

First Things First

Newsletter of the Western Maryland Intergroup of Alcoholics Anonymous

Finding a home (group) in AA

Maybe it's the first meeting you ever attended, where someone greeted you warmly and made you feel at ease.

Maybe it's the meeting where you met your sponsor, where you can count on seeing each other every week.

Maybe it's the meeting that's closest to home -- or the one with the best cookies, the strongest coffee, the most comfortable chairs.

Whatever the reason, you've landed there, and you plan to keep coming back. You've found your AA home group.

"I have a home group for the sense of community, commitment, and support it provides," said Lawry E, who calls Frostburg's Friday Night Serenity Group home. "We care that that particular group exists, we care that the other members are in our lives, and we support them, while they, in turn, care about us."

Just like most everything in Alcoholics Anonymous, finding a

home group is merely a suggestion. But many alcoholics in recovery find it so important that it's been called "the heartbeat of AA."

In the September 1986 Grapevine, RB of Neosho, Mo., wrote that "just as surely as we are aware of, sensitive to, and in need of our own heartbeat, each of us needs

a home group. It all began in the home group, didn't it?...It's where we first find a sponsor, where someone first sees that we get a Big Book, where we first see the Steps on the wall, where we learn again to pray, and where we first begin to recover."

Carol C, whose home group is Cumberland's HOW group at 11 a.m. Tuesdays, said committing to a home group helps keep her accountable.

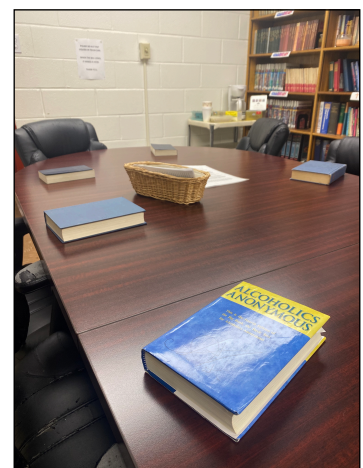
"First, I belong there," she said. "The other members know I'll be there, have gotten to know me, and will often check in on me if I'm absent. I know the other members, as well, and so there is more of a

continued on p. 2

"These people are my AA family, and I look forward to being with them every week."
—Carol C



Fort Cumberland meetings are Tuesday and Friday nights at 8 p.m. at Emmanuel Episcopal Church in Cumberland (top). The Kindred Spirits women's group meets at 6:30 p.m. Wednesdays at Frostburg Presbyterian Church (below).



social connection than just going to a meeting and seeing other familiar faces. These people are my AA family, and I look forward to being with them every week.”

Becoming a home group member is as simple as putting your name on a roster and showing up regularly. You might even get a service position – such as coffee maker, greeter, secretary, treasurer, Intergroup rep, or General Service Representative (GSR).

The HOW group, which is restructuring after losing many active members due to age-related limitations, death, or relocation, hopes to have an Intergroup rep and GSR by summer, Carol C said.

“Service positions are essential for keeping a group alive and vital to the AA community,” she said.

Grayson S, who moved to Minnesota last year after graduating from Frostburg State University, had to search a bit before finding a favorite group in his new hometown.

“I had one early on up here, but my personal life made it difficult to commit to it,” Grayson said. “I just found an awesome new home group that fits my schedule perfectly. And they had the

need for a GSR, so I grabbed it! I love the group and their brand of AA sobriety.”

Sheila C’s home group is the Mustard Seed at Liberty Club in Oakland, which has a GSR and Intergroup rep. She recommends that newcomers commit to a home group early in sobriety.

“Finding a group where you feel comfortable

is how you find a home group,” she said. “Identifying someone whose sharing you respond to is how you find a sponsor.”

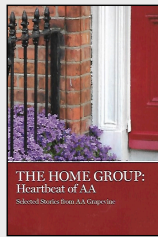
At Mustard Seed, home group members “know one another well, even if we don’t know last names,”

Sheila said. “Sharing our experience, strength and hope, we heal together and nurture one another.”

Frostburg’s Friday Night Serenity group has become like family for Lawry E.

“Many members of my group are my closest friends,” he said. “We communicate often and socialize outside of the rooms. These friends know what is going on in my life and care and support me when I am going through difficult situations. They teach and guide me through their words and actions, and hopefully, I am able to do the same for them.”

Check it out



Grapevine stories about the home group.

<https://www.aagrapevine.org/store/>

books

<https://www.aagrapevine.org/archive>

Home group checklist:

- Have you chosen a home group?
- Have you found a service position?
- Is your home group registered with Maryland General Service?
<https://www.marylandaa.org>
- Is your home group registered with AA’s General Service Office?
aa.org
- Does your home group have an Intergroup representative?
www.westernmarylandaa.org

General Service Representative

*What does a GSR do?
How can you help your home group and the still suffering Alcoholic?*

Join us for a Zoom
GSR Discussion /
Q&A

2nd Saturday of each month, 10 am
Meeting ID: 818 6222 7157
No PW
+ Special guests

Hosted by Area 29



Today I'm grateful...

– for my peace of mind.

– to be able to see and hear.

–for my pillow/bed.

–Randi B

–for the ability to take care of my holistic health and to make my health a priority.

–for health insurance, access to great medical care and for competent, caring medical professionals.

– Grayson S

–for baby bulbs blooming.

–for a winter sunset.

–for the sweet adolescent cat that is trying to adopt us by hanging out on the front porch.

–Kristin B



Send gratitudes to *First Things First* at westernmarylandaa@gmail.com.

News from AA's General Service Office

Literature prices to increase

Starting April 3, it will cost a little more to buy a Big Book and other AA literature. GSO is implementing an estimated 20 percent price increase for books; pamphlets will cost around 30 percent more. The last price increases took place in 2014.

Meeting Guide app available

Alcoholics Anonymous GSO continues to improve its free app for iOS and Android smartphones to help people find AA meetings and resources. More than 100,000 weekly meetings are listed, including those in Western Maryland. The app is refreshed twice daily by GSO. The app also features a daily quote from the *Daily Reflections*, as well as the latest news from GSO and *Grapevine*.



New 'jacketless' Big Book for sale

Recent and ongoing supply chain issues prompted the publishing department at GSO to explore finding ways to reduce production time on materials. Their solution: The jacketless Big Book, priced at \$9.50, soon to be followed by a jacketless *Twelve and Twelve*. For more information, go to onlineliterature.aa.org.

GSO open for visitors

The General Service Office in New York City has reopened to visitors. Guests are invited to visit between 9 a.m. and 3 p.m. Monday through Friday.

For more information and to schedule your visit, email gstours@aa.org or call 212-870-3430. In accordance with building policy, all visitors must register in advance to gain access to the building.

The GSO is located at 475 Riverside Drive, New York, NY.

AA Slogans: “Keep It Simple”

What Does It Mean to You?

When I first came into the program, three or four days sober, my mind was continuously racing. I was terrified that my entire life was going to come crashing down around me and I anticipated that I would lose everything. The phrase “Keep it Simple” helped me to slow down the runaway thoughts and just STOP.

Now that a number of 24 hours have passed, I can still go off the beam, with racing thoughts, when stressed out (mainly by family issues). By attempting to ‘keep it simple’ I can ease my anxious stress and evaluate exactly WHAT is getting me wrapped up in mental chaos.

Usually it’s ego as certain people aren't acting the way I think that they should. By keeping it simple I am reminded to stay on my side of the sidewalk of life and, as John B. would remind me, let them all whirl. As a sober alcoholic, I can complicate the heck out of anything. “Keeping it Simple” allows me to break down my issues and determine exactly what parts of whatever ‘it’ is are my business. Typically, I find that when I break down an issue, much of it is none of my business.



—Tina B

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

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



WESTERN MARYLAND
INTERGROUP

34TH ANNUAL
GRATITUDE
BREAKFAST

Saturday April 22, 2023
8 am - ?

Speaker: Ryan
Baltimore MD

See any Intergroup Rep to
purchase ticket or email
westernmarylandaa@gmail.com

CUMBERLAND COUNTRY CLUB
10200 COUNTRY CLUB RD NE,
CUMBERLAND, MD 21502

SAVE
THE
DATE

What is the Western Maryland Intergroup?

The primary purpose of the Western Maryland Intergroup is to assist the Alcoholics Anonymous groups of Allegany and Garrett counties, and Ridgeley, W. Va., carry the message to the still-suffering alcoholic. As a courtesy, our Where-n-Whens include meetings in Salisbury, Pa., and various locations in West Virginia. Western Maryland Intergroup is responsible for the phone lines, the Where-n-When and newsletter publications, institutional 12th-step work, the website, the annual Gratitude Breakfast, and more, so that AA members and their families can hear the message of recovery.

We Need You!

Every AA group in the area is entitled to elect a representative to Intergroup. Intergroup representatives attend monthly meetings, contributing ideas and skills, and help to form the collective group conscience for AA in the area.

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, March 17.** at Emmanuel Episcopal Church, 16 Washington St., Cumberland.

What happened at the meeting?

Western Maryland Intergroup, Feb. 17, 2023 meeting minutes

Chair: Cody B.

Co-Chair: Les W.

Secretary: Lora B.

Treasurer: Farren S.

Attendance

Woody, Lee, Cody, Dan, Kristin T, Lora, Les, Kristin B, Wendell, Farren

Call to Order at 6:15 adjourned 7:07

Serenity Prayer

Traditions

Minutes approved

Treasurer

Starting balance \$2267.37

paper statement \$2.00

NYE 50/50 \$85.00

Rent for Cumberland -\$8.00 (Jan)

Rent for Cumberland -\$8.00 (Feb)

PO Box renewal -\$194.00

Dan B. hotline reimbursement -\$183.90

Group contributions:

Friendsville Step \$33.00

Lake Group \$100.00

Frostburg Friday \$37.00

NYTE security deposit returned \$100.00

Reserve and savings stayed the same \$2237.47

Treasurer's report approved.

Institutions

Jails and Massie

Les has people to speak at Massie until the end of March.

Lora said jail is going well.

Activities

Open mic night is next week—the fourth Saturday.

Newsletter

Kristin B got the newsletter out. Thanked Dan and Wendell for reviewing the newsletter before printing. Submitted Lee's piece to the Grapevine.

Suggested printing out copies of newsletter and distributing to meetings and Massie to show everyone that there is a working AA community waiting to help them when they get out. Discussion to give the printer to Kristin for printing the newsletter and the where and when handouts. Kristin T will tell Ed to bring the printer with him to give to Kristin B next week. Discussed creating a word jumble, cross word puzzle, etc for the newsletter. Asked if Massie had a Grapevine subscription.

Website

Kristin T updated the website. Can also change the where and when to fix meetings in the meeting guide.

CPC

Woody gave a stack of where and when handouts to a teacher. She works at SCI in Morgantown. Massie needs where and when handouts. Garrett County Detention Center needs where and when handouts.

Where & When handouts

Kristin T needs to adjust where and when handouts. Kristin will send a digital copy to Woody. Sisters in Sobriety has moved to St. Anthony's for the winter. New Hope is meeting at Fort Recovery for the time being. Changes will be added to where and when handouts and Meeting Guide. Kristin showed the new formatting for the where and when handouts to those who hadn't seen it.

Literature

No requests for books. Working on the new format where and when handouts. Dan wants to get new books for New Hope.

Hotline

January we had four calls. February has had five calls so far. Lora was mocked by a caller for saying "rural" incorrectly.

Old Business

Farren brought fliers for the Gratitude Breakfast.

New Business

Forgot to pay the bill at the Post Office for the PO Box for the year. Farren went to the post office. Opened a new account, kept same number, and filled out a new form. All the mail was still there. The bill has now been paid up until January 2024.

Gratitude breakfast

April 22, 2023 at 8 AM at Cumberland Country Club. Speaker is from Baltimore. This is a to do list:

- Have a speaker
- Need an agenda
- Les will MC.
- Need a count before the breakfast of potential crowd
- Buy unique books for donations: Emotional Sobriety and Voices of Women in AA, etc.
- Get info out to each group, and ask newcomers in their group who would be willing to do a job.

- Put newcomers' (from groups) name in a hat and draw names for jobs before the breakfast starts.
- Dove release - Investigate cost for dove release
- Sobriety countdown
- 50/50
- Book raffle
- 12 steps
- 12 traditions
- Conclusion

Get a unified message to send to the groups to gather group information, such as contact information, etc.

Dan will create a group form for hotline to collect data. Kristin and Dan will collect and hand out information at the breakfast.

Our next meeting will be March 17, 2023.



Area 29
Maryland
State
Convention

*Without Unity, the Heart of AA
would cease to beat...*
*Sin Unidad, el Corazón de AA
dejaría de latir...*

51st Annual Area 29

Maryland State Convention

August 4-6, 2023

*Hosted by Maryland General Service, Inc. with
Al-Anon Participation*

Held at the Delta Hotel by Marriott—Hunt Valley
245 Shawan Road, Hunt Valley, MD 21031

Spanish & ASL Interpretation will be provided
with additional accommodations for the hard of hearing.

AA Speakers	Friday, August 4th	Saturday, August 5th
Amalia C.—Farmington, CT <i>(Friday, 1 pm)</i>	7:00 am Registration Opens	7:00 am Registration Opens
Stephanie L.—Eastampton, NJ <i>(Friday, 4 pm)</i>	8:15 am Prayer and Meditation	8:15 am Prayer and Meditation
Barclay R.—Nashville, TN <i>(Friday, 7:30 pm)</i>	10:00 am Workshops	9:00 am AA Speaker Meeting
Greg T.—South Deerfield, MA <i>(Saturday, 9 am)</i>	11:30 am Lunch on your own	10:30 am Al-Anon Speaker Meeting
Jimmy A.—Spring Lake Heights, NJ <i>(Saturday, 7:30 pm)</i>	11:30 am Workshops/Delegate Report	12:00 pm Lunch A La Carte
Sara V.—Frederick, MD <i>(Sunday, 10 am)</i>	1:00 pm AA Speaker Meeting	1:00 pm Old Timers Panel
Al-Anon Speaker Katie C.—Frederick, MD <i>(Saturday, 10:30 am)</i>	2:30 pm Workshops	2:30 pm Workshops
Open AA and Al-Anon Meetings at intervals each day	4:00 pm AA Speaker Meeting	4:00 pm Delegate Report
Evening Activities Ice Cream Socials (\$5 each night) Live Music and Talent Show	6:00 pm Dinner on your own	5:30 pm Dinner Banquet
	7:30 pm AA Speaker Meeting	7:00 pm Meet Area 29 Officers and Sobriety Countdown
	9:00 pm Ice Cream Social with Live Music	7:30 pm AA Speaker Meeting
	10:00 pm AA History Presentation: Founding Moments	9:00 pm Ice Cream Social/Live Music
	Pre-Registration Gift! Limit 600 See Back	10:00 pm Recovery Talent Show
		Sunday, August 6th
		9:15 am Prayer and Meditation
		10:00 am AA Speaker Meeting

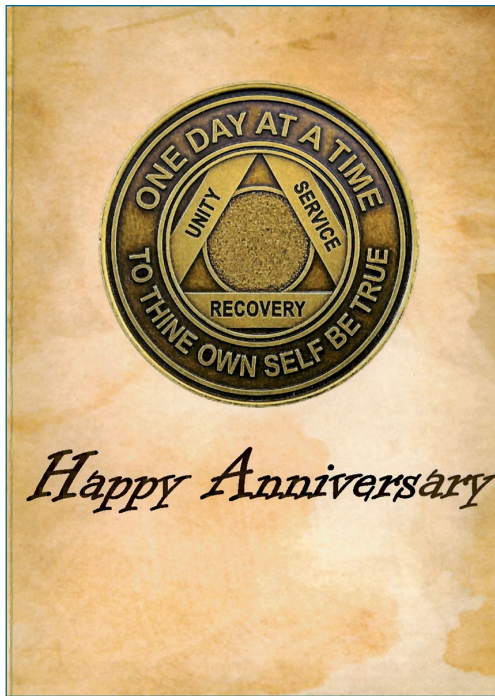
Convention Hotel Room Rate: \$124/per night + tax
Hotel reservations **must be made by Sunday, July 9, 2023**
For hotel reservations, call 844-781-7404
(Code: MGS 2023 State Convention)
For online hotel reservations click on—
[Book your group rate for MGS 2023 State Convention](https://www.marriott.com/event-reservations/reservation-link.mi?id=1666295673654&key=GRP&app=resvlink)
<https://www.marriott.com/event-reservations/reservation-link.mi?id=1666295673654&key=GRP&app=resvlink>

or scan



Online registration is open for the 51st annual Maryland State Convention.
<https://www.marylandaa.org/state-convention-3/shop>

March anniversaries



- Jim D, Grantsville Helping Hands, 3/1/2013
- Royce I, Mustard Seed, 3/3/1983
- Loretta, Mustard Seed, 3/3/2009
- Sheila C, Mustard Seed, 3/8/1993
- Kristin T, Sunday Night Step, 3/12/2016
- Wendell F, Mustard Seed, 3/13/1986
- Flora B, Ridgeley Renegades, 3/16/2016
- Carol C, HOW, 3/18/2020
- Erin B, Sunday Night Step, 3/20/2012
- Randy B, New Hope, 3/26/1984

To include your anniversary in *First Things First*, email westernmarylandaa@gmail.com, or enter your information on the website, www.westernmarylandaa.org.

AA History: Do you know?

- Where did AA first start?
- What year was the Big Book first published?
- How often do international conventions take place?
- What are the names of the AA cofounders?

Quiz answers: Akron, Ohio, 1939; Bill W and Dr. Bob every five years;



March challenge:

Say “rural” five times fast. (See page 6).

I am responsible....

“Whenever anyone, anywhere reaches out for help, I want the hand of AA to always be there. And for that: I am responsible.”