

SOBER CONNECTIONS

A QCGSA newsletter dedicated to informing Alcoholics Anonymous groups in Queens County

STEP SEVEN: Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.

When I read Step Seven I am reminded of the first time I heard the Joe and Charlie tapes. Someone in my Home Group gave me CD's of these two old guys going through the Big Book of Alcoholics Anonymous. At first I didn't think I would like listening to them dissecting every step. For some reason I kept listening, and these two really grew on me. When they got to steps six and seven they talked about how Bill W would use different words to describe the same thing. One example is using shortcomings in place of defects of character. For some reason that really got my attention. I thought of how caught up in semantics I get. The word God, for example, was one that was giving me a bit of trouble. "Higher Power" did not really fit the bill for me, either. I had picked up on "The Great Reality" because it sounded dramatic and less threatening than GOD. So I realized that the word "shortcomings" just sat better with me than "defects".

Here is a definition of defect: a shortcoming, imperfection, or lack.

The definition of shortcoming? A fault or failure to meet a certain standard, typically in a person's character, a plan, or a system. The way Joe and Charlie explained it, Bill W liked to make himself sound smart and rather than use the same words throughout the steps, he mixed it up a little, which tended to confuse people. I saw the similarities between myself and Bill W in that moment. I had spent my life trying to impress people and make people think I was smarter than I was. I had used big words to confuse people and had avoided asking for help when I didn't know what those words meant. My ego had been my reality, and it had been blocking me off from having any real connection in this world.

I had not even gotten to Step Seven at the time I was listening to the Joe and Charlie tapes. I had memorized the Seventh Step prayer at my Home Group mainly in an effort to impress the old timers and to make it seem like I knew what I was doing. I said it every day as if I understood what it meant. I came up against some issues in sobriety that were very difficult to stay sober through and that compelled me to do steps again with a new sponsor. I did not even remotely understand humility.

My new sponsor took me through the 12 and 12 and we spent a lot of time in Six and Seven before making my list. Sure, I had memorized the Seventh Step Prayer but was that second time through the steps that I was desperate enough to actually look towards The Great Reality for help with these faults that were getting in the way of my having healthy relationships. A few years later I find that saying the Seventh Step prayer has helped me all along, whether I understood it or not. Whatever I call this thing that I pray to, I know that it has done for me what I could not do for myself, up to and including staying sober! Today I am grateful for Step Seven and all of the steps for giving me a blueprint for living far better than anything I could have come up with myself.

By Jennifer S.
high_and_dry@SeattleAA.org.

QUEENS COUNTY GENERAL SERVICE CALENDAR

Have a service or non-service AA-related event that you would like added to the calendar?

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and we will post it.

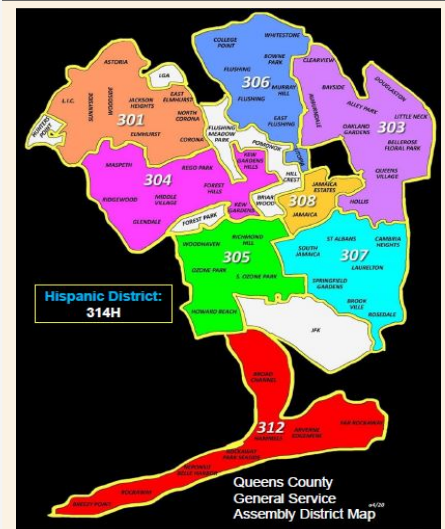
NEWSLETTER

Would you like to submit a story to the newsletter?

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and we will publish it.

Queens County District Map



**Queens County General
Service**
P.O. Box 670533 Flushing,
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WWW.QCGSA.ORG

What's the Big Deal?

A longtimer reflects on his first celebration

As I approached the end of my first year of sobriety, I mentioned that fact to one of my daughters. She had lived with me during the four weeks of my outpatient treatment and had seen firsthand the beginning of my new life. I said I didn't want to make a big deal out of it, and she said, "Why not?" I thought for a minute and then said, "What the hell, why not?" and organized an anniversary party.

Just a year before, I was completely alone; I had no friends and barely a job, and I was living a hopeless life. I kept scheming how I was going to commit suicide, but I couldn't even organize that. My daughters stood by me, but at a fearful distance. I was so angry and so difficult to be around. They were justifiably afraid of me.

That day I made a list of all the people who had profoundly affected my life during the year, and I came up with thirty. Included were my daughters; a few long-time friends who didn't give up on me, even though I had; the lawyer who bailed me out of jail the morning after my last drink; a long-time drinking buddy who preceded me into recovery; some of the powerful influences from my AA groups and aftercare; and other recovering alcoholics who had generously shared their lives and feelings. The list didn't begin to include everyone who had helped save my life: the cops who picked me up treated me with respect I didn't deserve; a wise and understanding judge who let me go to treatment instead of jail; all those men and women without last names who patiently sat through my whining and complaining in AA meetings and aftercare sessions.

I mailed out the invites, and all but one showed up. Thirty people in a one-bedroom apartment on a Minnesota January evening! It was a joyous celebration, a true celebration of life. There was intense mutual pride and love with my children. It was a big deal!

Still, I have mixed emotions about celebrating sobriety anniversaries. On the one hand, all the days behind us don't matter; today is all that counts. A thousand days sober does not guarantee sobriety today. On the other hand, a day sober, ten days sober, three hundred days sober are all huge victories for alcoholics. Each day sober represents what was once totally impossible, so a bunch of them together is worthy of acknowledgement.

I had been a drinker for twenty years. The skid downward started with my first drink, and it got worse every day. I lost a marriage, I lost jobs, I got arrested, and, worst of all, I lost myself. The details may differ, but my life story is recounted every day in AA meetings around the world.

The morning after my arrest, I lay on the bunk in the jail cell: stripped of my belt, my shoelaces, and my dignity, and amongst overwhelming feelings of self-pity and anger, I heard a voice saying, "This has to stop!" I didn't know it then, but that was the first day of a wonderful new life, and with the grace of God and the Fellowship of AA, I haven't had a drink since.

The sober days have rolled by and now number about 10,000. I've fulfilled many dreams. I have a wonderful relationship with my children, and they have blessed my life with ten priceless grandchildren. They have generously let me be part of their families and lives. I've flown airplanes, I've sailed boats, I've traveled to places that were just words on a map for a Minnesota farm boy. I've been blessed with many friends. A wonderful woman loves me as I am, and she brings new joys to my life.

My wish list for life did not include a heart attack and cancer. Yet those incidents proved to be valued gifts. While the desire to drink left long ago, the demon of alcoholism continues to shadow me, and sometimes I let it get out in front of me. I can be angry, hostile, self-pitying—I can act as if I'm drunk again. I can wonder how a good French wine tastes, or an English pub bitters. But, because of AA, I can be content with just wondering. As of today, I've been able to chase the demon back into the shadows.

I know that all I have, including life itself, is but a loan to me. It is up to me how I use it. I try to be a worthy borrower. The biggest gift of all is a sober today.

Some mornings, wisdom rises to the surface, and as I open my eyes I ask: Do I want to make a big deal out of today? You bet I do!

BILL S. | HOPKINS, MINNESOTA

AAGRAPEVINE
The International Journal of Alcoholics Anonymous

August 2005

GRAPEVINE AND LA VIÑA ARE HERE TO HELP

AS THE U.S. AND CANADA BEGIN THE CAUTIOUS REOPENING OF COMMUNITIES AND BUSINESSES, OUR JANUARY, FEBRUARY, MARCH, APRIL AND MAY GRAPEVINE AND JAN/FEB-MAY/JUNE LA VIÑA ISSUES HAVE REMAINED AVAILABLE AND FREE TO ALL UNTIL JUNE 30TH, 2020.

FOR THOSE WHO WISH TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF OUR NEW DOWNLOADABLE, DIGITAL [EPUB](#) VERSION OF GRAPEVINE (INCLUDING AUDIO), WE ARE MAKING IT AVAILABLE AT A RATE OF ONLY \$1.99 PER ISSUE (EVEN LESS WITH A YEAR OR MORE SUBSCRIPTION AND THE ABILITY TO CANCEL AT ANY TIME).

PLEASE SHARE WITH YOUR FELLOWS.

Fellowships Feelings on Celebrating Anniversaries On ZOOM

Hello I'm an Alcoholic and my name is Martin O'K (Newsletter Editor), March 30th 2015 is my Sober date and so when I was told that both of my homegroups were shutting down and that I wasn't going to be able to celebrate my 5 years, I was crushed. This is the year I get my marbles back. I have so many people I want to thank for helping me stay sober and cake... What about the cake? I quickly did remember though that the anniversaries are not for me but yet the newcomers. Both my homegroups, as always did show me though that I'm not alone and that we will get through whatever is put Infront of us and so we quickly put together a format to celebrate here on zoom and it was an experience I will never forget. Members of my groups did special deliveries of my five-year coin; I got my marbles and I even got cake. I know this is a year that I will be sharing with many people for years to come. Now that zoom meetings are our new norm and many people have been celebrating their anniversaries virtually, I was curious to know other people in the fellowship feelings on celebrating remotely. Here's what a few had to say.

Ben L. – I was somewhat disappointed because I plan on moving out of state and this would be my last anniversary at my Home Group. I celebrated all past 25 here. Thankfully a group member opened her home to group members. We had a virtual meeting with cake, candles and Fellowshiping. This also allowed some friends from out of state to be a part of it.

Brian – I just celebrated my 16th anniversary yesterday via Zoom. While I missed the in-person comradery and cake, this format made it easier to invite and host people from far away who would otherwise never be able to attend. That alone made it a success.

Gladys A. – A member of our group invited Group members to her house and we held a Virtual Anniversary Meeting. It was awesome getting together with my AA Family.

Jocelyn V. – I hit an emotional bottom at my one year and with it came the gift of desperation. With the tools I gained from my first year and my newfound trust in my Higher Power, I put my pride aside, and I was able to practice humility and seek God. I'm grateful zoom has been a part of my recovery. It has granted me access to meetings at the touch of a button, bringing amazing human beings into my life. There have been challenges, but when I apply the Traditions and Steps of AA to my thought process, I gain clarity. And with this clarity I am able to sacrifice: "Sacrifice what no longer works in order to stay close to what is sacred."

Linda G. – When Covid and the shutdown happened, I thought that anniversary celebrations were on hold. When meetings started on the Zoom platform, the AA fellowship proved that was not the case. Although the physical hugs were missing, the caring good wishes were there. I felt the much-needed love during this time. They say that the 1st anniversary is for the individual and the rest are to show the newcomer that it works. This year I felt how well the program and fellowship works for all of us.

Neil B. – For me celebrating my Anniversary on Zoom was something I will never forget. I was days out of the hospital getting over the Coronavirus and my Home Group members rallied around me to show the Newcomer that this can work even in the face of extreme adversity. It was the first Zoom Anniversary for most, if not all of us. I will never forget it.

Carmela F. – I thought it was great because my daily members from far were able to be part of it. But there isn't anything quite like being at a meeting location.

Peter M. – I celebrated my first anniversary of sobriety in July, and it was wonderful. Following my sponsor's advice, I celebrated at several groups I'm a part of via zoom, and I got great support from my friends in AA at all of them. The toughest thing for me was deciding whether I wanted to invite my family to one of the meetings. In the end I did, and I was so glad I shared my milestone with them. They were proud of me and glad to be there. I look forward to my next anniversary, one day at a time, but there will be nothing like this first one, and I owe it all to my family, my colleagues and my friends in the program, who all have given me so much support. Thank you, Alcoholics Anonymous.

Shawn H. – This year's 24th birthday celebration was different and unusual as I celebrated on the Zoom format and it was wonderful. Not only did I, have my homegroup members, sponsor and family there, but also numerous members from a Hawaiian group, Aloha Mana, that I have been attending daily since finding on the internet during this pandemic. I surely will include this experience into my future qualifications, as it was something, I'm sure won't happen again and was one of the best anniversaries I've had since celebrating my very first one."



QUESTIONS, COMMENTS, EVENTS, NOTES?
EMAIL THE NEWSLETTER EDITOR (MARTIN O'K)
AT
NEWSLETTER@QUEENS.AASENY.ORG



Carrying the Message by Any Means Necessary: A Tribute to Antonio G.

The truth is he was a ball of energy as soon as he walked through door. Ready to carry the message by any means necessary. There was an ongoing razzing within Queens County that Antonio's home group was...Queens County. Antonio loved AA with a passion. He not only took a commitment but recreated in a way that made one want to learn more and do it. He carried the message in his way through The Buddy System and The Golden Doorknob - both started as a germ of an idea through his experiences as chairs for the PI and CPC committees; the Queens County GSR Bootcamps; and the article "Sober Holidays are a Possibility" which was published in the newsletter. He was also the Chair of Queens Intergroup before he had to step down earlier this year.

I met Antonio at Survivors in early recovery and we hit it off in minutes. He was definitely passionate and chatty as am I, so there was much laughter and much loudness. Listening to him go off on a tangent and then return to the topic at hand - usually about his flight attendant days or being on Soul Train - was a one of a kind experience. He'd make you crazy and make you laugh. That was the attraction. That's how he piqued your interest in service. My most favorite memory is directing him in The Sponsorship Game, a recovery skit with The Below the Group Players. He played Lothario, 13-stepping his way through the program until a safety card timeout was called. So much fun. Service with a tambourine. Antonio, you'll always be in my heart. Thank you for being a part of my sober family.

*Yours in Love & Service,
Malini*

Maura Z. - Antonio was one of the people that attracted me to service below the group level. I will miss his vision, enthusiasm, sense of humor and endless energy. I am a better AA member, having known him, blessings.

Frank G. - Antonio's wide-eyed child-like inquisitiveness into service below the group level in the name of AA was intoxicating. He's biggest gift to me was seeing how being in service at an early stage of my sobriety was a blessing.

Ben L. - We lost a Trusted Servant who was greatly loved. He had gotten started late in service below the group level and boy, did he make up for it. He had a tremendous love for this Fellowship. We would tell him to slow down, but he would have none of that. Maybe God was pushing him because he knew his time was short. There was always laughter when Antonio was around. He may have left a lot of voids in the service area due to all the commitments he held. But he definitely left a void in our hearts. R.I.P. my friend.

Jan A. - Antonio was always fun to hang out with and he taught me a lot about gratitude. He made me laugh.

Neil - Antonio, even though he is gone, will continue inspire service in others who knew him. And he was a great example of us not being "a glum lot."

Jo Ann M. - My experience with Antonio reminds me of the saying "a kid in the candy store". When Antonio was introduced to the wide world of service in A.A. below the homegroup he was mesmerized. Like the little kid wanting some of everything; he was looking to absorb himself in service. He would call me with questions and literally pick my brain about service. He wanted to know the importance of events and which ones he should attend. Always grateful to be informed and willing to inform others.

Where to Mail Your Group Donations

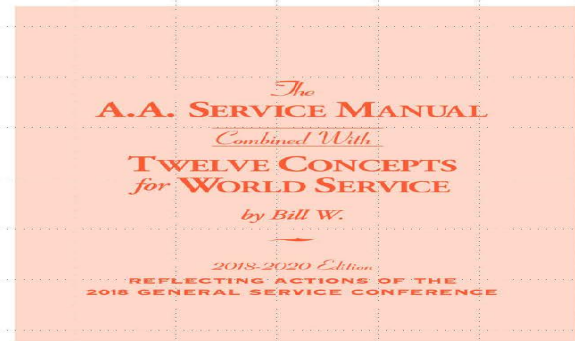
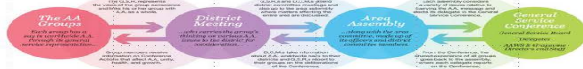
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Queens County General Service Presents

G.S.R. BOOTCAMP

**“The A.A. Service Manual:
How This Works for A.A. as a Whole”**

Monday, September 21st
7:15pm – 8:45pm



- There's a manual for this?
➤ Oh, this is where I find the Twelve Concepts.

If you don't have a hard copy of the manual, please visit
https://aa.org/assets/en_US/en_bm-31.pdf to download your copy.

Zoom details will be provided closer to the event.
Contact QC Sponsorship Chair for more information at Sponsorship@queens.aaseny.org

A DECLARATION OF UNITY:
This we owe to A.A.'s future: To place our common welfare first; to keep our fellowship united. For on A.A. unity depend our lives and the lives of those to come.

RESPONSIBILITY STATEMENT:
I am responsible... When anyone, anywhere, reaches out for help, I want the hand of A.A. always to be there. And for that: I am responsible.

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