

# First Things First

Newsletter of the Western Maryland Intergroup of Alcoholics Anonymous

## Spring and summer Intergroup events bring local A.A.s together to celebrate sobriety

### Music festival, Gratitude Breakfast 2025 — in the books!

**S**eventy or eighty people braved the hot weather on June 22 to enjoy a Sunday afternoon of live rock-and-roll in the parking lot of Fort Recovery in Cumberland.

Sponsored by Western Maryland Intergroup, the event featured three members of the local band “Wayward Son,” along with lead singer Mary College, and keyboardist Brian H.

Calling themselves “Sons and Daughter” for the one-off performance, the group sounded awesome, with a professional PA system set up outdoors. Wayward Son band members included J.J. Miller, bass and lead vocals; Steve Baer, lead guitar and vocals; and Jeff Sears, drums.

The group played a mix of rock classics, blues, and country (see set list on page 2).

A.A. trusted servants George L. and Grady S. Grilled hamburgers and hot dogs, and an assortment of homemade treats were provided by Intergroup trusted servants Mary Jo C. and Shawn A. — deviled eggs, Mac and cheese, and cupcakes.

And there was plenty of water, since it could hardly have been hotter! AccuWeather and The Weather Channel recorded the high at 97 degrees.

The cool music helped. A big thank you to Brian H. (New Hope and Sunday Serenity groups) and all the band members for the great music!

Earlier, on May 3, Intergroup hosted its 33rd annual Gratitude Breakfast, at the Cumberland Country Club, with around 130 people attending.

See **Events** on page 2





**Events** continued from Page 1

A.A. speaker Sheila U., of Somerset, Pa., shared her experience, strength and hope, followed by Al Anon speaker Diane S. The buffet breakfast, including eggs, bacon, sausage, potatoes, and fruit, was tasty, as always.

Western Maryland Intergroup is made up of representatives from A.A. groups in Allegany and Garrett counties, and like all A.A. Intergroups, is charged with helping groups in a region carry the message to the alcoholic who still suffers.

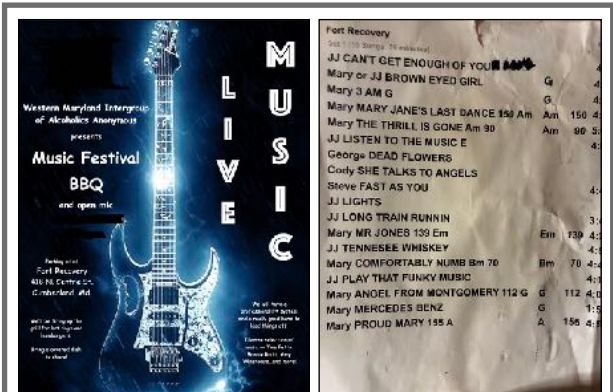
Per the A.A. Service Manual, there are more than 800 intergroup/ central offices throughout the world.

Intergroups provide a variety of services, often including a call-line for inquiries about A.A. meetings and services in the region, meeting lists and other A.A. literature, offer a website and periodic newsletters, as well as activities such as picnics and workshops, and carry meetings into jails and treatment centers.

See page 12 for more information about our local Intergroup services and how to get involved! Visit us at [www.westernmarylandaa.org](http://www.westernmarylandaa.org).

“Service centers usually have no authority on their own account; they derive it from the participating groups. Intergroup(s)...are A.A. service entities, and are “directly responsible to those they serve,” as described in Tradition Nine. Local group representatives participate in forming the groups conscience that guides the service center operations.”

—A.A. Service Manual, page 168



## Set List

### Fort Recovery Music Fest 2025

- “Brown Eyed Girl” (Van Morrison)
- “3 a.m.” (Matchbox 20)
- “Mary Jane’s Last Dance” (Tom Petty and the Heartbreakers)
- “The Thrill is Gone” (B.B. King)
- “Listen to the Music” (The Doobie Brothers)
- “Dead Flowers” (The Rolling Stones)
- “She Talks to Angels” (The Black Crowes)
- “Fast As You” (Dwight Yoakam)
- “Lights” (Journey)
- “Long Train Runnin’” (The Doobie Brothers)
- “Mr. Jones” (Counting Crows)
- “Tennessee Whiskey” (David Allan Coe, George Jones, Chris Stapleton)
- “Comfortably Numb” (Pink Floyd)
- “Play That Funky Music” (Wild Cherry)
- “Angel from Montgomery” (John Prine)
- “Mercedes Benz” (Janis Joplin)
- “Proud Mary” (Creedence Clearwater Revival)



# Fort Cumberland Group of Alcoholics Anonymous: A Legacy on the Hill

**Randi B., Fort Cumberland Group**

Nestled in the heart of Western Maryland in Allegany County, the Fort Cumberland Group of Alcoholics Anonymous has been a beacon of hope and recovery since 1961. As one of Cumberland's oldest A.A. meetings, it holds a special place in the community's history.

Affectionately known for years as "The Smokehouse," due to the thick cloud of cigarette smoke and the ever-present aroma of coffee in the air, it later became known simply as "the meeting on the hill." No matter the name, the feeling has always been the same — you're greeted with a smile, a hug, or a firm handshake the moment you walk through the door.

Alcoholics Anonymous itself was founded in 1935 by Bill W. and Dr. Bob in Akron, Ohio. Since then, A.A. has helped millions of people around the world find a new way to live — one day at a time. The Fort Cumberland Group proudly carries that legacy forward. I've been coming here since I was five years old, holding my dad's

hand as he walked the road of recovery. He, along with so many others, helped pave the way for those still struggling today.

I chose this home group because I've always felt at home here. From the warmth of the fellowship to cherished traditions — like our old Christmas dinners, where Jun M. would dress up as Santa and hand out presents to



*"This group played a huge role in giving my own father his life back—and in many ways, it gave me mine, too."*

all the kids — this group has never been just about staying sober. It's been about family, connection, and love.

As I often say, *"This group played a huge role in giving my own father his life back—and in many ways, it gave me mine, too."*

The Fort Cumberland Group continues its mission today, meeting every Tuesday and Friday at 8 p.m., offering strength, support, and a reminder that no one has to face this journey alone. We carry forward the spirit of the program with the same guiding words that have helped so many before us: *"One day at a time," "Keep it simple,"* and *"We're only as sick as our secrets."* Whether newcomer or old-timer, you are welcome here—just as you are.





# Experience of a lifetime

## A.A. International Convention in Vancouver

**Kristin B.,** *Ridgeley Renegades*

Everybody told us how awesome it would be when tens of thousands of A.A. members from around the world said the “Serenity Prayer” together during the Big Meetings at the International Convention.

And it was — it was awesome. To hear all those voices and see all those smiling, sober faces in the huge BC Stadium in Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada.

At the Opening Big Meeting on July 3 we watched as sober representatives from 88 countries carried flags across the stage, some dancing or fist-pumping to roars from the crowd. We listened to speakers from as far away as Iceland.

We spent the weekend meeting strangers who felt like friends, handshaking, high-fiving and fist-bumping, celebrating the one thing we have in common: Sobriety through Alcoholics Anonymous.

Organizers estimated that around 35,000 people from 90 countries attended — smaller than the last convention in Atlanta in 2015, when 57,000 people attended. (The convention planned for 2020 in Detroit was canceled because of COVID.) This was only the second time since 1950 a convention has taken place outside the United States.

Held every five years, the conventions are a celebration of the founding of A.A. in 1935, when Bill W. and Dr. Bob met and discovered a way to recover from alcoholism.

This year marks 90 years.

Coming from a small community with mostly small A.A. meetings, it was honestly a little overwhelming.



We're not used to having so many sober alcoholics together in one place! And I'm not big on crowds.

But we survived feeling overwhelmed, fueled by the tools of the A.A. program, and I walked away inspired by how big this thing really is, how it really works if you work it, no matter where you live or what your circumstances are.

My husband texted me as the first Big Meeting was about to begin. We had waited in line outside the stadium for close to two hours and had just settled into our seats with bags of popcorn, Twizzlers, and Peanut M&Ms.

“What's it like?” he asked.

“Stadium's getting full,” I wrote. “They're playing Journey, “Don't Stop Believing,” and people are running around with flags and dancing...A lot of joy.”

That single moment made it the trip of a lifetime.

The next A.A. International Convention is scheduled for summer of 2030 in St. Louis — a lot closer than Vancouver! Who wants to go?





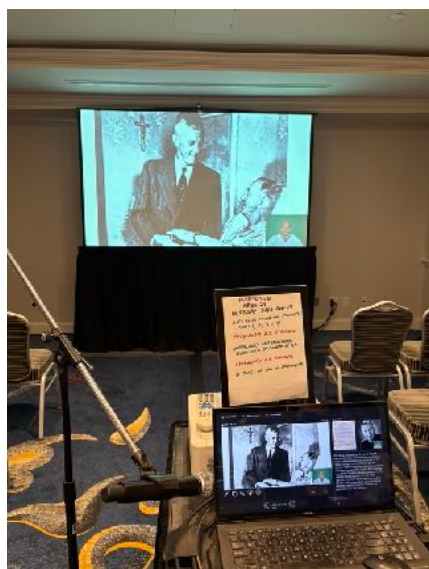
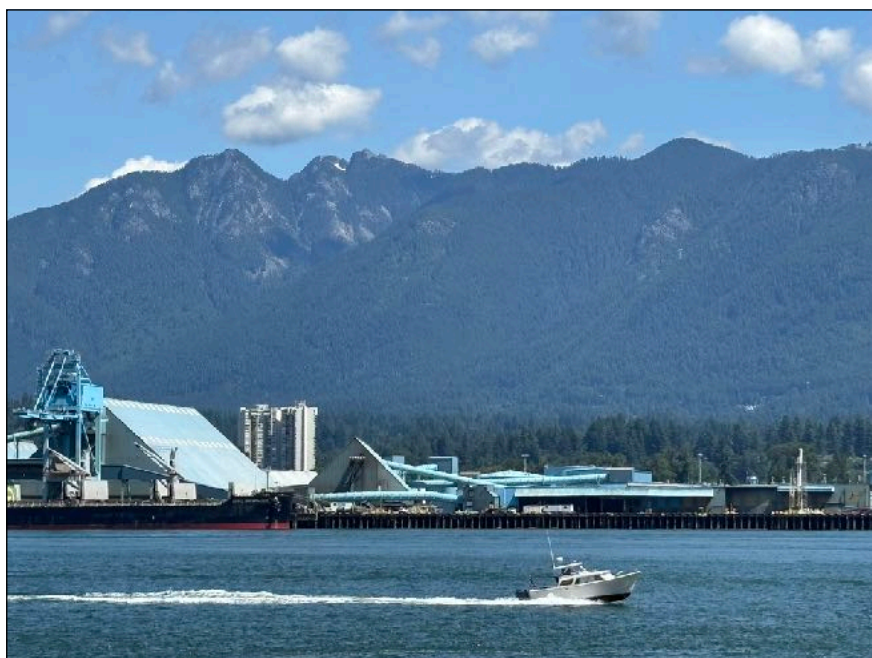
# Our trip to the A.A. International Convention — 2025



Long day of travel on Air Canada from Pittsburgh to Montreal to Vancouver. We made the tight connection – but our luggage didn't.

Lanyards for our A.A. name tags in the Vancouver Convention Center, on the Vancouver Harbor, where lots of cruise ships dock.

Area 29 Maryland General Service was one of a couple dozen A.A. service bodies that set up hospitality rooms in a number of hotels near the Vancouver Convention Center downtown. Hundreds of A.A.s visited from around the world.







Stadium popcorn and candy for the Big Meeting? Oh yes we did!



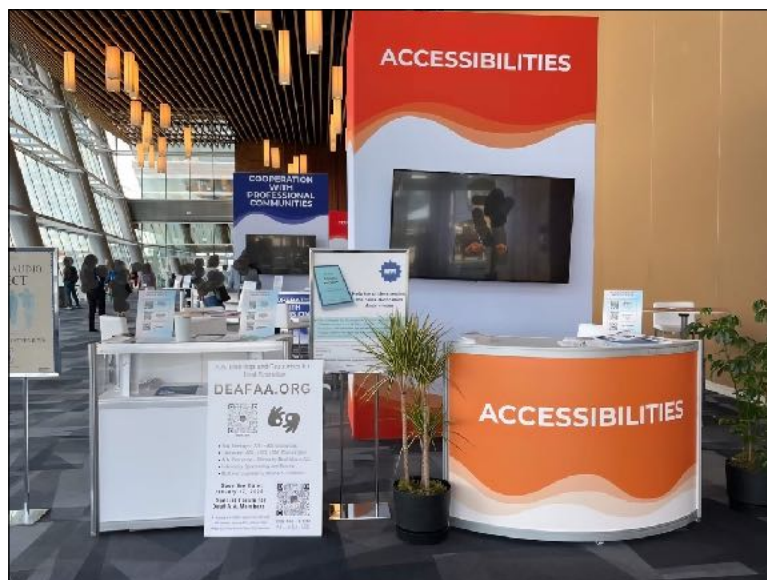
Lion's Gate Bridge from underneath while on a 10K bike ride along the seawall around Stanley Park.

We did A LOT of walking!

All blinged out with A.A. pins! (below)

On first seeing people walking around with pins all over their shirts: "I'm not going to do that." Then a smiling A.A. handed me a cool pin from Australia....

Hundreds of Maryland Area 29 pins were given out in the Maryland (Area 29) hospitality room.



A.A.'s General Service Office in New York set up booths for different 12th-Step service focuses, including Accessibilities, Treatment facilities, and Grapevine.



# What happened at the meetings?

## Western Maryland Intergroup, April 18, 2025, meeting minutes

### Attendance

Cody, Les, Farren, Brian, Mary Jo, Kristin, Lora, Wendell

CtO@ 6:12 pm

Traditions: Les

Minutes read & approved

### Treasurer: Farren S.

- Paid Dan \$36.78 for hotline, Wendell \$153.51 for CPC, Farren \$409.90 for breakfast speakers (travel and hotel reimbursement.)
- Receipts: Early Bird \$20 Sick & Tire \$25, Helping Hand \$50 Mustard Seed \$65.

Checking balance: \$ 2696.99

Reserve balance: \$2,192.72 reserve balance

### Institutions/Literature Chair: Les W.

Massie speakers are filling up. Lora continuing ACDC.

### Activities Chair: Mary Jo

- Proposed music festival: Brian talked to Chris and George, who are really into it. Tentative date is 6/22/25 1-4 p.m. Outdoors, weather-permitting. Thinking hot dogs, sodas, maybe hamburgers. Need to get flyers together. Other performers are interested. Don't know if permit required. Will be an 7<sup>th</sup> Tradition event, no contributions from NA or Fort Recovery. Club neighbors will be warned/invited. Les suggests one activity/month. Discussion included suggestions of additional dinner events, and recovery-focused workshops, as well as the different roles of Intergroup and the service structure. Kristin will provide

information of existing workshop formats which are available.

### Newsletter Chair: Kristin B.

Summer edition planned for maybe July. Suggestions/ideas/articles appreciated.

### Website/Where & When Chair: Wendell F.

252 page views; 199 unique visitors up from February. Spring W&W will be available at Gratitude Breakfast, deadline for changes is April 30.

### Community Engagement Chair: Matt

- Pamphlets received, some distributed at Garrett Health Fair along with where & whens. Rotary may be calling to get a lunch speaker, leftover where & whens from event to be distributed at GRMC. Kristin distributed new business cards.

### Hotline Chair: Dan not present

- Reports 4 calls for the month (via Lora).
- 

### Old Business: Bylaw review tabled.

**New Business:** Gratitude Breakfast ticket count due to Farren 4/25. Table agendas have been received. Speakers are lined up, Visa gift cards (for travel and hotel) and tickets are ready for them. Free tickets for institution residents.

Next meeting: Oakland May 16, 2025

Adjourned at 7:23 p.m.

## Western Maryland Intergroup, May 16, 2025, meeting minutes

### Attendance

Farren, Les, Brian, Jim, Cody, Tony, Mary Jo, Nicole, Ian, Jeremy

Call to Order at 6:15 p.m.

Traditions read by Les.

April 2025 minutes approved as read.

### Treasurer: Farren S.

**Starting balance: \$2696.99**

### Donations:

Chapel Hill... \$100

Coffee Club... \$126

Sunday Serenity... \$100

### Payments:

Flyers and Lavale Buffet Dinner... \$679.95

May hotline... \$36.78

Business cards... \$108.08

Gratitude Breakfast... \$2340

### Revenue:

Gratitude Breakfast... \$2122

**Ending Balance: +1980.18**

Savings Acct: \$18.02

Reserve fund: \$2193.24

Treasurer's report approved.

### Institutions/Literature Chair: Les W.

Lora not in attendance

- Speakers for Massie are going well
- Les will get with Kristin at Massie to determine what pamphlets/readings are needed
- The daily reflections that were purchased for the jails are MIA; need to contact Dan to see if he has them.

### Activities Chair: Mary Jo (Co-chair Brian)

The Liberty Club in Garrett County will be hosting a Memorial Day cookout May 25 at the Liberty Club (flyer to be posted on website).

The Liberty Club in Garrett County will be hosting a Glow in the Dark Party, July 18, at Brodak's Banquet Hall from 6-10 p.m. (Flyer to be posted on website)

**Continued next page**



Farren suggested that Intergroup members make an appearance after the July meeting to support Garrett County activities

Live music cookout:

Flyers are being distributed

George will cook hotdogs/hamburgers, Motion made and approved to limit food costs to under \$400

Mary Jo will communicate with the NA women's group that will meet at the Fort during the event to let them know of happenings.

#### **Newsletter Chair: Kristin B.**

Newsletter was printed and distributed at the Gratitude Breakfast

Chair not in attendance

#### **Website/Where & When Chair: Wendell**

Chair not in attendance

Ian volunteered to help with the website as needed

Spring 2025 Where and Whens were distributed at the gratitude breakfast

#### **Community Engagement Chair: Matt**

Chair not in attendance/no report

Jeremy and Nicole volunteered to aid in CPC committee efforts in Garrett County.

#### **Hotline Chair: Dan**

Chair not in attendance

Reported that 5 calls came in to Ian and 0 night calls to Mary Jo

#### **Old Business**

Bylaws revisions tabled

Gratitude Breakfast breakdown:

\$18 a head x 130 = -\$2340

10% tip for servers = -\$230

17 ticket donations= -\$306

Travel expenses for speakers= -\$400

Ticket printings= -\$11.56

Total expenses = -\$2981.56

50/50 winnings= +\$154

Ticket sales= +\$2400

Total revenue= +\$2554.00

Net profit = -\$427.56 (loss)

#### **New Business**

Discussions on new activities:

Rotating potluck at different groups - would need to be organized by/within the groups

Allegany County Mental Health Fair - too short of notice, motion failed

Walk for Recovery- motion passed to stage a table

Sept 13

Will get Ian pamphlets from Matt or order more if needed for next month

Discussion about getting pamphlets to the Reflection House... Jeremy will look into this and report back. Tony can get a pamphlet rack from New Hope Group for next month

Motion made to get table banners made for fairs. Jeremy and Nicole will look into and send out a price for us to vote on before the next meeting. 2nd motion made to purchase 2 banners (one for Garrett County and one for Allegany County), motion passed contingent on pricing.

Next meeting

June 20, 2025 at the Liberty Club in Oakland

Adjourned at 7:28 pm

## **Western Maryland Intergroup, June 20, 2025, meeting minutes**

### **Attendance**

Farren, Les, Brian, Jim, Cody, Jeremy, Dan, Lora, Wendell, Mary Jo and Shawn

Call to Order at 6:08 pm

Traditions read by Dan

May 2025 minutes approved as read

### **Treasurer: Farren**

Starting balance: +\$1980.18

Donations:

Friendsville 197

Mustard Seed 35

New Hope 250

Payments:

Rent 40 to LC

We have an EIN number and online banking established, can set up online donations if we want to

**Ending Balance: +\$2422.18**

Treasurer's report approved.

### **Institutions/Literature Chair: Les (Cody)**

- Speakers for Massie are going well
- Garrett Jail meetings are on hold
- Lora still doing Allegany meetings. Books are going home from jail.
- The daily reflections that were purchased for the Jails are still MIA, Dan will check his truck but doubts that he had them.

### **Activities Chair: Mary Jo (Co-chair Brian)**

- The Liberty club in Garrett Co. will be hosting a Glow in the Dark Party, July 18, at Brodak's Banquet Hall from 6-10 pm (Flyer to be posted on website). Farren suggested that Intergroup members make an appearance after the July meeting to support Garrett Co. activities
- Live music cookout:
- Everything is in place, musicians, equipment and food including 64 hamburgers, 75 hot dogs, veg trays and condiments are in place, Weather looks good. 150-200 expected including from Keyser and halfway houses. City has been contacted and no permit needed unless street obstructed. The sound system is a full major league PA system which is a big honking deal.

**Continued on page 9**



- George will cook hotdogs/hamburgers, and Grady will help Food costs were \$461. Fort is asking for contributions of at least \$50. Donations may be solicited.
- Farren moved that IG contribute \$75 to the Fort, which was seconded.
- Les volunteered to sell 50/50 tickets.
- Deep Creek State park pavilion is \$57, Mary Jo proposes a picnic and meeting with theme gratitude for August 10. Not seconded.

#### Newsletter Chair: Kristin B.

Chair not in attendance

#### Website/Where & When Chair: Wendell

- 176 visitors in 248 sessions with 481 page views for May.
- Summer W&Ws will be published in July, get changes to Wendell by 7/11/25 Community Engagement Chair: Jeremy
  - banners were printed
  - Reflection House will accept a literature rack, but does not want a meeting brought in.
  - Jeremy has given where & whens to pretrial release and has reached out to probation
  - Plans to have a table at Walk For Recovery. Business cards will be located and provided.
  - Dan will be the custodian of the banner for Allegany and Jeremy will keep the one designated for Garrett.

#### Hotline Chair: Dan

- 8 calls in May, one was redial. All 7 calls were answered.
- Volunteers are handling the calls which are not rolling to Dan.
- Need to transfer the phone line account to IG rather than Dan personal account.
- Matt has agreed to cochair hotline, was appointed by Cody to do so.
- Hotline number can be announced at the music festival and other events
- Old Business
  - Bylaws revisions tabled
  - Wendell asked whether the bylaws need to be revised to add event hosting as an IG purpose in addition to supporting AA groups. have a provision for spending intergroup money on events at a loss. Farren confirmed that the bylaws do provide for spending IG money on events. No motion made.

#### New Business

- Les proposed to have IG write Tim a thank you letter. Wendell will draft something for the council members to sign at the July meeting.

Next meeting: July 18, 2025 at the Liberty Club in Oakland.

Adjourned at 7:06 p.m.

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

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**Email:** [westernmarylandaa@gmail.com](mailto: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.

*A Spiritual Experience*

Every Tuesday  
**AA Women's Big Book Workshop**  
 Line by Line  
 Uncover, Discover, Discard

Presented by Candice M.  
 With Featured Co-hosts  
 This week: Leslie S.



Zoom ID: 858 0161 3157 PW: 561896  
 Room opens 15 minutes prior.

A beautiful community of strong women.

Tuesdays  
 6 pm PST  
 7 pm MST  
 8 pm CST  
 9 pm EST

Big Book breakdown  
 Q&A/Sharing

*Boldly go where few Big Book Workshops can take you!*

THE KEYSTONE GROUP  
 presents

# AA BIG BOOK STEP STUDY

GOOD VIBES • FELLOWSHIP

## Thursdays

7PM PST/10PM EST/3AM UK

With Ray S 36 yrs  
 And Tony R 36 yrs

A step by step guides through  
 the steps of the program of recovery

**ZOOM ID: 648-865-8508**  
**NO PASSWORD NEEDED**

# "AANYTHING GOES" WORKSHOP OF AA

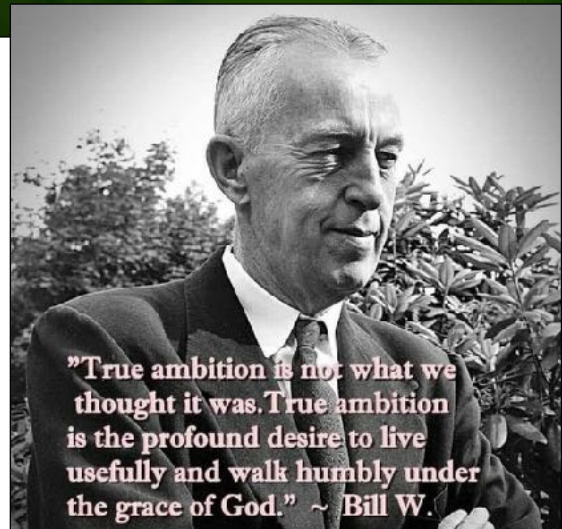
Occurs Weekly - EVERY THURSDAY  
 4:10 pm Pacific  
 7:10 pm Eastern

*Bring an open mind  
 and an open  
 big book  
 to follow*

## Thom R

*down the  
 rabbit hole*

Hosted by the 10:10 group  
 Zoom ID 911 097 244 No password







D Y J U Z F V S X S G R O W T H W Q Q A X Q I O  
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 B U B G Y T E I R B O S W H T I A F V K T J D F

HARD WORK POTENTIAL COURAGE SMART BEAUTIFUL

HONESTY FAITH BRAVE INSPIRE LAUGH PEACE JOY

HOPE ACCEPTANCE HAPPINESS CONTROL OBTAINABLE

SOBRIETY DISEASE REBIRTH SALVATION RENEWAL

GROWTH PROGRESS CHANGE RELAPSE GOD WORTHY

FIGHT RECOVERY CHALLENGING LIFE WILLING HUMBLE

GRATEFUL FOCUSED



# Get involved in Intergroup!

**Help Western Maryland Intergroup carry the A.A. message by becoming your home group's Intergroup representative! There are lots of ways to get involved:**

- If you have at least a year of sobriety, we need your help taking A.A. meetings into the Joseph S. Massie unit at the Finan Center. Intergroup brings a speaker into Massie twice a week — on Wednesdays and Saturdays at 8 p.m. If you would like to speak at Massie contact Les W., at 240-727-1921.
- We need volunteers for our hotline. During set hours, you would answer 12th-Step calls from your own phone and direct callers to local resources.
- Write an article for the newsletter! Submissions are welcome.
- Share your anniversary date with us so we can include it in the newsletter. Follow the prompts at [westernmarylandaa.org](http://westernmarylandaa.org)
- Help us plan and host workshops and activities for local A.A. groups.



**Intergroup meets at 6 p.m. the third Friday of each month. Our next meeting is Friday, April 18, at Emmanuel Episcopal Church, Find more information at [westernmarylandaa.org](http://westernmarylandaa.org).**

## April through June 2025 Group contributions Thank you!

<b>Chapel Hill</b>	\$100
<b>Coffee Club</b>	\$126
<b>Early Bird</b>	\$20
<b>Friendsville</b>	\$197
<b>Helping Hand</b>	\$50
<b>Mustard Seed</b>	\$100
<b>New Hope</b>	\$250
<b>Sick and Tire</b>	\$25
<b>Sunday Serenity</b>	\$100

