

First Things First

Newsletter of the Western Maryland Intergroup of Alcoholics Anonymous

Today I'm grateful....

–That my bad decisions in the past and life struggles give me lessons that I can share with others and help them along the way.

$-Lisa\ T$

–For words like *Zamboni* that make me giggle.

–For lavender: the flower, the color, the scent.

–For learning how to pray when I came into the rooms: “Thy Will....”

–Sommer S

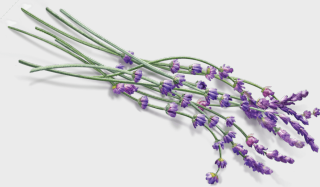
–For the job that I have and having the ability and means of being able to help others see that there is a way out of addiction and into recovery.

–For my health and family as well as all the friends that I have met in my life's journey.

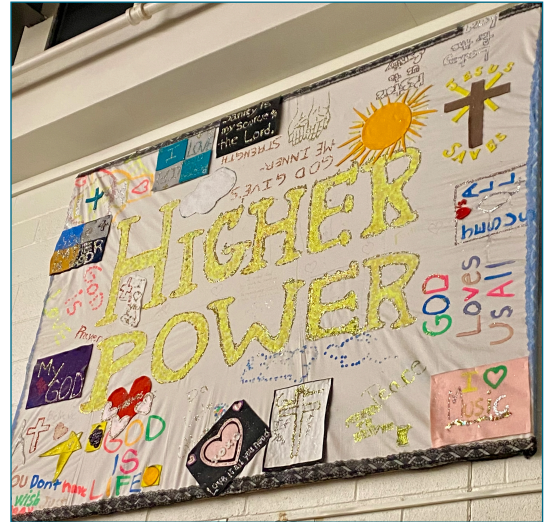
–Jim M

–For the meeting last night to remind me of powerlessness and the Serenity Prayer. And how important it is to get my butt to a meeting.

–Molly D



*Want a chance to include your gratitude in First Things First?
Send your thoughts to westernmarylandaa@gmail.com*



A hand-made quilt hangs inside the Massie unit in Cumberland.

Intergroup takes twice-weekly meeting to Massie

On a frigid Saturday night in January, Jamie B and Meghan D drove an hour from Hedgesville, W.Va., to share a message of recovery with addicts and alcoholics in treatment at the Joseph S. Massie unit in Cumberland.

They did it because they know what it's like to be in treatment, and they know what it's like to need a meeting of Alcoholics Anonymous. Meghan herself completed a 60-day stint at a Baltimore treatment center less than a year ago.

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In the months since then, she's managed to stay sober by following a few simple suggestions, she said. She went to 90 meetings in 90 days. She got a sponsor.

"It sounds corny, but I do it one day at a time," said Meghan, who spoke for about 10 minutes to a group

of around 25 Massie inpatients. Settled into cozy couches in one of Massie's rec rooms, they listened intently, soaking up experience, strength and hope from someone who has been where they are — someone who is now where they'd like to be.

The hour-long AA meeting is one of two that takes place weekly at Massie, courtesy of the Western Maryland Intergroup.

Les W, chair of the Institutions Committee for WMI, has been lining up speakers for the meetings for about seven years. AA Intergroups around the world are tasked with bringing meetings into treatment centers, jails, and prisons to help suffering alcoholics.

Western Maryland Intergroup is always looking for sober AA members to share their stories at the Cumberland Health Department's Joseph S. Massie Unit.

Intergroup speakers lead AA meetings at 8 p.m. on Wednesdays and Saturdays at Massie.

To volunteer, email Western Maryland Intergroup at www.westernmarylandaa.org, or contact Les W., who coordinates speakers.

The Massie meetings take place at 8 p.m. Wednesdays and Saturdays. All inpatients are required to attend.

"Helping them helps me," said Les, who finds many speakers locally, but also travels regionally to seek volunteers. "I could be sitting in my lounge chair, kicked back, watching television. That's not going to keep me sober."

Massie provides short-term residential care for people struggling with alcohol or chemical dependencies, as well as mental health disorders.

Jamie B., who first got clean and sober in the 1980s, said relapse has been part of his story — more than once.

"Relapse has never catapulted me forward," said Jamie, who spoke for about 40 minutes. "They always ended in catastrophe."

A group of Massie residents gathered around the two speakers after the Jan. 28 meeting, offering thanks and appreciation.

"It seems like every story I hear helps me a little more," one resident said. "It means a lot to me."

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.



AA Slogans: “Live and Let Live”

What Does It Mean to You?

Live and Let Live is the second “little motto” which the Big Book offers us. I've found it useful to remind me to let others live their lives. I firmly believe that my own life would be easier if other people would just act right, but they don't. People have their own needs and ways of expressing themselves, and when they come into conflict with what I want or think I deserve, I can respond badly. I can be angry, controlling or manipulative. My serenity can be badly damaged, unless I realize that it is my own reaction which is upsetting me and take steps to become centered again. Inventory and prayer may help with that, or simple deep breathing.

It's important that I remember to “LIVE!” I have heard that our fellowship is a “bridge back to life.” I'm now able to enjoy activities ranging from simple moments spent on a walk or bike ride, petting a cat, or listening to music to more elaborate projects and hobbies. All of these are ways for me to focus on things I love about my sober life and take my energies away from worrying about what others are doing. It becomes easy for me to let others live when I am busy — living!

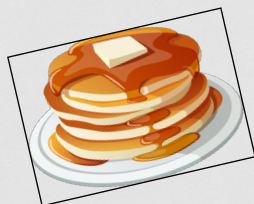
The Big Book says on page 135: “We have three little mottoes which are apropos. Here they are:

*First Things First
Live and Let Live
Easy Does It.*

—Wendell F



Get Ready to Give Thanks!



34th Annual Gratitude Breakfast

Saturday, April 22, 2023

Speaker: Ryan, Baltimore, MD

8:00 AM-?

Cumberland Country Club



Tickets are \$20 and will be available from Intergroup reps at various meetings around town.

‘Don’t Give Up Five Minutes Before the Miracle Happens,’ they said.

For this alcoholic, five minutes felt like forever. Then he realized his HP had perfect timing.

By Lee B

When I first started coming around the rooms during the beginning of the summer of 2020, I heard a lot of AA sayings. One that people started to say to me a lot as I stumbled in and out was “Don’t leave five minutes before the miracle happens.” This one frustrated me very much because, although I did keep trying, that summer quickly turned into fall, then that fall to spring and, eventually, I was checking into yet another inpatient rehab two years later.

“Don’t leave five minutes before the miracle happens.”

On the outside, I would nod in agreement and vow that I would get it right each time. On the inside, I would explode. “Five minutes?! I know that they don’t literally mean five minutes, but it’s been two years!”

One of the only things that I did right during that time of stumbling in and out of the rooms, back and forth from rehab, PHP houses and sober livings and then back to rehab to restart the cycle again, was that I kept showing up. Then I hit yet another bottom — hard. After a rapid succession of events, I found myself facing living outside again. I knew that it was unavoidable and after my most recent experience with it, I was terrified.

I was alone and full of fear, pain and hopelessness. I still had a bit to drink left and some dry goods in my pocket. As reality began to really hit, without any conscious thought, I disposed of everything I had left. I turned and headed towards the woods.

I’ve been sober ever since.

That stands out to me as one of the miracles. I wish that I could pick just one moment that was “the miracle” but, for me, I don’t think that it happened all at once.

I spent the first three months of my sobriety living alone in the woods. I had no obligations — no paper to sign, nowhere that I had to show up



to to keep me accountable and no one that would be there to make sure I was doing the right things or not picking up.

I ended up attending more meetings, doing more service, more step work and more growing during those three months than I ever had before. I went through things during that time that I didn’t know I could get through sober. I was robbed three times, lost even more friends to this disease, became physically ill several times, endured a lot of additional physical pain and experienced other mental and emotional rock bottoms.

At one point I realized that I had a thousand excuses to pick up. Then I had another realization — I may have a thousand excuses, but there wasn’t a single reason to. There never was and there never will be.

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I know without a doubt that I wouldn't have made it this far if I didn't finally, truly surrender and become willing to do what had been being suggested to me for over two years.

You see, that's the tricky part about that saying — those “five minutes” weren't my five minutes. They were my higher power's five minutes. And that miracle wasn't just one miracle. It was an accumulation of miracles that happened over time.

For me, those miracles came in the form of overcoming intense hardships and pain with the help of the fellowship and my higher power. Every time I thought that I was being “tested” was just an opportunity for growth and a chance to practice being the person that I claimed that I wanted to be. Every day that I not only got

through sober, but got through practicing being a better person, things became more clear.

The miracles also came in the form of laughing with friends and offering my love and support to others even though I knew that, at the end of every day, I had to walk back out into the woods.

The miracles were everywhere in every day. I think that they were always there. So, truthfully, I think that one of the biggest ones is that I can finally see the miracles and acknowledge them for what they are.

I may not be where I would like to be yet (or even close) but, for the first time in my entire life, I know for sure that I am headed in the right direction and that more will be revealed, and that is a miracle.

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. In all its activities, policies and proceedings, Intergroup observes the practice and spirit of AA's Twelve Traditions and Twelve concepts for World Service, as well as its three legacies of Recovery, Unity and Service.

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

Come check it out and let your AA group's voice be part of the conversation. Need more information? Email us at westernmarylandaa@gmail.com, or ask your sponsor!

What happened at the meeting?

Western Maryland Intergroup, Jan. 20, 2023 meeting minutes

Chair: Cody B.

Co-Chair: Les W.

Secretary: Lora B.

Treasurer: Farren S.

Attendance

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

Call to Order at 6:07 adjourned 6:50

Serenity Prayer

Traditions

Minutes approved

Treasurer

Starting balance \$2088.37

Paper statement \$1.00

Rent for Frostburg church \$10.00

Presbyterian church -\$125.00

Contributions: HOW Group \$100.00

Sick n Tired \$200.00

Reserve and savings stayed the same \$2187.98

Institutions

Les said everything is going well with jails and Massie. He has speakers covered until the middle of February. Neither the House nor Massie have asked for any books.

Activities

New Year's was a great time. People from Romney stayed for the meeting after the party.

Open mic night is next week-the fourth Saturday.

Newsletter

Kristin asked for feedback on the December and January newsletters. She would like to have a

committee to suggest and review articles. Dan and Wendell volunteered to review the newsletter via email.

Kristin also suggested we get the anniversary list going again. Anyone who wants their anniversary in the newsletter can submit it to the email address, or submit it in the Anniversaries tab on the website. It would be nice to announce in groups to see if anyone is interested.

Website

Ed has been juggling things since he started splitting time between here and VA. He didn't get a chance to update the website or where and when handouts.

CPC

Woody needs where and when handouts. Wendell is going to print them and give them to him tomorrow.

Where & When handouts

Ed will take care of the where and when handouts. He offered to set up a brochure, and send it to us for review. The group said to bring them when he comes on the 29th.

Fort Recovery (John L) is considering selling literature. This will be good for groups that don't have their own literature to sell.

Literature

Nothing outstanding

Hotline

Dan said the hotline is going well. Only got two calls in Dec. Up to four calls already in Jan. Hotline is paid up through February.

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Old Business

There will be a district committee meeting on February 4, 2023 at 3 PM. This is the path toward getting District 17 going again.

New Business

Farren set up mobile access to the Intergroup bank account, so everyone can check the Intergroup's bank balance at any time. She also got an ATM card for the account. Any new treasurer must get a new card, and the outgoing treasurer must cut their card up.

Farren brought up making a reservation for the gratitude breakfast. She asked Kristin to be the lead for organizing the breakfast. Kristin asked for a restart of the committee to organize the breakfast. She said she will accept/reject the position next Intergroup meeting. She recommended that the committee meet before the next Intergroup meeting. Farren will make the reservation with the Country Club in April on a Saturday, but not on the 8th.

Our next meeting will be Feb. 17, 2023.

Make a note

—Oakland's **Mustard Seed Group** has added a new meeting at noon on Fridays, at 125 E. Liberty St. The Mustard Seed Group now has four meetings: at noon on Wednesdays and Fridays, and 10 a.m. on Saturdays and Sundays.

—The **District 17 Committee**, which has not met in some time, has a Zoom meeting set for 3 p.m., Saturday, Feb. 4. General Service representatives of AA groups in Allegany and Garrett counties are invited to attend. Zoom ID is 408 404 1990. Password is 12+12.

Plans are to elect officers, set a meeting schedule, and determine how to provide services benefitting AA groups in the region. For more information, contact Wendell F at 410-929-2440.

12TH ANNUAL SOUTHERN MARYLAND ROUND-UP

May 5-7, 2023

Hollywood Volunteer Fire Department
Hollywood, Maryland

SERVICE IS THE SECRET



SPEAKERS:

Christina G. Brecksville, OH Jane L. Tallahassee, FL
Karl M. Covina, CA Edith P. Omaha, NE
Les B. North Port, FL Marty C. Hamilton, ONT
Mike F. Aurora, CO Hosea M. Washington, DC

-PRICING-

Early registration fee of \$35 per person includes all Workshops, Speakers, and Fellowship for the three day program. Tickets for Banquet Dinner (\$30) sold separately.

Starting April 1st, the registration fee is \$40
Register online at:
www.southernmarylandroundup.org

Register by mail by May 1st. Make check or money order payable to:
Southern Maryland Round Up
Mail to: P.O. Box 427, Dunkirk, Md 20754

After May 1st, check the website for registration availability.
All registrations FINAL. No refunds - pass it on to a friend of Bill's if unable to attend.

Outstanding Speakers!
Fellowship!
AA & Al-Anon Workshops & Meetings!
Sobriety Countdown!
Hospitality Corner!
On-site Recovery Store! T-shirts!
AND MORE!

2023 SERVICE IS THE SECRET

For conference and lodging information, please visit
www.southernmarylandroundup.org
or email: info@somdroundup.com

12TH ANNUAL SOUTHERN MARYLAND ROUND-UP

Name: _____
Address: _____
City: _____
State: _____ Zip Code: _____
Email: _____
Phone: _____

Special Needs: Yes No
Describe: _____
Registration: \$ _____
Banquet: \$ _____
Hospitality Donation: \$ _____
Lend a hand to those unable to pay the Registration Fee: \$ _____
TOTAL: \$ _____

February anniversaries



- Paddy C, Mustard Seed, Oakland, 2/1/2009
- Jim Murray, Recovery 101, 2/6/2016
- Jerry P, Grantsville Helping Hands, 2/07/2015
- Nick Hepp, Oakland Serenity, 2/10/2018
- Holly C, HOW Group, 2/20/2014
- Jay C, Fort Cumberland, 2/15/1990

To include your anniversary in *First Things First*, email westernmarylandaa@gmail.com, or enter your information on the website, <https://westernmarylandaa.wixsite.com/website>

'Zamboni' (zam-boh-nee)

- Trademark
- Invented by Frank Zamboni in 1947
- A machine that smooths the surface of ice in a rink
- See page 1



Photo courtesy the Zamboni Co.

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.”