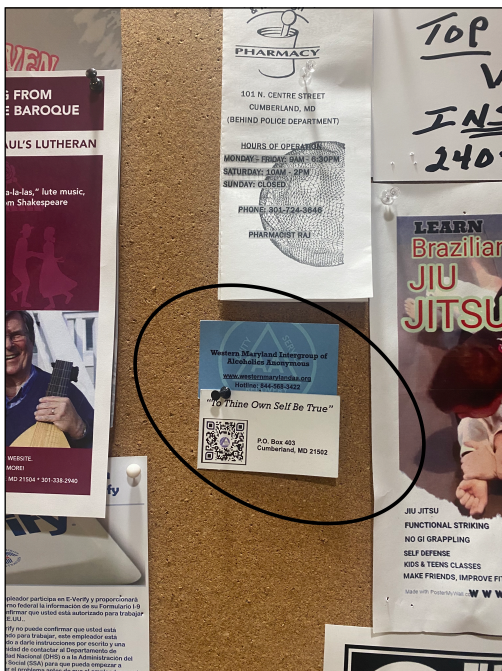


First Things First

Newsletter of the Western Maryland Intergroup of Alcoholics Anonymous

Calling cards help to carry the message



Western Maryland Intergroup calling cards can be spotted on bulletin boards in public places such as coffee shops or post offices as part of our 12th-Step mission to let sick and suffering alcoholics know about the A.A. program of recovery.

The cards include intergroup's mailing address, hotline phone number, website, and an A.A. slogan, such as "One Day At a Time," or "To Thine Own Self Be True." Placing cards and signs in public locations is sanctioned by A.A.'s General Service Office as being in line with our 11th Tradition of attraction, not promotion.

The QR code takes you directly to our website, which includes a list of meetings in Allegany and Garrett counties, the newsletter, and upcoming events.

Can you think of places to place calling cards? Would you help us spread the word about A.A.'s program of recovery from alcoholism? Let us know, and we will get you some cards.

Contact us at westernmarylandaa.org.



Western Maryland Intergroup calling cards are tacked among other public service announcements on bulletin boards at a Sheetz in Cumberland, as well as post offices in Frostburg and Cumberland, libraries, and other locations in the area.

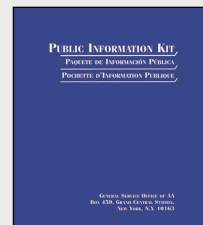
Letting the public know about A.A.

Cards and Signs

"These are often used to offer the telephone number of the nearest central office, intergroup, or A.A. contact (depending upon the size of the community), or to give the times and places of nearby meetings. Cards and signs have been placed in....police stations, sheriff's offices, hospitals, county infirmaries, hotels, and taxi stations. Signs may in be in the form of car cards (or buses or subway trains) or of road signs (those that welcome the traveler to 'our town' by listing local lodges and civic clubs."

—from the A.A. General Service Office

Public Information Workbook



Virtual meetings: The pros and cons

Carol C., HOW Group

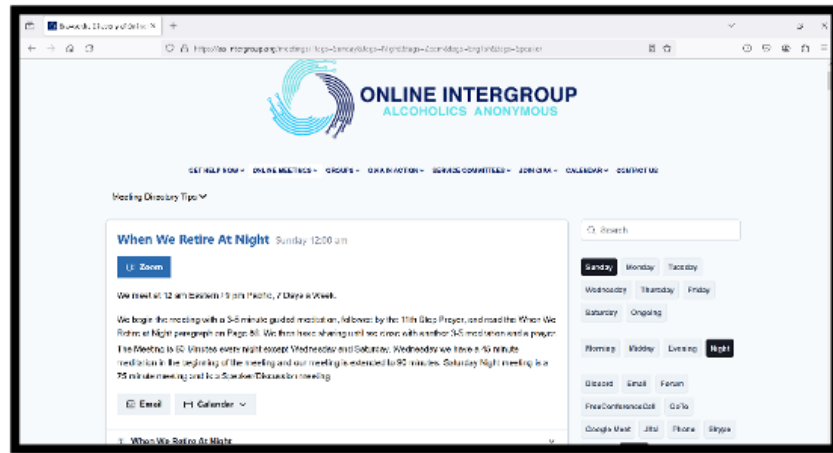
Why a virtual meeting? There are plenty of reasons. Meeting times conflict with your work schedule. You get sick and can't get out of the house at all. You're aging and getting around is difficult, especially if the meeting location does not have an accessible entrance. Or you just plain *need* a meeting at 2 a.m.

There are more variations to meetings online than in a rural area like ours, including American Sign Language, *Daily Reflections*, and other AA approved literature, Deaf / Hard of Hearing, LGBTQIAA+, Loners / Isolationists, Meditation, Newcomers, People of Color, Seniors, Speaker, and young people. All you need is access to the internet with a smart phone, tablet, or computer and one of the following apps: Zoom, Discord, Google Meet, Skype. If you don't have internet, you can use a simple telephone to dial in, though you may still need the internet to locate numbers.

English not your primary language? No worries! Meetings are held in many different languages around the clock, 24/7/365 including all holidays.

Virtual meetings are convenient and customizable – what's not to like? Well to begin with, lack of access to an internet connection or an unstable connection. It is far easier to become distracted in one of these meetings especially in a large meeting where you've hidden your picture (an additional benefit for those concerned with anonymity). I've found myself getting up to start laundry or dinner or letting the dog in or out. None of that can happen in a "live" meeting.

Zoom "bombers" are another downer... people who log into a meeting with a hidden agenda of disruption. Hosts are usually highly trained by Zoom in creating a safe and secure environment, but occasionally a bomber gains entry and they can be completely disgusting.



Finally, the social elements which were important to my early recovery are greatly reduced. It is very difficult to make eye contact with anyone or have a one-on-one conversation. No handshakes or hugs, and no

coffee or free cookies!

However, I personally feel the pros outweigh the cons and I regularly supplement my live meetings with virtual ones. I have heard a lot of different perspectives on working a solid program, some of which I haven't validated in the book and so disregard but still find thought provoking. Of course, I hear the same in live meetings and remember where the program lives.

Interested in exploring? I am most familiar with Zoom, so here is how I would find and log into a meeting.

- 1) Log onto the internet and go to <https://zoom.us> and select "Sign Up Free" to begin setting up your free basic account.
- 2) Enter your birth year and continue to the next screen where you will enter your email account.
- 3) Zoom will send a security code to your email so be sure you use one you can access. Once you enter the code,

See **Virtual** on page 3



Gratitude Breakfast

AA & Al-Anon
Open Speaker Meeting

When: Saturday, May 18, 2024

Where: Cumberland Country Club

Tickets: \$20 per person

Hosted by Western Maryland Intergroup

Virtual continued from page 2

you will reach a screen asking you to choose a password after entering your name. It is secure and you ought to use your real name.

- 4) In the lefthand bar of the next screen you will find a link for "profile." This where you select a photo and screen name and any other information you'd like shared with the meeting.
- 5) After a couple of more choices, you will get to the screen where you will download the Zoom app on your phone or computer and simply follow the directions from there.

Once you have Zoom set up, you'll want to find a meeting. AA.org has an additional site for virtual meetings only: <https://aa-intergroup.org> "Online Meetings" will provide a list with options for narrowing the search along the right of the screen. The list is massive and the one option I always pick is the language I want the meeting to be held in.

**Online groups registered
with the A.A. General Service
Office**

2021 – 595

2022 – 883

2023 – 1,236

**From the 2023 progress report of the
General Service Office's ad hoc**

From there, explore! Click on the blue Zoom box and you will be taken to the meeting. You can choose a screen name and whether to hide you live streaming video or not. Many users call the video streams "Hollywood Squares" and many meetings will require you to enter with the video streaming to help with security.

A.A. Slogans: 'Active alcoholics don't have relationships; they take hostages.'

What does it mean to you?

Farren S.

During active addiction, I didn't love anything except substances. Having that mentality didn't permit me to have any form of relationship with another living being. The relationships I had were purely to get what I needed from others: Attention, finances, emotional support, etc.

Today, I am a friend among friends, a partner, a daughter, a coworker, and a useful member of society. How to become all of these things was taught to me in A.A. Fellow alcoholics showed me unconditional love and acceptance until I could grace myself with those same ideals. Not until I accepted myself and my minute part in God's world could I have any meaningful relationships.



First Things First is published monthly by the Western Maryland Intergroup of Alcoholics Anonymous.

P.O. Box 3005, Lavale, Md., 21504

Website: westernmarylandaa.org

Email: westernmarylandaa@gmail.com

24-hour Hotline: 844-568-3422, or 844-LOVE4AA

Submissions are welcome! If you have an idea or a story, send us an e-mail.

The views expressed in *First Things First* represent those of individuals and do not imply endorsement by Alcoholics Anonymous.



Tradition Four: “Each group should be autonomous except in matters affecting other groups or A.A. as a whole.”

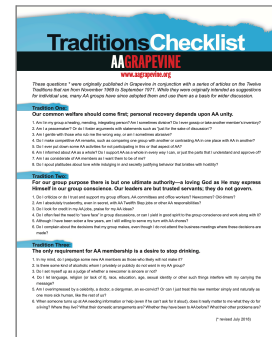
The Traditions Checklist is a tool for A.A. members and groups to take inventory of how well we know and follow A.A. Traditions. You can find it at aagrapevine.org/sites/default/files/2020-01/GV-Traditions-Checklist-2018.pdf.

Tradition 4, Checklist No. 6: *Do I ever criticize certain groups because I think they don't do things how A.A. should be done?*

I think ‘criticize’ is too strong a word. To me it implies that I’m running around whispering about personalities at a certain group, or the format of a certain group, or the weak coffee at a certain group. I don’t really do that – although weak coffee is not something to be shrugged off lightly! At the same time, A.A. groups, by design, are different. I’m a human being with tastes and opinions. I’m not going to like all groups equally. And that’s OK.

Maybe I feel like a group keeps too much money in its checking account and I’d rather the money be spent on 12th-step work. Or maybe a group lets newcomers with very little sobriety chair meetings. Not against the law. Groups can make their own rules about who can chair a meeting. But personally, I prefer for the person chairing the meeting to have a little time, have a sponsor, have worked the Steps, etc. Someone who knows the Traditions and can intervene if the meeting goes off track. If I’m asked, ‘Why don’t you go to such and such meeting,’ I would offer that as a reason. Personal preference. We all get to decide for ourselves which meetings are best for our recovery.

—Kristin B.



What We Do at Western Maryland Intergroup

- Maintain a website: westernmarylandaa.org and a hotline: 844-568-3422
- Create and distribute Where & When’s
- Host workshops and activities, including the annual Gratitude Breakfast
- Provide literature to local treatment and detention centers
- Publish a monthly newsletter
- Cooperate with the professional community to increase awareness and understanding of Alcoholics Anonymous
- Provide a P.O. Box for correspondence (P.O. Box 3005, Lavale, Md., 21504).



We need you!

Every A.A. group in the area can elect a representative to Intergroup. Intergroup representatives attend monthly meetings, contribute ideas and skills, and shape the way that the A.A. message is carried into the Allegany and Garrett county communities.

Meetings are at **6 p.m.** the third Friday of each month at various locations in Allegany and Garrett counties. **The next meeting is Friday, April 19, 2024,** at Emmanuel Episcopal Church, 16 Washington St., Cumberland, Md.

Thank you for your support!

March donations

Fort Cumberland: \$90.00

What happened at the meeting?

Western Maryland Intergroup, March 15, 2024 meeting minutes

Attendance

Les, Dan, Wendell, Kristin, Farren, Jim

Call to Order at 6:10 pm

Adjourned at 7:38 pm

Serenity Prayer

Traditions - Dan

Feb minutes approved.

Treasurer-Farren

Starting balance: +\$2984.45

Paper statement fee -1

Rent collected and donated \$5

Gratitude Breakfast Ticket

reimbursement (Farren) -16.00

Ft. Cumberland Donation +90.00

Ending Balance: 3057.45

Savings Acct: \$23.02

Reserve fund: \$2190.61

approved

Officers

Chair: Cody B.

Vice Chair: Les W.

Treasurer: Farren S.

Secretary: Lora B.

Newsletter: chair - Kristin B.

Les would like to be contacted when newsletters are printed

- Groups are reaching out to Les asking for copies
- Kristin will meet with Les around the first of the month and Les will distribute to treatment centers, Cumberland groups, and Garrett County groups.

•Roving Recoveries from Zoom meetings

- Wendell also willing to write some of this

•Bit on service positions and "group of people"

Website: Chairs - Erin and Wendell

425 pg views

•201 sessions

•101 unique

- Site has report on how people find us (google, straight to, referred from main AA site, MD general service)
- Meeting guide app is working for all meetings
 - The issue was Google sheet error
 - The column L needs updated every time a new meeting is added to the spreadsheet.
- Website being down was payment error (needs to be done every February)

Institutions: Chair - Les (Cody)

- Massie is open- Marvin and Cody still going in to jail
- Phoebe still hasn't received Grapevines
- Nothing from halfway house on literature
- Marvin, Lora, and Cody going in jails
 - Lora is trying to do zoom when tech works
- Hold off on Massie books?
- Discussion:
- Good way to do 12th step work and spend some of the treasury
- Wendell smaller books like living sober, more accessible and cheaper
- Dan encourage them to take a Big Book and mark it up
- Talk with Phoebe about ideas - Massie is a good
- Formation of "Treatment committee" sub-committee to figure out how to spend money
- Kristin, Les, Dan Start using handbooks/ workbook from General service to iron out ideas
- Need to be all on the same page in the subcommittee
- Motion made by Wendell and approved unanimously to purchase whatever literature is needed for the subcommittee

CPC: Chair - Woody

Not in attendance

Where & When handouts: Chair - Open

Web document updated quarterly

- New edition should be ready by breakfast
- 250 distributed

Literature: Chair - Les

- Talk about lit during subcommittee meeting
- Women's halfway house (Reflections House) getting off the ground - Wendell will reach out to see if they need materials

see **Notes** on page 7

Activities: Chair: Kenny

Chair not present

Notes continued from page 6

Hotline: Chair - Dan

Discussion about writing a basic guideline (i.e., limited to 5 min, personal protection for phone answerers)

- Creation of bylaws from the committee to present to Intergroup in future

Old Business

none

New Business


- Need to make new bylaws at some point
 - Should we write a to-do/how-to list for each of our positions that we use to pass down with our positions? Update it
- Cody had a baby!!
- Where and Whens in other rural areas are maintained by service districts
 - Change our function as a group to incorporate servicing district 17?
 - Discussion of funding for this function
- Garrett Co. healthfair - AA presence?
 - \$50 for table - voted to hold off on this

- Discussion about doing this as part of our CPC/PI committee

Gratitude Breakfast:

- Purchase of *Grapevine* books for breakfast - motion to purchase 10 GV books - approved
- Discussion of \$200 donation
 - Clarify that these gift cards are reimbursement for travel and lodging for both speakers**
- Need to contact Pam for signing of the event contract
- Printings discussion
 - Will make our own program for the middle of the table
- Honor for Mike R.
 - Balloons, etc.
 - Motion to reach out to Jim to see if his son could do the doves - unanimous — Kristin will call Carson.
- List of community members who we invite to breakfast next month
- Les will be the MC
- Flyers to be made for Save the Date.

Our next meeting will be at 6 p.m. April 19, 2024 at Emmanuel Episcopal Church, 16 Washington St., Cumberland.



2024 MONTHLY

April 12-14 (MD) Milburn Landing SP	August 16-18. (MD) Tuckahoe SP
May 10-12 (PA) Caledonia SP	September 20-22 (MD) Greenbriar SP
June 21-23 (VA) Westmoreland SP	October 18-20 (MD) Shad Landing SP
July 26-28. (MD) Susquehanna SP	

Wm. G. 717.504.5833
Elkton, MD

Tom E. 301.602.8680
Georgetown, MD

Jim W. 717.858.5617
Fredrick, MD

Each campground has Modern Bathrooms and Electric Sites
 This group was originally started in 1970's - many many good memories!!
 We encourage all new and experienced travelers to join us
 Bring the kids, fishing poles, bug spray, tp, tent, RV, (homemade bread?)

"We Absolutely Insist on Having Fun"

ith PosterMyWall.com



Sessions by the Trees

August 9-11, 2024

Greenbrier State Park

**21843 National Pike,
Boonsboro, MD 21713**

2 tents at a site
 \$75 total for both nights
 AA meeting every morning & night
 AA Meeting & Potluck Sat. Night
 Megan Weber Frans 443-536-6774
 Venmo, Zelle, Cash App, or Check





April anniversaries

Emily H., Kindred Spirits Women's Group, 4-25-2004

Reid C., Lake Group, 4-18-2017

Western Maryland Intergroup believes that observing A.A. members' sober anniversaries shows that the program works and offers encouragement and inspiration for suffering alcoholics, inside and outside the rooms of A.A.

Help us build our new anniversary database by sending your sobriety date and home group to westernmarylandaa.org, or email us at westernmarylandaa@gmail.com.

Grapevine celebrates anniversary of Big Book

A.A. *Grapevine* magazine is marking the 85th anniversary of the Big Book with a special section in the April edition.

In "Happy Birthday Big Book!" members share stories of how the program's seminal text has helped their recovery.

You can read the stories or listen to audio at aagrapevine.org, or download the app, available for iPhone or Android. The app is free to download, with an in-app subscription available.

More than 5,000 people have subscribed to the app since it came out in September, publisher Chris C told an audience of A.A. members at the NERAASA conference in February. Leadership at the magazine is encouraging members to spread the word to their groups.

"In the office and with the board members we're doing a lot of work to try to attract new people to *Grapevine* through the app, and that's really what it's about," Chris C. said. "We want to help alcoholics, and we want to provide modern stories to help them recover from alcoholism. The reality of it is, we have to earn money in order to keep doing that."

AVAILABLE NOW!

THE NEW GRAPEVINE & LA VIÑA APPS!

- Read or listen to every issue
- Search our vast GV/LV Archives
- Keep track of your sobriety and spiritual practices
- Listen to our podcast
- Share AA stories and area events with friends
- Find meetings and connect to aa.org

EASY TO USE!
Take GV & LV wherever you go!

Download on the App Store

GET IT ON Google Play

For more information visit: www.aagrapevine.org/apps



Download the Apps for iPhone

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