Declaration, the part that says when *anyone, anywhere* reaches out for help - not just someone struggling with alcoholism - I can lead by example. I can be approachable, remain teachable and always willing to help. Anyone. Anywhere. For that, I am responsible.

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