

First Things First

Newsletter of the Western Maryland Intergroup of Alcoholics Anonymous

End of an Era

Three Frostburg meetings close...A.A. carries on

Kristin B.

The inside of the car had a musty-basement smell as I pulled away from Frostburg Presbyterian Church that evening in June, the night we cleared out all the A.A. stuff.

It was warm, not hot, when we packed everything up from the storage cabinets and closets, the kitchen pantry, the small conference room upstairs.

Five or six large tubs filled with Big Books and 12 & 12s, some so well-worn they couldn't be salvaged, others crisp and new, hardly ever opened. Coffee pots. A pamphlet rack. The Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions banners that hung on the wall at every meeting.

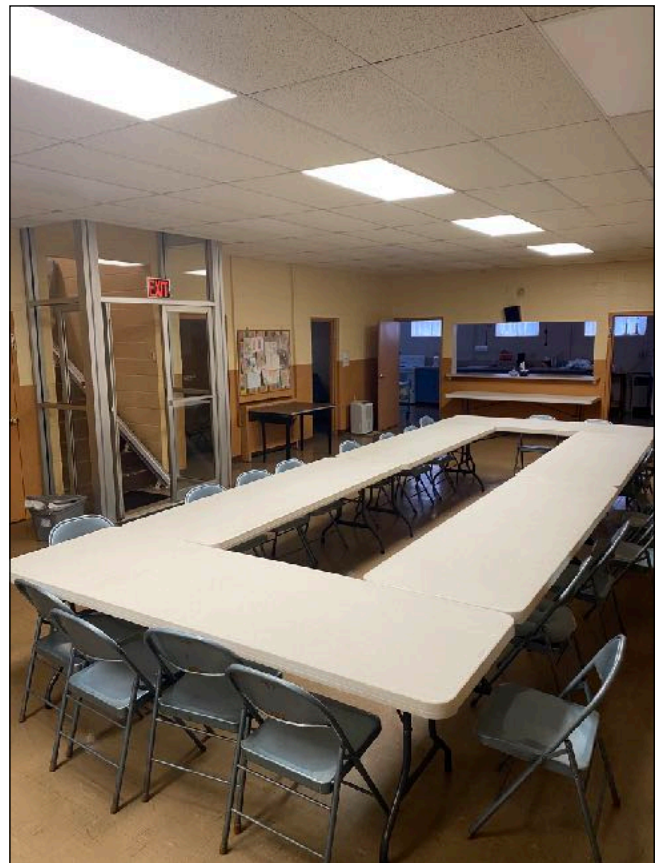
Jumbo cans of Maxwell House coffee and stale cookies in opened packages. Cremora, sugar, tea bags and napkins. Long sleeves of Styrofoam cups that kept one of the bins from closing.

The flotsam and jetsam of three long-time A.A. groups in Allegany County — the Frostburg Monday Night Group, Wednesday Kindred Spirits Women's Group, and Friday Serenity Group — which all closed in June after decades.

It had been a long time coming, with attendance dipping after COVID and never really recovering. The illnesses and deaths of several established members took some more of the wind from our sails. And a new meeting opened nearby that drew an enthusiastic crowd.

We kept the Wednesday and Friday groups — my two home groups — on life support for more than a year before pulling the plug. It wasn't easy, but it was clear: We needed to make the decision to end an era of A.A. history in Frostburg. It was time to let go.

I thought I should be sad, taking a last look that night in June. And it *was* a little melancholy, a feeling of leaving



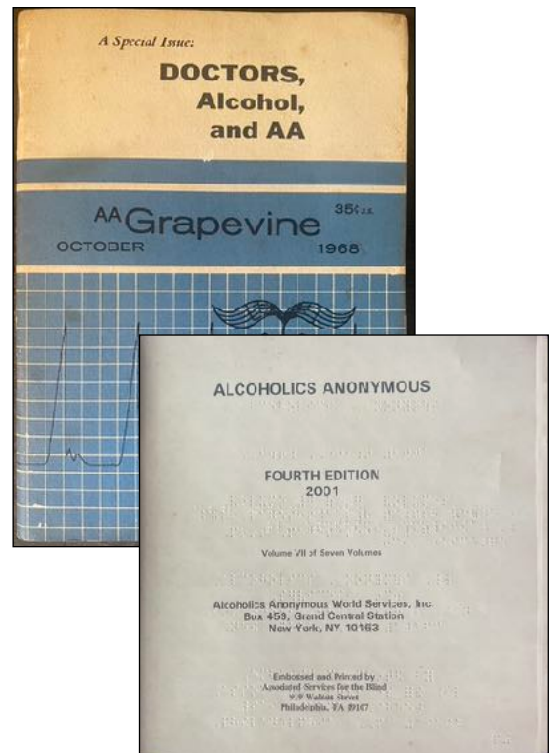
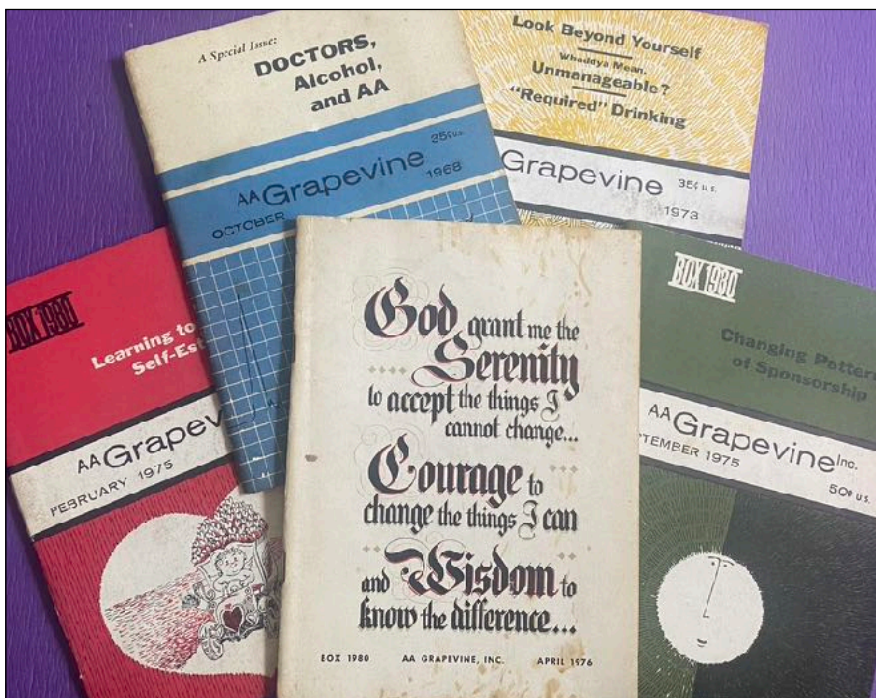
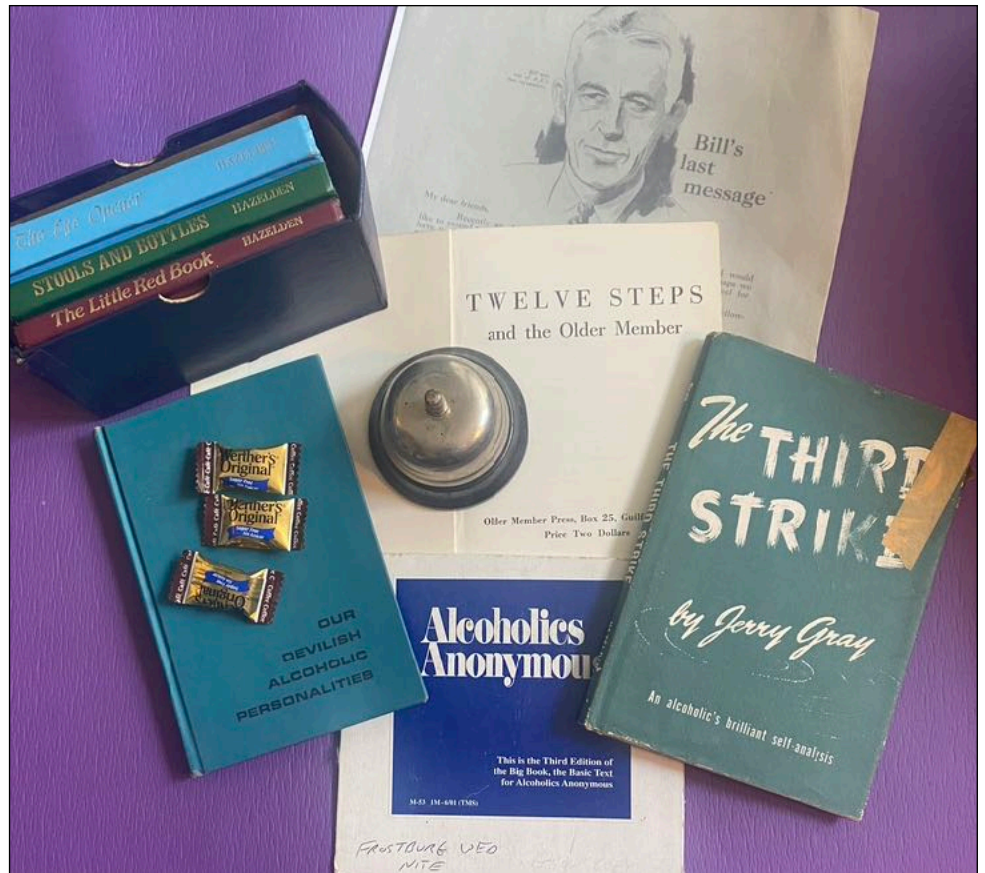
behind something that will be long and fondly remembered.

But mostly, I didn't feel sad. I felt grateful — deeply, buoyantly grateful for the 15 years of meetings I had attended there since moving to Frostburg in 2009. Full, lively meetings on Friday nights, with sometimes 40 or more people gathered around the tables. Intimate and meaningful book studies of up to a dozen at the women's

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Dusty bins at closed Frostburg meetings contain some cool stuff

Bins removed from storage at Frostburg Presbyterian Church after more than five decades contained some items of interest, including *Grapevines* dating back to 1968; out-of-print literature written by A.A. members and friends, the bell used by Monday and Friday Frostburg groups for many years, a seven-volume edition of the Big Book in Braille, and three Werther's toffee candies dating back to who knows when?





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meeting on Wednesday nights. The Monday night group, which is still mulling whether to reopen in the fall, is where I first felt a part of A.A. in Western Maryland. Transplanted to Frostburg with 15 years of sobriety, I had a stable program, but it took a while to let myself be part of the A.A. community here.

My sponsor suggested I take the coffee-maker position since I live so close by. Show up an hour early, she said. Greet people as they arrive. Look for someone who might be hurting more than you.

Anyone who's ever tried that knows how well it works.

All three meetings had long lives before I ever showed up. The women's group dates back more than 20 years; the Friday night meeting started at least 50 years ago, I'm told. Some of the dustier bins in storage contained *Grapevines* going back to 1968.

The church basement, with its attached kitchen, folding metal chairs and long tables, was perfect for an A.A. meeting. How many people have I heard over the years talk about "walking down those stairs" for the first time at Frostburg Presbyterian Church and finding a new life in A.A.?

Looking around at the empty room, I could almost hear some of the laughter that took place there over the years, could feel the hugs and handshakes. So many of us found recovery and freedom through the 12 Steps

there. We saw so many miracles during the days when those meetings thrived.

But sometimes, change is needed. Sometimes, well-established meetings have to close.

One of the *Grapevines* I found in the dustiest of the bins was from September 1992, the month and year that I got sober in Shreveport, La. I wasn't into *Grapevine* at the time, didn't know it existed, in fact. Too busy chain smoking and trying not to drink.

The theme of the issue was "A.A. around the World," and it included a story about a Saturday morning meeting in Papua, New Guinea, which usually took place in a "tiny room above the Lutheran Church administration building." Typically, around eight people showed up.

One Saturday, in pouring rain, the author, Colin C., arrived a little early. No one was there and the gate was locked. Figuring the opener would show up eventually, the guy sat in his car to wait, listening to a cassette tape of Clarence S., guest speaker at an A.A. convention in California, who talked about A.A.'s early history in Cleveland.

Eventually, as "blinding sheets of water hammered down," a regular named Noah arrived, so he got in the car too. In a little while, another regular named Pondros showed up, barefoot and wet after walking nine miles in the rain. He joined the other two in the car.

The three listened to the tape until it ended. "The time had gone too quickly, and the secretary had never come," the author wrote. "The rain pelted down. We said the Serenity Prayer, drove to a roadhouse, and had some coffee and a bite to eat. What a meeting it was!"

That story from more than 30 years ago illustrated what I already intuitively knew: An A.A. meeting is not a place. As long as two or three gather, with the common purpose of helping one another recover from alcoholism, a Higher Power joins, and miracles can happen.

I took one more look down the stairwell, locked the church door, and carried the last of the bins to my car. It was still light out at 7:30 p.m. when I pulled out of the church parking lot, with a deeper gratitude and appreciation for how A.A. works, and the promise of brighter days ahead.

“ An A.A. meeting is not a place. As long as two or three gather, with the common purpose of helping one another recover from alcoholism, a Higher Power joins, and miracles can happen.”



Conscious Contact

10th and 11th Step Workshop From the Big Book and the 12 & 12

Bring your Big Book and 12 & 12

Hosted by Awakening of the Spirt AA Homegroup
Supported by West Central Intergroup

Saturday August 10, 2024: 6-8pm
Fellowship, Coffee, and Snacks Beginning at 5:30pm

NorthStar Community Church
5112 Pegasus Court, Suite E
Frederick, MD 21704

Child Care Will Be Provided

Beginning Tuesday July 16th 6-8pm PT

An In-depth weekly look at the 12 Traditions

Lead by: Craig W. Of the Mighty Purpose & Rythum Grp.

Twelve Tradition Study

- 7/16 Tradition One
- 7/23 Tradition Two
- 7/30 Traditions Three
- 8/6 Tradition Four
- 8/13 Tradition Five
- 8/20 Tradition Six
- 8/27 Tradition Seven
- 9/3 Tradition Eight
- 9/10 Tradition Nine
- 9/17 Tradition Ten
- 9/24 Tradition Eleven
- 10/1 Tradition Twelve

Craig will be presenting each Tradition with plenty of time for questions and conversation. Start coming up with those hard questions surrounding the Traditions!!

Zoom ID: 869-0310-1724
Password: 164

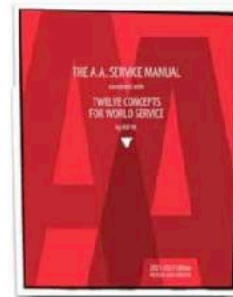


LEGACIES IN LITERATURE

The Literature Committee of District 6 in Area 15 Presents...

MONDAYS ~ 6/3/24 ~ 9/30/24 ~ 8:00 PM ET

THE A.A. SERVICE MANUAL



GENERAL SERVICE STRUCTURE WORKSHOP with Billy N., Palm Beach Gardens, FL

ID: 991-593-8471 PC: 615

District6AA.org

3RD LEGACY IN THE CONCEPTS

Summer '24 River Float

Hosted by Western Maryland Intergroup

Saturday, August 17
10 a.m. til around 2 p.m.

Meet at the toll bridge,
Springfield, W. Va.

Questions? Contact Kenny L. or email
westernmarylandaa@gmail.com

Grapevine Daily Quote

July 15, 2024

“For my sake, as well as the well-being of the women I sponsor, I stay within what I know. I tell them I’m not a mother, sister, favorite aunt, therapist, counselor, guru, spiritual advisor, AA authority, and sometimes not even a friend. I’m just another drunk who didn’t drink and didn’t die...”

“We’ve Got What You Need,”
Beaumont, Texas, February 1996, In
Our Own Words: Stories of Young AAs
in Recovery

Sign up to receive the
Grapevine Daily Quote via
email

Crapevine meeting.pdf

Visit the Sobriety Vineyard

Alcoholics and the AA Grapevine,
an AA Meeting

Tuesdays
@7:30 p.m. EDT
627 530 3589
514472

reading
Spiritual Awakenings -
Journeys of the Spirit

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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.



What happened at the meeting?

Western Maryland Intergroup, June 21, 2024 meeting minutes

Attendance

Jim, Wendall, Kristin B., Cody, Lora, Dan, Dick, Kenny

Call to Order at 6:17 pm

Adjourned at pm

Serenity Prayer

Traditions - Kenny

May minutes approved.

Treasurer: Farren

Starting balance: +2454.89

Friendsville donation +48.50

June Hotline (Dan) -36.78

Kristin CPC literature -38.06

Rent Liberty Club -12.00 +12.00

Supplies Kristin paper & drum -56.26

Ticket sales +2310.00

50/50 winnings +161.00

7th Tradition basket +197.00

Country Club Breakfast -1792.00

Tip for servers -400.00

Ending Balance: \$3286.01

Savings Acct: \$23.02

Reserve fund: \$2191.13

Institutions Chair: Les (Cody)

- Les did not attend.
- Lora and Cody are still going to ACDC.
- Les taking speakers into Massie.
- Farren talked to Allegany House about books. They wanted two meditation books.
- Motioned passed to buy the books

Activities Chair: Kenny

- Need to find a date in August for the float. Ron said he knows a great place to start.
- Needs help on finding a place to rent flotation devices.
- Cody talked to Kristin T about a friend who knows how to rent flotation devices and bring them to the start.
- Selected August 17, 2024 at 10 am.

Newsletter Chair: Kristin B.

- Handed out 50 June newsletters to Les and other people.
- July newsletter will be coming out soon. July 4th picnic for Fort Recovery's 30th anniversary.

- Inherited bins from a church that hosted AA meetings, includes a Braille Big Book Edition, Grapevines from 1968, and more.
- Kristin welcomes comments and suggestions.

Website Chairs: Erin and Wendell

- 144 visitors
- 239 sessions
- 484 page views

CPC Chair: Woody

- Woody did not attend.

Where & When Handouts Chair: Open

- Printed out 250 where and when handouts

Literature Chair: Les

- Les did not attend.
- Kristin B. offered to give needy institutions books leftover from some meetings that closed in Frostburg.

Hotline Chair: Dan

- Everything is going well.
- Missed calls from restricted numbers.
- Redo the list of volunteers for the hotline. Some people on the list don't answer their phones anymore. Going to recruit additional people.

Old Business

- Wendell has no updates on the Reflection House opening. He accepted some Big Books for the house.
- Remember to discuss what to do with our excess funds. Spend them in both Allegany and Garrett Counties.

New Business

- Delegate for Area 29 Terry P. Attends the general service conference and votes on issues. Attended the conference in April. Offered to meet with us and discuss how we can be more involved. Going to organize a "service workshop" for Terry to inform us on the topic.
- Now that many of the Frostburg meetings have closed. Where will intergroup meetings be held in two months? Farren, Kristin and Tina will contact the Presbyterian Church to sort it out.
- Do we need to lower the price for a ticket to the Gratitude Breakfast? Poll groups about what they want to do.

Next meeting: Aug. 16, 2024 at the Liberty Club, Oakland.

July and August anniversaries

Lawry E., Frostburg Friday, 7/29/1992

Randi B., Fort Cumberland, 7/29/2019

Bob R., New Hope, 8/7/1992

Woody, Friendsville Step Study, 8/14/1986

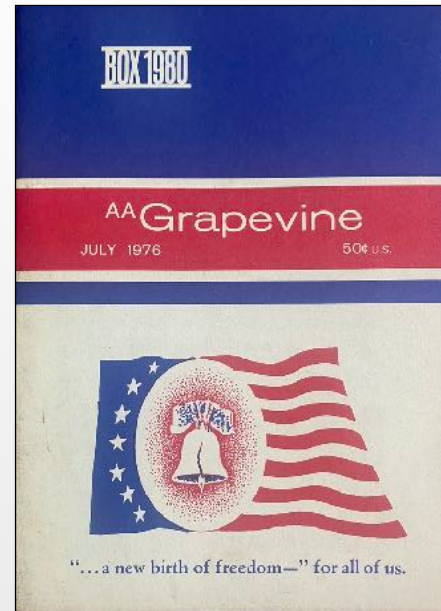
Christopher Z., 8/16/1987

Dan S., Up the Crick, 8/16/2020

Farren S., Unity Group, 8/19/2012

Fred M., Lake Group, 8/19/2012

Shane C., Ridgeley Renegades, 8/22/2008



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
- 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 August meeting is at the Liberty Club, 125 E. Liberty St., Oakland. Find more information at westernmarylandaa.org.

June contributions — thank you!

Friendsville Step Study: \$48.50