The NORTHERN LIGHT

NEWSLETTER FOR THE NORTHERN ASSEMBLY

Issue #1 October 7, 1982

AA....IT,S YOUR BUSINESS

Once while I was impatiently standing in line at our open meeting waiting for the cake and coffee to be served, I turned to a long-time member and inquired as to who was going to cut and serve the cake. She cooly replied, "Oh, they do that."

The light went on in my brain. The "they" is me! If you are a member of AA, then act like you believe it!

Our delegate needs to know your thoughts on such things as, the Grapevine, dealing with treatment centers, anonymity problems, concerns regarding AA finances, court referral programs, issues regarding AA publishing practices and plans and many other concerns.

AA is yours; you own it and you run it. If you have questions, gripes, concerns or whatever, tell your G.S.R.; tell your D.C.M.; tell your area officers or someone in the service structure so that your input will be heard where it counts.

AA will never be injured by over-concern of its members, our early history would seem to show that we grew out of controversy so why don't we do what comes so naturally to alcoholics, sound off, but do it where it counts.

It seems that there is a world-wide challenge to everything that is good and AA does not appear to be exempt from the forces of change. In a recent discussion with Tom L., our New York delegate, he said that input is needed from the Assembly members so he can carry its views to New York.

EDITOR'S NOTE

This is our first attempt at a newsletter. There have been a number of discussions about what it should be and what it should do.

It is hoped that the newsletter can become a forum for sharing ideas and concerns of the Northern Assembly. Also, it can inform the fellowship of important upcoming events. If there is an event to be listed, please write the editor so that it can be published.

The newsletter should provide communication not only within the service structure of the Northern Assembly, but also communicate directly with the membership at large. Whichever method of distribution is selected, it is anticipated that all of the AA members will have access to the paper.

With wide-spread distribution comes the possibility or likelihood that the publication will be read by non-AA members. This raises the question of anonymity.

For example, it may be helpful to publish the names and addresses of the Assembly and area officers; but should we if the newsletter has unrestricted circulation?

These and other problems will have to be resolved as (or if) the newsletter continues. It is your paper and this editor will be pleased to put it together anyway you want. If you have questions or comments, please write:

Editor
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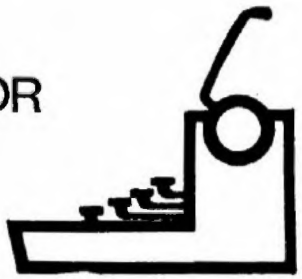
TO THE EDITOR



Since operations and activities of the Cambridge Community Group are much the same from month to month, the matter of real NEWS seems to be minimal. However as a first attempt, I can relate that this group has two meetings a week, the Thursday meeting which is closed/mixed with a volunteer member-speaker, runs around 20 in attendance quite consistently. The Saturday meeting which is open/mixed, and is a Step Meeting, with a chairman as leader, with about 10 in attendance. There is also Al-Anon on Thursday nights, all at 8:00P.M. The PI activity consists mainly in distributing Grape Vines in PI areas, there was also involvement with the PI booth at the Kanabec Co. fair at Mora recently. Also the District 6 Work Shop at Rush City last May. Institutional-wise, meetings are sponsored at the Federal Correctional Institution at Sandstond and Pine Manor Treatment Center at Pine City. There is an Intergroup situation here, where the 15 participating groups take turns in hosting a general meeting once a month. This activity is now in its 13th year. The Cambridge Group are hosting the meeting in September on the 21st, THIS month the Braham-Grasston Group on the 17th. To a fair extent, AA in our district is well knit, since numerous members attend each other's meetings quite regularly. Hoping that this will suffice for a first try, I remain

Very truly yours,

Bill H.

The Following Article Was Submitted By A Member Active In Service

Most members when first introduced to Alcoholics Anonymous, are introduced to our first legacy, the 12 steps, but this was not the case, for myself.

I had attended about two weeks of meetings, when I was asked to be an alternate G.S.R. in two of the groups that I was attending, at that time.

Of course, I accepted, even though I did not know anything about our third legacy of service.

Today, I look at service, as a way of carrying a message and a way of giving something back to a program, that has given me everything. But, at the time I did not have a message and therefore did not have anything to give away.

Service may enhance ones sobriety, I know it certainly has added to mine, but service is not designed to give us sobriety. That comes from the 12 steps.

Picture this in your mind, if you will, an alcoholic, who hasn't even gotten their feet on the ground, going around trying to give something of themselves. Give what? and to who? It's next to impossible for that individual to begin.

How could I serve a group, when I needed the service myself, first? How could I give freely of myself, when I didn't have anything to give without some selfish motive? I walked into A.A. a selfish and self-centered individual, and the only thing that changed in my life, was the alcohol had been eliminated, everything else was the same. I didn't even know who I was, let alone how a group functions. How could I have been unified with anyone else, I was falling apart by the minute? Unity has something to do with peace of mind and serenity, and being happy, joyous, and free. I was in a constant state of turmoil. How could I have been anything else? Recovery was not present.

About 9 months later, I found myself, drunk, and I know today, that it was not because of the members that asked me to be alternate G.S.R., it was simply, because I did not do anything with the 12 steps.

As I started to apply these steps into my life, I've come to the conclusion that general service in Alcoholics Anonymous is vital and a joy, if there is gratitude in ones life. Gratitude came from the steps, for me. It is not a chore to do what is asked of me, as a G.S.R., when the steps are in my life.

It is a priviledge to serve. Caring and sharing is love and service, in action. Sobriety is a give, and to have the ability to give freely of oneself, is made possible through the working of the 12 steps in ones life.

Anonymous

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Reprint Of Article From St. Paul Intergroup Newsletter

SERVICE FANATIC?

Recently, an AA friend of mine was telling another local member about the role service work has played in his recovery. He was shocked when she said, "People have told me about you and service work. I don't think it's at all important. They say you're out to save the world and you're so busy helping other people, there's no time left for yourself."

My friend protested that helping others was helping himself, and she replied, "Don't you know it's a selfish program and you have to take care of yourself first? You people are really fanatics."

Five years ago, I could easily have said everything that woman told my friend about working a "selfish program." When I left treatment and entered AA, that was my approach exactly. I want to be very clear on this point: Treatment never showed me anything that could hurt my AA program; treatment saved my life. But somewhere between the treatment center and AA, some information slipped through the cracks and was lost for a while.

Most people -- especially other young people -- I met in AA seemed to ask the same question first: "Where did you go to treatment?" I found a couple of groups that felt comfortable for me, because they used familiar sayings like "Do what you think you need for you today" and "How do you feel about how you feel?" These AA groups called themselves feelings groups, social groups, growth groups, support groups, or loving-confrontation groups. Our Twelfth Step effort was usually accomplished as the newcomer stepped out of detox. And when anyone relapsed, we almost invariably took that person back to treatment.

For the rough times, we rarely suggested sponsors, the Twelve Steps, service work, or even attending more meetings; we usually sought out another form of therapy, since AA obviously wasn't working too well for us. We worked with the tools we knew, and that program usually wasn't exactly traditional AA.

Now, that style of involvement is not taught by AA literature, and that's my point. Many newcomers in our area, regardless of age, aren't being given AA eye-to-eye from an older member. Most people in my area first get the message of AA the way I got it, from somebody paid to give it to them. I might have been told -- but I quickly forgot -- that the spiritual life is not a theory; it has to be lived. And I am not the only one.

I had a slip at fourteen months. I returned, not to treatment, but to ninety meetings in ninety days and my first International Conference of Young People in AA. It was then, and only then, that I found the beginnings of a spiritual program, in place of my "selfish" one.

That new road has made all the difference. You see, to me and to dozens, maybe hundreds, like me, Alcoholics Anonymous had sounded like just another institution, serviced and maintained by those "other folks" who worked an "old-fashioned" program. I rarely talked to them, because they didn't seem to like my therapeutic approach to recovery, and they rarely talked to me, because I showed no desire to hear quotations from the Big Book or suggestions that I get more involved.

"This we owe to AA's future: to place our common welfare first; to keep our Fellowship united," says our Unity Declaration.

The program I practice today relies heavily on unity. I once assumed Alcoholics Anonymous would always be there, no matter what I did. I assumed "somebody" was taking care of it, so I could go about working my "own program". I had no idea that the Twelve Traditions and the Three Legacies applied to me. I was really the only fellow in my "fellowship". Today, I know the basic text is titled Alcoholics Anonymous, not Alcoholic Anonymous. And today, I am not alone.

I do want the hand of AA to be there for every newcomer, but I'm not out to save the world. I'm just trying to be sober, the best way I know how, one day at a time. I hope to see many of you at young people's conferences, and if all this makes me a fanatic, let's just say I'm a very grateful fanatic.

Eric O.

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