

Sobriety Sentinel

JANUARY 2023 - REPRESENTING DISTRICTS 14, 19 and 20 of AREA 38 - TRICOUNTYAA.ORG

How It USED TO Work

A clear-cut account of self-will run riot

by CHRIS R
Group 589

Our stories before we got to A.A. disclosed in a detailed way how good we thought we were doing, what great choices we were making and how important we were.

Remember that we dealt with alcohol. Safe, we thought. Fun. Socially acceptable. With moderation, we swore it was perfectly under control. There was one who had all power - that one was us.

Here are the steps we took, which were mandatory as a program of hypocrisy: We admitted we could stop when we wanted, that our lives were perfectly manageable.

Came to believe that our own thinking could keep us in a state of sanity. Made

a decision to turn our will and our lives over fully to the care of ourselves as we understood ourselves.

We made a searching and fearless moral inventory of others. Admitted to God, to ourselves - and to anyone who would listen - the exact nature of everyone else's wrongs.

Were entirely ready to have all these defects of character removed from them. In fact, proudly demanded the removal of others' shortcomings.

We made a list of all persons to blame, and became willing to throw them under the bus.

Publicly humiliated all these persons wherever possible, especially when to do so would make us look better.

Continued to blame others and when we were wrong promptly made up lies.

We sought through our virtue and self-knowledge to improve our self-righteousness, demanding that others submit to our will or else.

Having come up with all these great ideas, we tried to carry this confusion to others, and to practice these principles in all our affairs.

The point is, that we were not just willing but insistent upon doing things our way. The principles we set down were guides designed to make us look better than others. That way we could continue to get what we wanted. We claimed perfection so others would feel less-than.

Our description of other people's problems and our personal achievements made clear three pertinent ideas:

A. That we were great people who could manage the lives of others.

B. That our selfish human power could solve anybody else's problems.

C. That we could and would if we were sought.

Thing is, fewer and fewer people sought us as we sank lower into our morass of addiction and of self.

We eventually realized this was no way to live and that we couldn't successfully be in charge.

And we did the most difficult thing we had ever done, which also turned out to be the most freeing - we surrendered, we asked for help, and to the best of our abilities, we began to do the exact opposite of everything listed above.



Holiday presence outweighs presents

by MISSY R
Group 632

By the time you read this, the crazy holiday season will have been in full sway for quite some time, or - mercifully - already come and gone. It happens every year. We get out in the cold and the crowds, behave rudely toward each other and lose sight of what is important, all in the effort to obtain the perfect gifts for our special somebodies. Tidings of comfort and joy! Peace on earth, good will to men, women, children, the entire human race and all their pets.

Thank goodness for AA, my relationship with my Higher Power, living sober and online shopping! I'm quite content to deplete my savings account from the comfort of the couch and yoga pants. If I had to physically go out and buy stuff, everyone on my list would be getting a box of cereal or some cheese, something straight off the grocery store shelf.

These days, I have more disposable income to spend on my friends and family, and I truly enjoy splurging on them. When I was drinking, I was not so generous. I needed every dime I earned to keep my circus going. The holidays presented a complication to my finances. I couldn't cut alcohol out of the daily budget. My steady supply of vodka and Sprite Zero ran me between \$200-\$250 a month pre-AA. That's \$48,000 over the course of 20 years. That

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AA 'overnighter' starts 3 am meeting at 212 Club

by CHRIS A
Group 979

I'm an overnighter with six months sober. Pretty quickly into my time with AA, I noticed it was really difficult to meet and get hold of people later at night, particularly in the middle of the night, because most people were asleep.

The weekends were particularly triggering for me, because I'd have time off from work and

nowhere to go. There was one meeting on Fridays at midnight then nothing again until 7 or 8 in the morning, maybe 6 am if you took a drive.

I approached my sponsor and asked him if there was a way, maybe, that we could get something going for people who are either up really late or really early. So in September, we got a meeting going at 212 Club at 3 am on Saturdays.

The most people we've had has

been six, but normally it's me and two other gentlemen. I've gone around trying to spread the word at the Office, in Troy and Wentzville. My sponsor made flyers. Everyone's been pretty cool and receptive. Most of the time, I get a double-take: "3 am? You said 3 am, right?"

And I say, "That's right, it's the late-night, the early bird, whatever you wanna call it."

Usually we just kind of choose our format in the moment. I ask,

"What do you guys feel like doing?" Someone might be working a step and ask, "Can we read this [particular passage or chapter] in the Big Book?" Or a few times we've done the 12+12, and last night we did *Living Sober*.

We're just trying to figure out how to grow it. I know there's much more opportunity to share, to hear and to fellowship. It took me a little while to get my stuff together, too, to get the meeting

listed on the app.

We've been steady since September, though, and we've only missed one meeting. I was in the hospital at the time, and there was nobody to cover it, but that night three people showed up, and they just decided to have a meeting in the car. That was pretty cool, I thought.

Anyone could need help - or help somebody - during any part of the day, you know? Doesn't matter what time it is.

AA ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Tri-County Alcathon will be held on New Year's Eve at Sts. Joachim and Ann Care Service, 4116 McClay Blvd in St. Charles. This is a free event that features a fried chicken dinner, AA and AI Anon speakers, music, dancing and more. Starts at 6:30, ends after midnight. Babysitting provided.

The Spring Fling committee's annual Comedy Night fundraiser will be held on Saturday, February 11, at Crestwood Community Center. This is a potluck event also including AA and AI Anon speakers. Says comedian Mike McGuire, who is in charge of the night's entertainment:

"The difference this year, we're doing a combo. We're gonna have comics, but we're also going to have improvisers. For the people who are interested, there are go-

ing to be opportunities for six to 10 audience members to participate in the show."

McGuire has been part of Comedy Night before, most recently when the event was Zoom-only in 2021: "You know what was funny about that? It was supposed to be Alcoholics Anonymous, but I could see everyone's name on the screen."

This event will sell out. Get your tickets now at SpringFlingSTL.com.

212 Club is holding a Christmas Potluck on Sunday December 25, starting at 2 pm. Meat will be provided by 212 Club. Sign up at the Shack to bring a side, appetizer or dessert. Soda and coffee will be sold at the Shack.

Cards, pool, darts and games will run throughout the day, with a Christmas celebration meeting

at 6 pm.

For questions or to volunteer, email Linda at events@212-club.net.

The Winter Area Assembly will be a one-day hybrid assembly held Saturday, January 28, at the Selinger Center at St. Peter Catholic Church in Jefferson City, hosted by District 11.

The assembly will welcome the new Panel 73 trusted servants for Area 38. There will be an overall orientation to the area and the General Service Structure of AA, and an introduction to the area's Standing Committees.

Please register at eamo.org/winter2023.

Saturday Poker Night is new to 212 Club, starting December 17 at 7:15 pm. For more information, contact the Shack at 636-240-1722.

BIRTHDAYS

Michelle K	12/13	13 years	GROUP 484		
Kevin G	12/5	19 years	Kim G	11/29	9 years
			Andy K	12/4	5 years
GROUP 164					
Emily E	11/27	14 years	GROUP 451		
			Nancy O	12/2	38 years
GROUP 4094					
James D	12/20	11 years	GROUP 1023		
Bob W	12/21	16 years	Kristi T	12/20	13 years
			Kathleen W	12/26	17 years
GROUP 77					
Matt G	12/2	27 years	GROUP 124		
George T	12/19	15 years	Fred V	11/18	37 years
Bill McD	12/12	7 years	Wayne L	11/25	33 years
Ed F	12/8	4 years	Patrick M	11/27	28 years
			Richard D	12/4	31 years
			Richard B	12/21	13 years

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.

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.

DON'T MISS

Monthly Meeting for IRs:
Sun. 12/18 and 1/15 at 12 pm, Campus Office, 2021 Campus Drive, St. Charles; or use Zoom ID: 874 7379 9414, no password required

District 14 meeting for GSRs:
Thu. 1/5 at 6:30 pm, Chapel of the Cross Lutheran, 907 Jungermann, St. Peters

District 19 meeting for GSRs:
Thu. 1/5 at 6:30 pm, 37 Elaine Dr, O'Fallon

District 20 meeting for GSRs:
Mon. 1/2 at 7 pm, Lincoln County Council on Aging, 1389 Boone St, Troy

Presence: Serenity is the perfect gift

From Page 1

money could have been spent much more wisely and compassionately.

Money was just one commodity I wasted. I cut myself off from everyone, partially to protect them but more to protect me and allow me to drink without being watched by judging eyes. I wasted or gave up time with my daughter, family and friends.

I gave up love and companionship, memories and celebrations. I gave up my own self-esteem, self-worth and to a certain extent, my will to live. I did not or could not imagine a life without alcohol. Since coming to AA and learning how to

live sober and love my sober life, everything I mentioned above plus so much more has come back to me.

When I'm spending money on people, I must remember that this might make me generous, but it doesn't make me selfless. It's fun to watch people open my gifts, of course. I can't wait for my daughter to open the pink coffee mug that says "Mother Bleeping Homeowner" on it.

But is that all she really wants or needs from me? No. What she needs, what my family needs, what my friends and fellow AA members need and, most importantly, what the alcoholic who is still suffering needs from me is my time, my experience, strength, and hope. My

presence, in other words. Not just my presents. (See what I did there?)

They need my presence of mind, body and spirit. My empathy, my encouragement, my unconditional love. It's not easy. Sometimes I'd rather just throw money at my problems than sacrifice my time or my attention.

That doesn't work, though. If it did, I could have just spent the last 20 or so years buying my daughter inappropriate coffee mugs. She doesn't just want a dumb mug. She wants me in her life. If that doesn't boost my self-esteem, what will?

Most importantly, I have something much more valuable than my entire net worth that I can offer to an alcoholic who wants to recover. I don't have all the answers or

maybe not even have half the answers. But I have my experience, strength and hope to offer, free of charge, to anyone who wants what I have and is willing to go to any length to get it. And that's the only way for me to keep my gift.

Selfish, self-seeking behaviors are always too close for comfort. When I notice them begin to creep back in, I say the Seventh Step prayer:

"My Creator, I am now willing that you should have all of me, good and bad. I pray that you now remove from me every single defect of character which stands in the way of my usefulness to you and my fellows. Grant me strength, as I go out from here, to do your bidding. Amen."

I must remind myself countless

times every day that my purpose is not to live my life for Missy and what Missy wants.

My purpose is to put other people's needs before my own. If I am capable of being helpful to others in a situation, it is my duty to act on it. If I remain focused on being useful to other people, I know I will stay sober.

I don't know what the future holds for me, and I am not supposed to know. I am happy in the knowledge that I can now "walk hand in hand with the Spirit of the Universe."

It's a feeling that is better than finding the perfect gift for everyone on your holiday list. It's a little something called serenity.

I wouldn't trade it for all the money in the world.

Walking through windows and into a new way of life

by ANDREW H
Group 484

The first time I encountered the Big Book personal story "Window of Opportunity," in early 2018, as it was read aloud at the Saturday morning 8 am meeting at 212 (now my homegroup), I remember thinking, *This crazy drunk dude walked through a glass window! I'm supposed to be looking for similarities, not differences, but that's pretty different.*

Toward the end of that meeting, though, I was racked with a sense of déjà vu: *Didn't something like this happen to somebody I knew, one of my crazy drunk friends?*

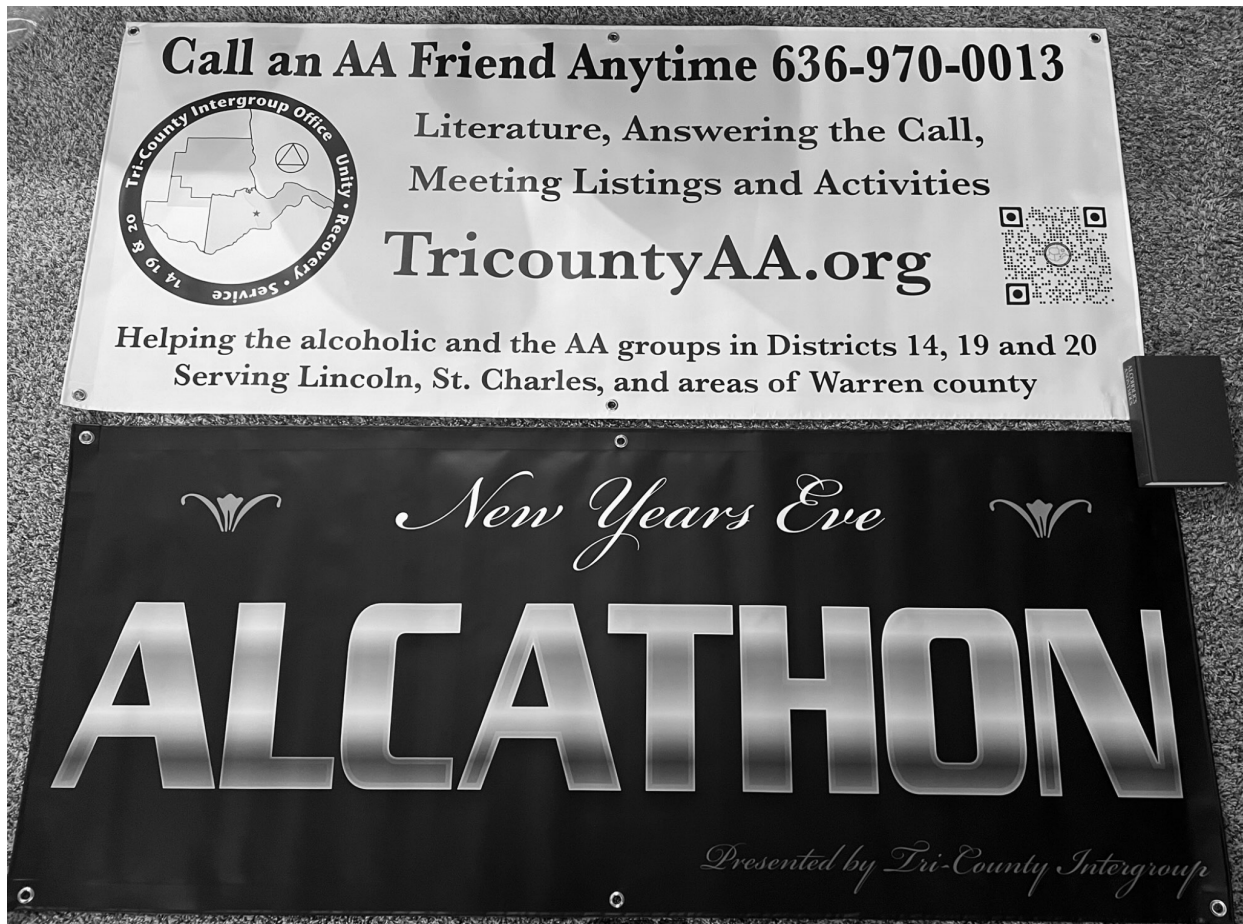
By the time I was at the red light under the I-70 overpass at K/M, I realized: *That wasn't one of your crazy drunk friends, that was crazy drunk you. You walked through a window.* A hazy surreal recollection popped up. Hanging out in a friend's front yard, charging in and out of the open patio door a bunch of times, grabbing more beer, using the bathroom. At one point, I didn't realize the sliding glass door was now closed, and I charged in knee-first, anyway. The glass shattered, I was miraculously uninjured, and I blamed whoever had decided to close the door. *Did this really happen?*

I texted my friend whose front yard was in the hazy surreal recollection: "This is gonna sound crazy, but did I ever walk through your sliding glass patio door?" The response came quick: "You sure did. Labor Day 2006."

This is quite a thing to forget for a decade-plus. And it says something about my drinking career that an episode like this doesn't even rank on the Top 50 most disastrous drinking consequences.

I don't drink anymore, and I haven't shattered any sliding glass doors in quite some time, and that's thanks to Alcoholics Anonymous.

Not just that, but the solution offered by the Twelve Steps means I don't have to blame anyone else for the mistakes I make. I can take ownership of them, make amends for them, make restitution for them. And not forget that they happened in the first place.



Bob M/Sobriety Sentinel

Explains Bob M, technology chair of Tri-County Intergroup: "Vice chair John A and I were voluntarily tasked by our member groups with putting together a few banners to bring focus to our literature table efforts, the Alcathon and the summer picnic. We worked together to get succinct and relevant content that would help folks learn

what Tri-County Intergroup does for all of the groups in our districts, providing information on where and how to get literature as well as directing attention to our hotline for alcoholics - new, recovering and recovered - to get information or directions to information and areas served. Enjoy seeing these banners at our coming events."

At 54 years, member recalls early service work

by DON B
Group 340

My first day within AA, my sobriety date, is November 10, 1968. I have 54 years with AA sober. It all started when I admitted myself into St. Louis State Hospital. They had the only treatment program in the area for alcoholics.

I was there eight weeks, then I went to Sobriety House. That was something that had just started, a halfway house. Unfortunately, they only raised enough money to stay open for two or maybe three years, but that was long enough for me to get on my feet and start putting my life together.

At that time, I also got involved with 1073 Tower Grove, an AA facility that launched a 24-hour answering service in 1969. It started from a resentment some AA members had with AA Central Service,

which only responded to Twelfth Step calls during daytime business hours. Of course, alcoholics don't necessarily just need help at those times. Then, when Central Service would close for the night, they turned it over to a professional answering service that would just take information down and give it to Central Service when they opened the next day. By then, the alcoholic was often drunk and unresponsive.

The 24-hour AA Answering Service at 1073 Tower Grove had someone manning the phones at all times, and a list of volunteers who would go out to call on the troubled alcoholic. Sometimes they'd bring the alcoholic back to the facility. Sometimes they'd give them orange juice and honey to ward off the DTs. They developed a detox procedure.

These were exciting times. We made many "house calls." We never knew what we would get into. One

member had a gun pulled on him. Another was actually shot at. The late-night phone calls were sometimes strange. One woman asked for someone to come out to her house to talk to her. When informed there were no women available to visit her that late at night, she got quite indignant and said she didn't want any woman, she wanted a man! I'm quite sure that we did not provide the service she desired.

The AA Answering Service seemed to be a thorn in the side of Central Service. We became known as the "skid row bunch," or "slippers bunch," a lower segment of AA. The word was around AA that starting a facility for a bunch of alcoholics was going against the traditions of AA, and they thought they'd all get drunk.

In time there were several other facilities that sprang up from this idea - Hampton, North County and Pa-

cific facility, maybe more. A number of new AA groups started from all this, too. It seems that there is always someone with a better idea or resentment. And, well, take a look around you today - there were a few alcoholics that got drunk, sure, what would you expect? But not all of them. In fact, there's a whole lot of people who owe their sobriety to those facilities.

A lot of alcoholics, the only place they had to go was on the street or in the park, homeless. By going to the facilities during the day, they'd learn about places they could stay at night. Some of them did, and stayed sober. What the percentage is, I have no idea, but it beats nothin'.

One more observation I'd like to add - AA is not a competition. I came into AA with a drinking problem and stayed because of a thinking problem. That's my story, and I'm stuck with it.



1073 Tower Grove today.

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@tricountyaa.org

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