

# Sobriety Sentinel

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



Pavilion A, in Olde Town Park of St. Peters, overlooks this softball field, where Tri-County Picnic organizers plan to resume organized games of softball for the first time in several years. The annual picnic will be held on Saturday, August 27.

## Open letter written by concerned reader

I am a grateful sober alcoholic, and I love the *Sobriety Sentinel*. Also, I think our trusted servant, Andrew, has used his skill, talent and passion to elevate our newsletter's relevance to a terrific new level.

However, I have serious concern about the July lead article featuring a prominently placed photo of a local business. To me, it disregards Traditions Four and Six and demonstrates that every service position must have a committee, sponsor, or co-chair to provide a double-check.

Tradition Four states, "A group ought not to do anything which would greatly injure AA as a whole, nor ought it to affiliate itself with anything or anybody else." I see this front-page article with a big picture in our Tri-County AA newsletter as clearly affiliating with this business and even promoting and advertising it.

Tradition Six states, "An A.A. group ought never endorse, finance, or lend the A.A. name to any related facility or outside enterprise..." This front-page article definitely endorses this enterprise, describing its attributes in detail.

Also, the article endorses drinking non-alcohol beers and wines as readily accepted and healthy behavior unless you are too "raw." Actually a serious and controversial subject. Many do not accept it.

I think that possibly because Andrew has been so willing and exceptionally capable, the committee neglected to provide the *Sentinel* with the safety net of teamwork. That established a precarious position. Two heads are most always better than one, and the *Sentinel* deserves that support.

AA is amazingly resilient, especially when supported by a group of people who care like we do. AA will probably emerge even stronger, but this can serve as a learning opportunity for the Intergration committee.

I want to close by saying thank you to Andrew for his beautiful, creative, reliable, energetic, exciting service! The Tri-County area is so much better for his work.

-Anonymous

## Purpose of the Picnic

Free annual AA event brings fellowship and fun, acclimates newcomers

by TOM B  
Group 113

Tri-County AA's annual picnic will be held on Saturday, August 27, at Olde Town Park in St. Peters. It will begin at 11:30, with food being served at 12:30. We will be providing drinks as well as hamburgers, hotdogs, and bratwurst. As an added bonus, Marcus T is donating and frying some catfish and crappie while supplies last. We ask that people bring a covered dish (with something in it) to share with all.

There will be lots of activities for kids of all ages, including games and water balloons, horseshoes, washers and softball beginning at 1:30. At 3, we have two great speakers, Al S for AA and Freda J for Al-Anon. We ask for groups to donate a basket to be raffled off, and we will be having a 50/50 drawing around 4:30.

I have the privilege of serving as co-chair for the activities committee, which got me thinking about the picnic's history and purpose.

Some AA oldtimers (elder statesmen, not bleeding deacons) told me the picnic originated to raise money

for the Alcahthon on New Year's Eve. It's also traditionally been a great chance for people to catch up with AA members they don't typically run into at their regular meetings.

Also, being a family-friendly event, the picnic gives opportunities to meet the family members of your AA friends and to see how the destruction of the disease of alcoholism can be repaired by a simple (if not easy) 12-step program, whether it be AA or Al-Anon.

There is another important reason for the picnic - to give the newcomer the opportunity, in a safe environment, to realize sober people can have fun, socialize and do things we used to think we needed alcohol for, without alcohol.

I still remember how much fun I had at my first AA picnic, even though I was an introverted isolationist, shy to the extreme. Being relatively new to sobriety, I was not in the best of financial positions. My girlfriend and I couldn't even pull together 50 cents to buy and share a soda, let alone contribute to the hat.

I was inwardly embarrassed about that and have never forgotten how that made me feel. That is why, when the decision was made several years ago to

make the annual Tri-County AA picnic a totally free event, I was behind it 100 percent.

Many of us in AA have been blessed beyond measure and can afford to give a little extra or put together an extra-nice basket to raffle off. This year, with the economy and inflation being what it is, we really need your support to keep this and the Alcahthon as free events.

That having been said, what we really need is your support in attending the picnic, whatever your personal reason might be.

In the process, we can all celebrate the very precious gift we have been given and be examples for the newcomer who is still trying to figure out how to live and stay sober one day at a time.

Hope to see you on August 27th at the picnic. God bless.

*NOTE: We held an activities committee planning meeting on Sunday, July 24, but if you wish to be involved, or if you have any questions or comments, feel free to contact me, Tom B. at 636-248-4010, or my co-chair, Sue S. at 314-657-5650. Come see us!*

## Group 967 resumes potluck anniversary meeting

**EDITOR'S NOTE:** I spoke with Group 967's Tom L about his homegroup's potluck/speaker meeting, coming to Zion Lutheran Church on Saturday, August 13, in collaboration with Al Anon's Solutions of Harvester group. My side of the conversation is in bold print:

**Tell us about this event. How far back does it go?**

This is the tenth anniversary of our meeting and of our potluck, although we did postpone it a couple years because of Covid - it just seemed like the right thing to do. We usually have it in March, but March of this year, Covid still seemed to be prevalent, so we just kind of held off.

This will be the first year we've joined forces with the Solutions Al Anon group that meets Wednesday nights at Zion

Lutheran Church. They postponed theirs for a couple years too.

Saturday August 13, 6 to 7p is food and fellowship. At 7, we crank up the speakers. There's gonna be an Al Anon speaker and an AA speaker. We'll have fried chicken, strong coffee and recovery from alcoholism. Anyone is welcome to come. Bring a dish if you feel the urge. Come on out and have some fun with us.

**How many traditionally attend this, and how many are you expecting?**

Oh man, isn't that the wild card this year? In the past, we've had a pretty good turnout, upwards of 100 people. How many would you say were at the event where you and I first met [the Group 124/Al Anon Hope For Today potluck/speaker meeting on June 23]?

**Greg K, the revered MC of the event, told me they had 200 chairs set out. Almost all chairs were full, and there were people there who I'd been used to seeing weekly my first few years in AA but hadn't seen since Covid. It was really cool to mingle through that crowd.**

It's nice to see potlucks popping back up again, nice to see area assemblies happening.

Our core of homegroup guys, we started this meeting 10 years ago, and we go to state conventions together. When there's international, we hop on a plane, and we go to that. Well, the last one was canceled. Think about that. An AA international convention that is global. Have you ever been to one?

**I've heard a lot of people talk about**

**them, but no.**

Please, please go. When they say "international," that's your friends from Russia, your friends from Argentina, Italy, it goes on and on. It's an astounding experience. So, this astounding experience in Detroit two years ago was canceled. How do you recover from that? Well, I guess you just have the next one (laughs). It's in Vancouver in three years. I'm saving up my money for a couple plane tickets to go and do that.

**And maybe you'll enjoy it twice as much, having missed the last one.**

We take so much for granted, right? I do. I take it for granted that my homegroup, Group 967, will always be good and strong. We're good now, here in 2022. We survived Covid. We still have a dozen

or so homegroup members, most of whom attend and participate regularly, but it took a hit. We shut the meeting down for several months and just did Zoom-only.

When we started the meeting back up, it was almost like when we started 10 years ago. There were, like, five or six of us again. (laughs) It was like, *Are we gonna be okay?*

And it's been an adventure, watching it - and not just our homegroup, but Alcoholics Anonymous - regenerate. Our potluck, on August 13, is part of that regeneration.

*Group 967 meets at 7p on Tuesdays at Zion Lutheran. It's a closed, mixed meeting that studies the steps and traditions and reads out of the Big Book.*

-Andrew H, Group 484

### 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

Julie S	6/1	25 years	<b>GROUP 484</b>	
Skip H	6/17	43 years	Colby H	90 days
			Tim M	5/15
			Jeff K	5/15
<b>GROUP 968</b>			Charlie M	5/17
Ken G	6/16	15 years	Luke P	5/29
Gloria Z	7/14	34 years	Christine C	6/19
			David H	7/5
<b>GROUP 164</b>				
John A	7/1	31 years	<b>GROUP 124</b>	
			Jim S	5/29
<b>GROUP 77</b>			Mike Q	6/28
William H	6/18	27 years	Mike E	7/4
Jennifer R	7/12	12 years	Paul E	7/7
Jim L	7/15	9 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.

### Announcements for the good of local AA

The **Fall Classic**, held Labor Day weekend at the Airport Hilton, has decided that this year's convention will be its last. Come help send off 37+ years of tradition.

It's been reported that the weekend meeting at **Transfiguration Episcopal Church** in Wentzville has changed day and time from Saturdays at 8p to Sundays at 7p and is going strong.

**North County Office** is celebrating 50 years on August 20, with food, fun and

fellowship throughout the day. Its regular Saturday meetings will be giving special speaker presentations, along with three other themed speaker talks, donuts for breakfast and barbecue lunch.

The **HubBub** homegroup, formed in Maryland Heights by a trio of Group 589 alums, is hosting a Day at the Park potluck on August 6 at Creve Couer Park, 11a-2p, with a speaker meeting on the water at 1.

-Andrew H, Group 484

# Intro to Service:

Ahead of **Trivia Night**, two AA members new to **Spring Fling** committee explain their roles and motivations

The Spring Fling Convention's annual Trivia Night event comes to the Crestwood Community Center on Saturday, August 20. Fellowship starts at 6p, speakers at 6:30, trivia at 7:15. Individual tickets are \$25, tables of 8 sell for \$180.

If recent history is any guide, this event will sell out. Visit [SpringFlingSTL.com](http://SpringFlingSTL.com) for tickets.

Events like Trivia Night don't just happen. They are planned and executed by members of a committee.

I talked to the brand-new Host Chair, Kathy S of Group 383 in Weldon Spring. And I talked to new committee volunteer, Steps Alano Club regular John S, to get their perspective as newcomers to this type of service. Then I chopped up their interviews to bounce back and forth, because I've always enjoyed the oral history storytelling format.

-Andrew H, Group 484

**KATHY S:** I'm excited to step up and do this, because I gotta tell ya, I love people. Meeting new people is fun for me. When they said that I'm in charge of getting gift baskets for the out-of-town speakers' hotel rooms, I thought *Man, I'm totally on top of that*. But there's a lot more to it than just that.

**JOHN S:** My first Spring Fling was in April, and I was lucky enough to know someone on the volunteer committee. So I volunteered and met lots of people who directed me to some great meetings in St. Louis. I liked the camaraderie of the Spring Fling committee, and decided I'd like to join the committee for the future.

**KATHY S:** Then they said there are letters I'll have to send out to the speakers, and I thought *Aw shoot, that means I'm going to have to be computer-savvy. Or maybe I can just hand-write them*. Then I thought, *I know what I'm going to do first, that makes me comfortable - acknowledge the speakers by sending a card to introduce myself, thank them and make that first initial contact, until I can figure out how to do the letter part*.

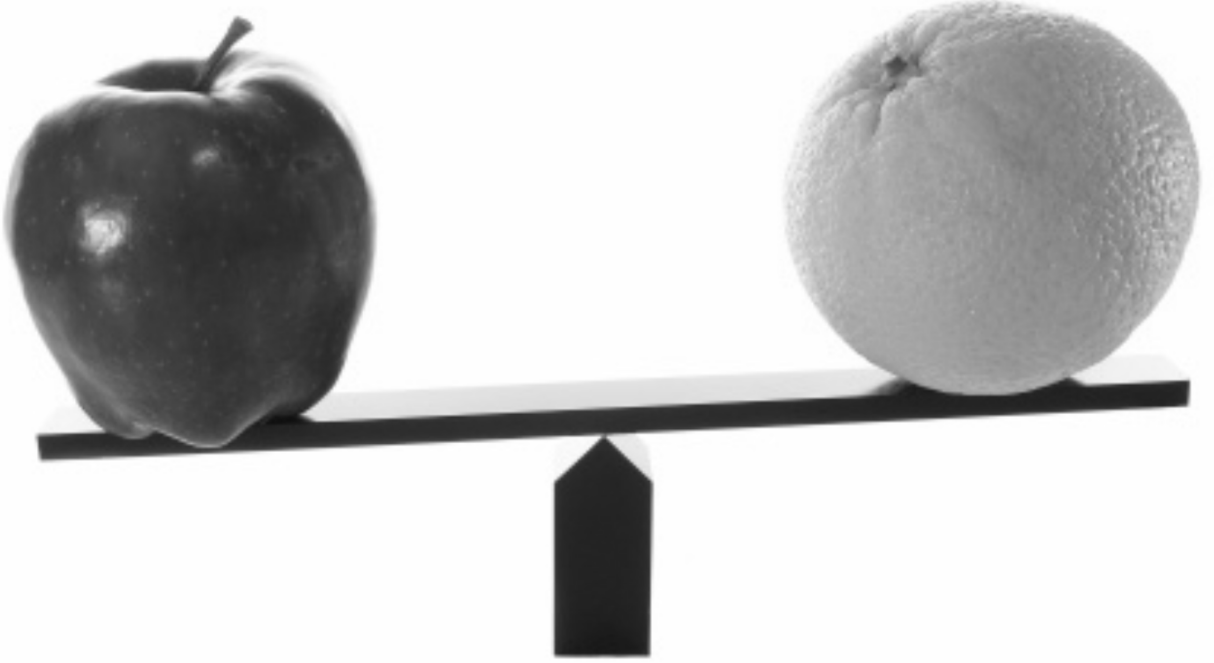
**JOHN S:** It's a real neat service opportunity. No one's looking to get anything out of it; they just want to serve the sober community. And, boy, they have their stuff together. I can tell this has been done for years. They know how to form sub-committees, they know how to have bench strength for the next year. One person may chair a committee this year, while the next person's getting set up for the next year.

**KATHY S:** Now, I have the letter to the speakers from last year, and I'll have to do some copy and paste - which I'm not real good at. The computer side of things holds me back from a lot. Arranging their flights, that scares me. I've never done that. A part of me doesn't know, doesn't have the agenda. I'll need a checklist of what to do month by month.

**JOHN S:** Because of my involvement in the Spring Fling, I had loosely heard there was another convention called the Fall Classic, and I don't know anything about it. I'm about to attend their committee meeting. I learned a lot at Spring Fling, so I want to add Fall Classic. I'm joining up, and whatever committee they want me to help on, I'm happy to do. I tend to have the gift of gab, so I'm guessing I'll be greeting again (laughs).

**KATHY S:** I'm excited but nervous. I look forward to the next committee meeting. I feel like, I've already got one meeting under my belt. It's like when you walk into your first AA meeting, only have to do it once then you know your way around a little bit more. And I found a co-chair, to work with me. I told her, "We're both rookies at it, but that's okay. We'll get it done."

The Spring Fling committee meets every fourth Sunday at 1p at Central Service Office, 14 Sunnen Drive. Call Emily S for more information at 314-760-7151.



## The Weight of Comparison

by **MISSY R Group 632**

There's a story in the Big Book, "Window of Opportunity," that talks about one of the most common and self-defeating quirks that torments many alcoholics - the desire to be something or someone we're not.

Some of us get downright resentful, even hateful, towards complete strangers because they have shinier hair than we do. It could be anything, really, that they have and we want. Since we can't do anything to get that thing we want, we instead just have to be angry, unhappy and dissatisfied with every aspect of our lives until we die.

We also tend to be quite dramatic on occasion.

The writer of "Window of Opportunity" says he had an "awakening" at an AA speaker meeting when the speaker said, "If you're an apple, you can be the best apple you can be, but you can never be an orange." This made him realize he was an apple but had spent his entire life trying to be an orange.

How many times have you heard someone say in a meeting that they always felt like they didn't fit in? Hundreds, maybe? Someone says it at nearly every meeting I attend, while the rest of us sit there nodding our heads.

I don't think this trait is exclusive to alcoholics. I'm sure absolutely everyone feels this way at least some of the time. The difference between us and the normies is in the way we decide to deal with it. Since I am nothing close to normal, I don't know how normies

handle stressful or frustrating situations.

As an alcoholic, I figured out at some point that whenever I was drinking, I felt much more comfortable with myself. I could make conversation with other grownups and be witty and charming. What a fabulous discovery!

I can tell you that, for me, it was like magic. Liquor made me believe that all the super-fantastic, wonderful things my mom said about me were *actually true*. I was smarter, prettier, funnier and more talented. You name it, I was the best at it, and everyone loved me!

I did a lot of things to get attention, and I got it. When I was drinking, there was no such thing as "bad" attention. At the time, I thought it was awesome. I was soaking it all in. Only later - when I was alone, trying to put the little bits of my memory back together - that the attention didn't feel very good. Later, when I was alone, I was ashamed and humiliated about how I had acted. I was horrified to think I might have auditioned for a *Girls Gone Wild* video to some guy who was completely unaffiliated with *Girls Gone Wild*. I felt so stupid. I wished I hadn't said or done so many of the things I think I might have said or done.

Many times, I didn't even know what had taken place or how I drove home. And for what? For the attention of some people I'd never see again? (At least I *hoped* I'd never see them again!) These were total strangers I was trying to impress. So stupid. And what could I do to feel better? Of

course - Happy Hour!

I was stuck in this pattern for most of my adult life. As long as I kept trying to be accepted and loved in this way, I would never learn to love myself. If I kept trying to be something I wasn't, I would never be happy with who I am. Time to just be an apple.

The Big Book says that acceptance is the answer to all my problems today. This includes self-acceptance. For a long time, I thought this meant acceptance of other people, other circumstances, other things. I do have to accept those things, but acceptance needs to start with me accepting myself exactly as my Higher Power intended for me to be.

It's not my job to understand why my Higher Power gave me the skills and talents I have, instead of making me a movie star or an NFL player. My job is to embrace myself for who I am and be the best Missy I can be. If I don't and instead go on wishing I had someone else's family, house, job, car, flawless figure or hair - or whatever - I can't be useful to anyone else, I'll waste my life being a grump, and I won't have anything to show what I have done with the gifts my HP gave me.

I accept that I'm an alcoholic apple. I will not waste any energy, no matter how slight, on trying to be an orange. I am at peace with being an apple, and I don't have to drink to feel accepted by anyone else.

There's nothing better than being comfortable in your own sober skin. After all, what other apples or oranges think about me is none of my business, and I plan to keep it that way.

*"If you're an apple, you can be the best apple you can be, but you'll never be an orange."*

-AA speaker quoted in "Window of Opportunity," Big Book, p. 427

## From the editor: learn from mistakes

by **ANDREW H Group 484**

The day we began to distribute the July print issue of the *Sentinel*, I received an email from a concerned reader who is also an AA member I've known and respected for years. This email was CC'd to Tri-County's chairperson and vice-chairperson, and an adapted version of the email runs on the top right of the front page of this issue. You've probably already read it. If not, I'd suggest you read it before continuing here.

After I read the email, I replied to its author. We started a dialogue. I also called the chairperson for Tri-County, and she corroborated what was asserted in the email - that, by profiling and giving favorable coverage to a specific local business, I had unknowingly violated at least one of the Twelve Traditions of Alcoholics Anonymous. A roomful of committee members and in-

tergroup representatives corroborated it even further at our monthly IR meeting for July, as I recounted everything I just told you and looked out to a sea of nodding heads.

To them, I apologized. To you, the reader, I also apologize, and to the contributors and article subjects of the July issue, I apologize, because our typical distribution dropped by design as a result of my error. It was not my aim or intent to damage the reputation of Tri-County AA or to upset any readers, and I particularly did not intend to give off the impression that this publication (or AA as a larger whole) endorses or advocates the consumption of nonalcoholic beers and wines as a healthy pastime.

Looking out over the sea of nodding heads at the IR meeting, though, while owning the mistake, was not an embarrassing moment. It was not shameful, nor was it guilt-inducing. It was a true group conscience moment for me. I didn't know

I'd messed up until I was called out by someone I trusted. Even after a second trusted person confirmed it, I wasn't so sure. My first reactions to being called out were not my healthiest reactions, either. That group, though, that full room, they told me - with their words, with their reactions and with their presence - *we love you, we value you, you made a mistake, you owned up to it; mistakes are how you learn, mistakes are how we learn*. It was Tradition Two in action, with a loving God at its core. It was the unity of Tradition One. It was the single-minded focus of Tradition Five, making sure we carry the message of Alcoholics Anonymous as primary purpose.

Truly, I feel like a spring chicken here. The *Sentinel* is my first AA service assignment, and it's been highly rewarding, learning-experience warts and all. Email me at the address below or come to the noon IR meeting on August 21st at Campus Office if you'd like to talk further on this.

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](mailto:sentinel@tricityaa.org)

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