

First Things First

Newsletter of the Western Maryland Intergroup of Alcoholics Anonymous

Workshop creates ‘positive energy’ for A.A. in Western Maryland



Sponsorship, the home group, and service in Alcoholics Anonymous were key topics last month during a two-hour workshop hosted by Western Maryland Intergroup.

Around 30 A.A. members attended the Sept. 9th event, called “A.A. Basics.”

Six panelists answered specific questions formed from readings in three A.A. pamphlets – *Questions &*

Answers about Sponsorship, The A.A. Group, and Experience Has Taught Us: An Introduction to Our Twelve Traditions.

Sitting at six different round tables, elbow-to-elbow with audience members in the basement of St. Patrick Church in Cumberland, each panelist shared for up to three minutes per question. At intervals, audience members were invited to share their thoughts, as well.

One question was, “Has the principle of Tradition 7 – self-support instead of asking for a hand-out – helped you grow as a sober individual?”

Another was about finding a sponsor: “It can be really difficult for newcomers to ask someone to be their sponsor. How was it suggested to you to choose the right person?”

Midway through, everyone took a break for food – a feast

of nuggets from Chic-Fil-A, fruit and vegetable trays, cookies, iced tea, lemonade, and coffee.

“This was my first workshop, and it was great!” said one A.A., who traveled from Bedford to attend. “I learned so much.”

Everyone received a packet including a

program, each or the pamphlets, and a bookmark featuring the 12 Steps and 12 Traditions, The Promises, the 3rd and 7th Step prayers, or other familiar A.A. literature.

Before the workshop closed with the Lord’s Prayer, some were already wanting more: “We need more events like this,” one audience member said.

“I was really impressed by it,” said another. “To me, it was very well-organized. It just flowed. It was just a real positive energy.”

“We need more events like this.”

—Workshop attendee

'Sick and Tire' Group discusses *As Bill Sees It*

By Carol C.

The "Sick and Tire" meeting is held Tuesday evening beginning at 7 p.m. at Smitty's Tire Shop, 101 Industrial Park, in Frostburg. This discussion meeting revolves around a reading from A.A. approved literature. At present, the book in use is *As Bill Sees It*.

When you arrive, you will take one step up into the "office." The meeting is held in the adjacent room, which is lined with stacks of tires and an abundant number of comfortable seats. The fridge is stocked with cold water, the coffee is K-cup, and there are cookies. There is also an adorable little dog named Toto.

About 14 A.A.s were in attendance and the comments were remarkably unguarded.

There was a lot of love in this house, and the openness of the regulars quickly disseminated any pretense of defensiveness. This evening the topic of discussion was friendship and love, as directed in the table of contents. In general, the thread weaving the room together was empathy, self-love, forgiveness and acceptance.

A young woman stated, "I have a new vision of what a friend is. A.A.s don't care what I did in the past or even what I can contribute now. They accept me just as I am. Remarkable!"

Another attendee shared, "When I left the military, the thing I missed most was the camaraderie – the brotherhood. I never felt it drinking. I never felt it again until I came to A.A."



Roving Recovery

Tell us about a meeting you attend – either regularly, or as an out-of-town guest – for our "Roving Recovery" feature. Send it to westernmarylandaa@gmail.com

"I have to remember that not everyone is an alcoholic. Letting the love of God help me daily keeps me on the beam. I'm still learning!" chimed in another.

Every person had something to contribute:

"AA fellowship is love and it is an experience not to be missed. I always have someplace to go where I'll be welcomed."

"Because of the love I found in these halls, I have my family back. They loved me from the start through all the shit. Because I love AA, I now have two families!"

"I have to have self-love if I'm going to recover. If I can't forgive myself — love myself — I can't forgive anyone else or truly love them."

"If I wake with the feeling that I pissed someone off, I probably did. I need to review and correct ASAP. Self-love is admitting my shortcomings. Respecting others is love."

"To me, self-love is dignity and respect. The mayhem that used to be my life was nothing to brag about."

The meeting chair, in the last few minutes before closing, lightened up everything by saying, "I LOVE not being in cuffs, jail, or homeless!"

And so it is... We are blessed to have halls still open and people still carrying the message!

Presented by
District 40 & District 41
**Handling Grief in Sobriety
Workshop**



Saturday, October 14, 2023

1:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.

Grace Trinity United Church of Christ
9501 Baltimore Road
Frederick, MD 21704

Losses that can trigger grief:

- Divorce or changes in a relationship or a friendship
- Death of a loved one including pets
- Losing job or changes in financial security
- Changes in your health or that of a loved one

Presenter Ella J., Middle River, Maryland

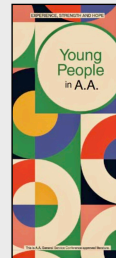
Question and answer period and guided meditation



Coffee – Water – Light Snacks will be provided

New 'young people' pamphlet available

A revised and redesigned pamphlet featuring new stories by seven young A.A. members is available to order from the A.A. World Services web store and other local distributors of A.A. literature.



It includes colorful illustrations by a Grapevine illustrator and is available in English and Spanish for 40 cents.

Go to <https://onlineliterature.aa.org/> to order, or check at a local distributor.

Updated fact sheet shows how money spent

The General Service Office of A.A. has refreshed its Seventh Tradition Fact Sheet to better reflect the newest services that are supported by contributions from groups and individuals.

For example, A.A. *Grapevine* and A.A. World Services Publishing collaborated to make A.A. literature available on more than 200,000 tablets in jails and prisons. And the Technology Department at GSO developed a “Submit Your Story” portal to make it easier for members to submit stories for possible inclusion in the Fifth Edition Big Book. To see the new Seventh Tradition Fact Sheet, go to <https://www.aa.org/seventh-tradition-fact-sheet-your-seventh-tradition-contributions>.

Print out a copy for your home group!



**AREA 29 MULTI DISTRICT
ELECTION YEAR TRAINING EVENT**

General Service

BRING THE HEAT AND A HEART FOR SERVICE

**CHILI
COOK-OFF**

Sunday 11/5/2023

2:30-5:00 PM

Hot Prizes for the best chili!

**REPRESENT YOUR GROUP,
DISTRICT, OR INTERGROUP**

St Stephens Church, 901 Courtney
Road, Halethorpe, MD

GSR & DCM TRAINING
All are welcome!



ENTRY DEADLINE 11/2/23

CONTACT 410-949-6456 TO ENTER

CO-HOSTED BY ACCESSIBILITIES & DISTRICT18@MARYLANDAA.ORG

IN-PERSON SPANISH AND ASL INTERPRETATION PROVIDED

AA Slogans: “Keep Coming Back”

What Does It Mean to You?

“Keep coming back it works if you work it” is such a powerful slogan, most groups chant it at the conclusion of their meeting. To me this means that the design for living sober that our book, *Alcoholics Anonymous*, reveals through personal stories, the Steps, and the need for a power greater than myself is not going to just happen to me if I read about it. Or if I talk about it. I have to work at it. I have to be about it. Eventually, the entire program works *me*.

I need to keep coming back to meetings to listen to the ones who have trudged before me. I need to keep coming back to meetings once I “get it” to illustrate how it worked in my life.

With the guidance of the God I understand and have learned to rely upon, I have become the person I believe I was always meant to be.

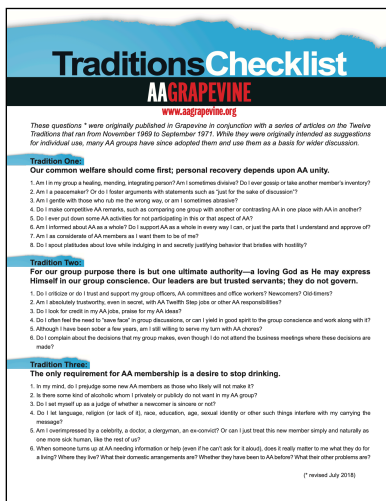
We need each other. There isn't a one of us that can accomplish this incredible transformation alone. Stick around for the miracle – it is real.



—Carol C.

Tradition Ten: “Alcoholics Anonymous has no opinion on outside issues; hence the A.A. name ought never be drawn into public controversy.”

(From Traditions Checklist)



#7 Should the meeting secretary intervene to remind A.A. members about this Tradition if a member starts criticizing one political party compared to others, or favoring a religion over others?

Yes, I believe they should. It's interesting that when someone begins to speak in a divisive way about politics or religion at a meeting, you can feel the whole tone of the room shift from an elevated place where a common solution is being discussed to a baser level, where negativity becomes pervasive. I think it's not only appropriate, but necessary, to steer the way back to safe ground. Some people might not be aware of the Tradition. Others might just get carried away and forget themselves, swept up in an issue close to their hearts. An A.A. meeting is neither the time nor the place. It can be difficult to speak up, but for the sake of the Fellowship we must.

—Kristin B.

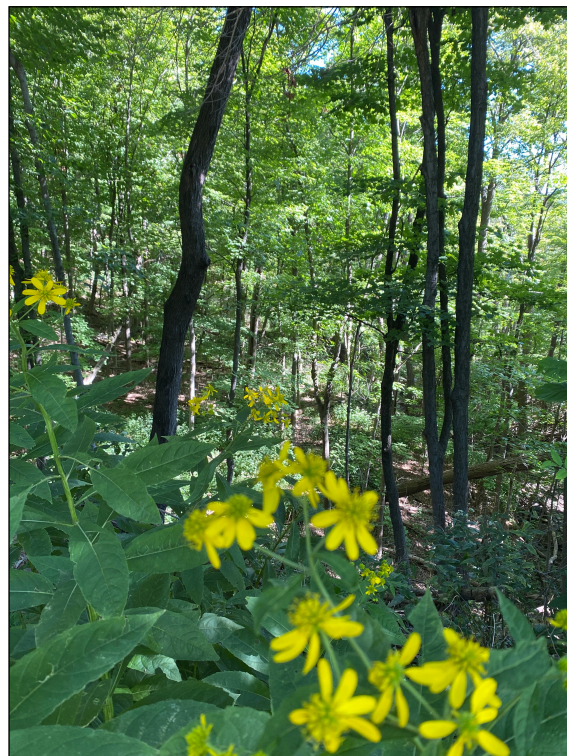
Find the Traditions Checklist at <https://www.aagrapevine.org/sites/default/files/2020-01/GV-Traditions-Checklist-2018.pdf>. Enhance your sobriety! Do it as an individual, or as a home group.

Carrying the A.A. message in Western Maryland

Western Maryland Intergroup is made up of representatives from Alcoholics Anonymous groups in the area and strives to help those groups carry the message to still-suffering alcoholics. We do this by:

- Creating and distributing Where & When meeting lists;
- Maintaining a web site (www.westernmarylandaa.org);
- Creating and distributing a monthly newsletter;
- Answering a hotline (844-568-3422);
- Hosting workshops and activities, as well as the annual Gratitude Breakfast;
- Providing A.A. literature to local treatment and detention centers;
- Cooperating with the professional community to increase awareness and understanding of Alcoholics Anonymous;
- Providing a P.O. Box for correspondence.

Contributions and other correspondence may be sent to P.O. Box 403, Cumberland, MD, 21501-0403.



Every A.A. group in the area can elect a representative to Intergroup. Intergroup representatives attend monthly meetings, contributing ideas and skills, and help to form the collective group conscience for A.A. 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, Oct. 20**, at First Presbyterian Church, 33 S. Broadway St., Frostburg, MD.

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

P.O. Box 403, Cumberland, MD 21501-0403

Website: <https://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.



What happened at the meeting? Part I

Western Maryland Intergroup, Aug. 18, 2023 meeting minutes

Attendance - Cody, Wendell, Farren, Bob, Kristin, Carol

Call to Order at 6:07 pm
Adjourned at 6:58 pm
Serenity Prayer
Traditions by Wendell
July 21, 2023 minutes approved.

Treasurer

Starting balance: \$3798.78
Hotline -36.78
Paper Statement Fee -1.00
Sick and Tire Donation +25.00
Ending balance: \$3786.00

Institutions

Lora, Marvin, and Cody going into Allegany County; Lee and JR into Garrett County.

Activities

Workshop committee has been making plans and setting the agenda. Workshop will follow 3 pamphlets and consist of Q&A/discussion with panelists.

- Order placed for pamphlets- Farren asked for reimbursement of \$76.10 - approved.
- Discussion and questions about format by group and panelists.
- Flyers distributed.
- Will purchase food/ refreshments and ask for reimbursement after the workshop.

Newsletter

- Sept. newsletter will be created towards end of month.
- Carol gave suggestions:
 - do a different blurb about groups each month- "Roving Recovery"?



Chair: Cody B.

Co-Chair: Les W.

Secretary: Lora B.

Treasurer: Farren S.

Committee Chairs

Institutions: Les W.

Activities: Kenny L.

Newsletter: Kristin B.

Website: Erin B. and Wendell F.

CPC: Woody

Where & When: Carol C.

Literature: Les W.

Hotline: Dan B.

- autobiography of old-timers

Website

- Hotline checkbox for anniversary removed
- A page for for hotline volunteering tbd
- Discussion about a virtual payment option on the website. Research the topic from World Services- table til September.
- Intergroup meeting where and when updated

CPC

Chair not in attendance

Where & When handouts

- Reformatted for ease, will self-populate from master document
- 350 distributed
- Next quarterly printing will be in October

Literature

Chair not present

Hotline

Chair not present

Old Business

Farren will take notes for Lora, who will be on vacation.

New business

-Discussion of putting what we (Intergroup) provides the area on

a business card-like thing; i.e., website, hotline, newsletter

- Kristin mentioned all of the information is in the where and whens
- Put QR code on When and when for website

Our next meeting will be Sept. 15, 2023 in Frostburg

What happened at the meeting? Part 2

Western Maryland Intergroup, Sept. 15, 2023 meeting minutes

Attendance

Farren, Cody, Bob, Kristin B., Emily, Nikxan, Sue 2, Carol, Woody, Erin

Call to Order at 6:12 pm

Adjourned at 7:29 pm

Serenity Prayer

Traditions -read by Woody

August 18, 2023 minutes approved.

Treasurer: Farren

Starting balance: \$3786.00

Paper statement fee: \$1.00

Reimbursement (Farren) workshop pamphlets: \$6.10

Rent collected and donated to Liberty Club:

+/- \$6.00

Printer paper: \$29.94

Printer Toner: \$42.39

Reimbursement (Kenny) Bike Ride: \$100.92

Donation from Workshop: +\$45.00

Chapel Hill Donation: +\$100.00

Sunday Step Donation: +\$12.00

Ending balance: \$3692.60

Savings Acct: \$23.03

Reserve fund: \$2,189.55

Institutions: chair- Les (Cody)

Cody - Garrett County inmates in Allegany County because of renovations- till November.

Massie is shut down for COVID -reopening TBD.

Discussion of process to be approved to take meetings into jails - safety rundown by Sheriff.

Question about needing help taking meetings into the jail - always need help.

Activities: chair: Kenny

A.A. Basics Workshop (Sept. 9)

- ~30 ppl
- Feedback included: Went well, organized, flow was good, liked the timer, topics were relevant for newcomers
- Extra pamphlets made into packets and will take them to Intergroup for people to distribute
- Support for doing another workshop every year or 6 months
 - 6 months was suggested to be better?
 - Possibly do them Sept/February or November/June-July

Idea tossed around to do a future workshop on the 12 steps with 12 speakers.

Idea to host Thanksgiving Dinner?

- Lutheran church
- Meeting
- Discussion included:
 - Not a lot of time to plan - positive energy - giving back
 - Open meeting format
 - Kids activities
 - Sign up sheet of who is bringing what - make
 - Bob will chair committee, Carol will also be on committee - TBD

Newsletter: chair- Kristin B.

October coming together - feedback welcome QA of oldtimer

Gratitudes are needed "Today I'm grateful for..."

300 Slogans - write a blurb about what it means to you. Index cards for people to complete and turn in

Website: Chair/s- Erin and Wendell

Chapel Hill Group glitch in the meeting guide being worked on

Events updated (Contra-study and Men's Retreat)

Page added for hotline

Donation page in the works

CPC: Chair- Woody

Woody- Where and Whens to pastor in Friendsville, FSU, and men's prison.

Will get business cards to Woody to distribute

Motion to order 25-50 pamphlets for "young people" - approved

Where & When handouts: Chair- open position

Carol nominated as chair . Will meet with Farren to get the rundown

Literature: Chair- Les (not present)

Hotline: Chair- Dan (not present)

Old Business

-Discussion of putting what we (Intergroup) provides the area on a business card-like thing; i.e., website, hotline, newsletter.

- Kristin mentioned all of the information is in the where and whens
- Put QR code on When and when for website.

See [Meeting](#) on next page



October anniversaries

Angela A., Sunday Night Step, 10/1/2015

Dave M., Fort Cumberland, 10/5/1998

Russ C., Mustard Seed, 10/6/2010

Paul T., 10/7/1992

Jack K., New Hope, 10/8/1990

Sheila S., Lake Group, 10/11/2014

Patrick H., Into Action, 10/13/1991

Grady S., New Hope, 10/14/2011

Bruce V., Lake Group, 10/15/2014

John M., 10/18/2010

John L., Freethinkers, 10/20/2009

John B., Sunday Night Step, 10/25/2009

Dusty S., 10/31/2011

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

Meeting continued from page

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New business

Calling Cards - design idea passed around

- Add slogan and QR code
- Motion to order 500 if \$25-50 -approved
- Get stickers/bookmarks?
- Motion for reimbursement of \$99.31 (Martins) + \$226.31 (Chick fil a) = \$325.62 for the workshop - approved
- Discussion on How much to donate to church for workshop
 - Motion made to donate \$50- approved
- QR code for the website uploaded on google drive and put on W&W

Our next meeting will be October 20, 2023 in Frostburg.

Meeting notes

Garrett County has a new morning meeting at MoonShadow restaurant, 145 Bumblebee Road, McHenry.

Called "Coffee Club," the group meets at 8 a.m. on Thursdays. It is an open discussion meeting.

Frostburg needs support

Monday and Friday 8 p.m. meetings at Frostburg Presbyterian Church have been suffering from low attendance since the COVID pandemic.

Established meetings with years of history, they could use support. Both are open discussion meetings. The church is at 33 S. Broadway St., Frostburg.

