

First Things First

Newsletter of the Western Maryland Intergroup of Alcoholics Anonymous

“Would you be my sponsor?”

It can sound like a daunting proposition to a newcomer in Alcoholics Anonymous.

Walk up to someone you barely know and ask them to be your ‘sponsor.’ It can feel, the old joke goes, like asking a stranger to be your Valentine.

It’s not easy, and it’s certainly not a requirement for A.A. membership. As the fellowship’s Third Tradition states, “the only requirement for membership is a desire to stop drinking.”

But countless sober alcoholics will attest that sponsorship is integral to achieving quality sobriety.

“Having a sponsor gives me accountability,” said Jean T. “It’s someone I can discuss my everyday issues with...My sponsor has shown me that no matter what life throws at me, I don’t have to pick up a drink. She’s also a role model, she talks the talk and walks the walk.”

Put simply, A.A. sponsorship is when “an alcoholic who has made some progress in the recovery program shares that experience on a continuous, individual basis with another alcoholic who is attempting to attain or maintain sobriety through A.A.,” according to the pamphlet “Questions & Answers on Sponsorship,” approved by the General Service Conference.

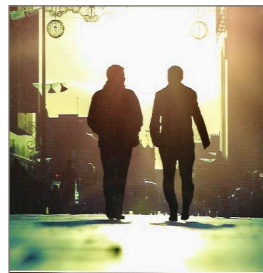
A sponsor is not meant to be a guru, said Dan R., who led a Zoom workshop on sponsorship in March hosted by the Greater Seattle Intergroup.

“A sponsor and sponsee meet as equals,” he said, quoting from the pamphlet. “We walk shoulder to shoulder, knee to knee.... We need to work to demystify the ‘guru’ idea.”

Look for someone who has what you want, group wisdom states. Ask them to show you how they got it.

“I looked for someone who had good long-term sobriety,” Jean T. said. “Also, someone that I felt was firm, but kind. I wasn’t looking for a friend, but it turns out that was an added bonus.”

Resources on Sponsorship



ONE ON ONE
AA Sponsorship in Action

“There is no right or wrong way to sponsor, only suggestions — each sponsor and sponsee finds his or her own path.”

—From *One On One: A.A. Sponsorship in Action*

Find *One on One* and other Grapevine publications at www.grapevine.org



Back issues of Grapevine, such as this one from 2018, are available at www.grapevine.org. Numerous other member-written articles about sponsorship can be found using the website’s search engine.

On finding — and becoming — a sponsor

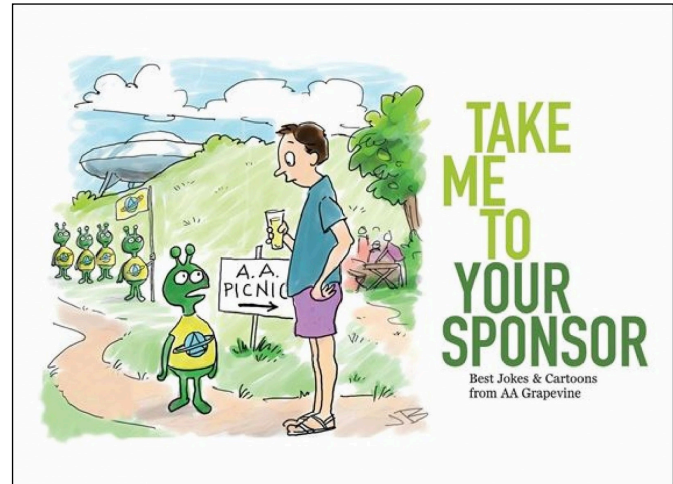
By Stephen K

I met my would-be sponsor at one of my first A.A. meetings. I went to that meeting immediately following a hospitalization in Baltimore from alcohol-related health issues. There must have been something about how I looked that got the attention of my sponsor because he stopped me on my way out and genuinely asked me how I was doing. He gave me his number and told me to call him when I struggled, needed guidance, or simply wanted to talk.

Shortly after completing 28 days at Massie, I asked him to be my sponsor, and I've been calling this guy for the last four and a half years. Having a sponsor has been one of the most important decisions I have made in recovery. He has walked me through the Steps, kept me accountable, and has been a great source of wisdom through difficult chapters.

In the early days, I called him to avoid that quick drink. But today, it's about working with him to identify how my program is going, where my ego needs to be checked, and how I can maximize my gifts to serve others. That's a massive part of what keeps me sober today. Sponsoring other men in the program has been another significant point of working in this program.

“Having a sponsor has been one of the most important decisions I have made in recovery.”



A book of cartoons created by members of Alcoholics Anonymous, this book is available at aagrapevine.org.

When I completed Step 12, my sponsor told me it was now my responsibility to carry the message to the new guy. So, that's what I've tried to do. Not only has sponsoring other men allowed me to serve others, but it also allowed a sort of “re-review” of my program down to the basics. Step One, Step Two, Step Three — going through this process for the first time with a new guy really gives me a greater perspective and can help keep me sober just as much as the new guy.

An A.A. sponsor is....



- a bridge to help the newcomer meet other alcoholics in recovery.
- an “understanding, sympathetic friend when one is needed most.”
- an A.A. member who has worked the Steps of A.A. as a way to attain sobriety.
- someone who sees that the newcomer is aware of A.A. literature, in particular the Big Book, *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*, *Grapevine*, *As Bill Sees It*, *Living Sober* and suitable pamphlets.
- someone who impresses upon the newcomer the importance of all our Traditions

Read the General Service Conference-approved pamphlet at <https://www.aa.org/questions-and-answers-sponsorship>



Today I'm grateful for...

–God seeing me through for many years so that I didn't drink.

–having gone to an insightful meeting.

–the blue sky.

–Shirley C.

–the opportunity to further my education.

–the warmth and happiness of Spring.

–the joy that comes from helping others.

–Jenny K.

–the amazing kindnesses that people show me daily.

–the hope of Spring.

–the love of my sons and their daily caring.

–Sue A.

–my children's gratitude for my sobriety.

–my sponsor.

–the first sweet flowers of spring.

–Patsy N.

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

Road trip, anyone?

HOST: AREA 29 CORRECTIONS COMMITTEE

GRAPEVINE PARTICIPATION

Corrections Workshop

TOPIC: *Corrections Correspondence*

LUNCH PROVIDED

SATURDAY, APRIL 29TH
12-3:30 PM
SAINT STEPHENS CHURCH
901 COURTNEY ROAD
ARBUSUS, 21227

CO-HOSTS: DISTRICT 4 & DISTRICT 18

CARRYING THE MESSAGE INTO TREATMENT FACILITIES

Saturday, May 6th from 11:00 to 2:00pm
South Shore Recovery Club
1199 Generals Hwy
Crownsville, MD 21032

You are invited to attend a workshop hosted by Maryland General Service (MGS) Treatment Committee in collaboration with District 42.

LUNCH WILL BE SERVED!

11:00 am Welcome: Diane F., Area 29 Treatment Committee Chair
11:15 am Bringing an AA meeting into a Treatment Facility
12:00 pm Lunch
12:30 pm Treatment Facility Speaker
1:15 pm Bridging the Gap (BTG) and O&A Session
2:00 pm Close with Responsibility Statement

12TH ANNUAL SOUTHERN MARYLAND ROUND-UP
May 5-7, 2023

Hollywood Volunteer Fire Department
Hollywood, Maryland

SERVICE IS THE SECRET

SPEAKERS:
Christina G. Broomeville, OH | Jose L. Tallabasse, VA
KAC & Corby, IA | William P. Gentry, MS
Lee P. North Fort, FL | Marty C. Hamilton, OH
Mike F. Aurora, CO | Joseph R. Whaling505, DC

-PRICING-
Early registration fee of \$25 per person includes all workshops, speakers, and fellowship for the three day program.
Tickets for Payment (Printed) \$25 sold separately.

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

Register by mail by May 1st. Money check or money order payable to:
Southern Maryland Roundup.
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 if you're unable to attend.

Outstanding Speakers?
Fellowship?
AA & Al-Anon Workshops & Meetings?
Sobriety Conferences?
Sponsorship Opportunities?
Complete Security Screen? - \$100
A&P \$25

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: \$ _____

2023 SERVICE IS THE SECRET!
For conference and lodging information, please visit www.southernmarylandroundup.org or email info@southernroundup.com

34th annual Gratitude Breakfast



Saturday, April 22, 2023
8 a.m.
Cumberland Country Club
Speaker: Ryan, Baltimore, Md.

Tickets are \$20
Available from Intergroup reps
50/50 Raffle!
Dove release at 12:30 p.m.

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

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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 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 A.A. members and their families can hear the message of recovery.



Join us, won't you?

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, April 21.** at Emmanuel Episcopal Church, 16 Washington St., Cumberland.

**AREA 29
MINI-CONFERENCE**

**ALL AA MEMBERS ARE
ENCOURAGED TO ATTEND!**

SATURDAY, APRIL 15, 2023
9:00AM-3:30PM
8:30AM ORIENTATION

BE INVOLVED... Your views, opinions, and experience are essential to our Delegate, Kurt W.

BE INFORMED... Our Area 29 trusted servants will share agenda items to be discussed at the General Service Conference.

BE INSPIRED... It's up to us to ensure that the AA program is here anytime, anywhere when someone reaches out for help.

HYBRID MEETING:
Severna Park United Methodist Church
731 Benfield Road,
Severna Park, MD 21146
Zoom ID: 335 232 9265
Passcode: mini

BE OF SERVICE:

- Come discuss GSC agenda items and make recommendations to the Delegate, Kurt W.
- Bring your sponsor, sponsee or a newcomer

Coffee, snacks and FREE lunch provided!

For more information, contact Terry P. at altdeldelegate@marylandaa.org

73rd A.A. General Service Conference

Area 29 Delegate Kurt W. has been gathering input over the last few weeks from groups around the state to take to the 73rd General Service Conference in New York later this month.

A Conference Agenda Review Committee (CARC) mini-conference on April 15 offers another chance for A.A. members to share their views, opinions and experience with Kurt so that he knows the conscience of the A.A. community in Area 29. Also, Area 29 trusted servants will share agenda items to be discussed at the General Service Conference scheduled for April 21-29.

All A.A. members are invited and encouraged to attend. The conference is from 9 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. in Seven Park, but it's also accessible via Zoom. For log-in codes, see the above flyer.

What happened at the meeting?

Western Maryland Intergroup, March 17, 2023 meeting minutes

Attendance

Woody, Lee, Cody, Dan, Kristin, Lora, Les, Wendell, Farren, Kenny, JC

Call to Order at 6:05 adjourned 7:01 pm
Serenity Prayer
Traditions
February 17, 2023 minutes approved

Chair: Cody B.

Co-Chair: Les W.

Secretary: Lora B.

Treasurer: Farren S.

Literature

Mary wants to get pamphlets for Massie. Trying to find out where to order. Still working with Chapel Hill for books.

Hotline

Old Business

Treasurer

Starting balance	+2237.47
paper statement	-1.00
Rent collected for Cumberland	+6.00
Rent collected for Cumberland	-6.00
Dan hotline March	-36.78
Farren G.B. tickets	-14.93
G.B. Books	-126.96
Speaker G.B. Hotel	-162.71

Institutions

Jails and Massie
Les has speakers for Massie until the end of April.
Lora and Cody are still going into the jails.

Activities

Newsletter

Kristin B. did get the printer from Ed. Ordered a cord for \$10. Printed 50 copies on her home printer. Handed them out to Les and others to distribute. Tried to do a puzzle but there were copyright issues. Handing out the newsletter and plugging the website.

Website

CPC

Woody gave a stack of where and when handouts to the Oakland jail and to a booth at Garrett College. The lady at Garrett College said she didn't know there was a meeting at Friendsville. She took a stack of where and when handouts. Woody also gave handouts to Addiction Happens, who are in charge of upper Garrett County for the health department.

Where & When handouts

Kristin B. has the printer so she can print out where and when handouts when she gets a current template. She will give receipts for paper and cord.

New Business

Gratitude breakfast

April 22, 2023 at 8 AM at Cumberland Country Club.

Speaker is from Baltimore. This is a to do list:

- JC did the programs. He wants to get them printed 2 weeks before. Make 500 business cards to give out to newcomers. JC will speak about how the gratitude breakfast was started.
- Dan will create a group form for hotline to collect data. Kristin and Dan will collect and hand out information at the breakfast..
- Set up a group table for Kristin and Dan to gather information about the group.
- Kristin will ask people for a gratitude to include in the newsletter
- Kenny will introduce the speaker
- Les will MC the event
- JC - Said you need to be aware of when the food will come out. Ask for food to come out at 9:20am.
- Stick to our program so that we're ready for the food.
- It's an open event, and spouses are invited.
- Funds are tight. Charge the clients at the halfway house \$5. Should we provide complimentary tickets to the professional business community next year?
- Report number of attendees to Farren by the 14th. Sellers hand in the money to Farren by the 21st.
- Les expressed concern about the breakfast and what if two of us aren't available. How would we pick it up? Farren said it's all in the tote and on the Google drive.

Our next meeting will be April 21, 2023

A.A. Promises: “A new freedom and a new happiness”

What Does It Mean to You?

“I was very hopeless. I had no idea how to live anymore. I was depleted of everything that I knew and loved. Nothing mattered to me anymore. All I knew was hatred.

I found something in A.A.. I found a new way of living. I found happiness. I found trust. I found forgiveness. Utopia.

Then I found what I was looking for: Freedom of self. I found me. I found my Higher Power.”

—Kenny L.





Area 29
Maryland State Convention

Without Unity, the Heart of AA would cease to beat...
Sin Unidad, el Corazón de AA dejará 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 (Friday, 1 pm)	7:00 am Registration Opens	7:00 am Registration Opens
Stephanie L.—Eastampton, NJ (Friday, 4 pm)	8:15 am Prayer and Meditation	8:15 am Prayer and Meditation
Barclay R.—Nashville, TN (Friday, 7:30 pm)	10:00 am Workshops	9:00 am AA Speaker Meeting
Greg T.—South Deerfield, MA (Saturday, 9 am)	11:30 am Lunch on your own	10:30 am Al-Anon Speaker Meeting
Jimmy A.—Spring Lake Heights, NJ (Saturday, 7:30 pm)	11:30 am Workshops/Delegate Report	12:00 pm Lunch A La Carte
Sara V.—Frederick, MD (Sunday, 10 am)	1:00 pm AA Speaker Meeting	1:00 pm Old Timers Panel
Al-Anon Speaker Katie C.—Frederick, MD (Saturday, 10:30 am)	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 (55 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
		10:00 pm Recovery Talent Show
	Pre-Registration Gift! Limit 600 See Back	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>

Online registration is open for the 51st annual Maryland State Convention.

<https://www.marylandA.A..org/state->



2023 CARRY THE MESSAGE PROJECT

Give a Gift Subscription to an alcoholic who needs it. Great for:

- Sponsees • Newcomers
- Prisons • Detoxes
- Doctors' Offices • Group Celebrations • District and Area Events • Giveaways

WANT TO HELP ANOTHER ALCOHOLIC?

Grapevine & La Viña are Great Twelfth Step Tools!

Get your group, district, area or AA friends to join in. Carry the Message, it's easy!

Go to aagrapevine.org/carry-the-message to get started and see our new Carry the message video at www.youtube.com/c/AAgrapevine

Get a subscription to Grapevine! Buy one for your home group!

Follow Grapevine on Instagram at [alcoholics_anonymous_gv](https://www.instagram.com/alcoholics_anonymous_gv).

Listen to a new **Grapevine Podcast** every Monday at aagrapevine.org/podcast.

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

April anniversaries

- Jodi K., Sunday Night Step, 4/12/2014
- Ian W., New Hope, 4/21/2018
- Emily H., 4/25/2004
- Ron B., Fort Cumberland, 4/29/2013
- Amanda R., 4/28/2006
- Sarah L., Frostburg Monday Night, 4/30/2018
- Shawn J., Ridgeley Renegades, 4/30/2018



Corny joke corner

Daffy Duck and Elmer Fudd break into a distillery. Daffy turns to Elmer and says: "Is this whiskey?"



Elmer says, "Yeah, but not as whiskey as robbing a bank!"

How many members of Alcoholics Anonymous does it take to change a light bulb?

Only one, but the light bulb has to want to change.

Got a better one? Send it to westernmarylandaa.org



I am responsible....

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