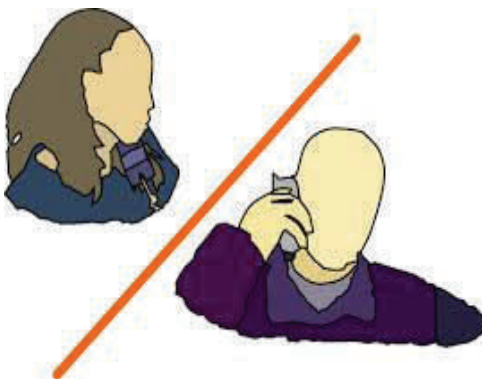




HAS THE HOT-LINE GONE COLD?

Almost fifty years ago, six AA groups in the Riverhead area got together to form what was then called the "Answering Service". Their intention was to provide a twenty-four hour-a-day centralized contact point through which the hand of AA would be extended to any suffering alcoholic in Suffolk County who needed our help. At the time, having a phone call to a single, well-publicized and anonymous number automatically transferred to a waiting AA volunteer was in the forefront of telephone technology. Over the years, Answering Service volunteers have probably answered in excess of a million calls for help of various kinds. Thousands of our members, past



and present, made their first contact with AA via the Hot-Line. However, times have changed and we must now confront the possibility that the Hot-Line is a cherished, but unnecessary, relic of AA's past in Suffolk County. (continued on page 3)

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**TAKE
NOTE!**

New Bulletin Editor Big Cry-Baby; Easily Hurt!



Your new Bulletin editor is widely known to be a horrible whiner. Ignoring his efforts to encourage wider readership for the Bulletin is likely to have many undesirable results. If you do not want some old bastard in suspenders showing up at your group meeting and standing in the corner of the room pouting at you, it is strongly recommended that you read and participate in the local voice of AA: your Intergroup Bulletin. Send in an article; voice your opinion in a letter; let the entire world (OK, our little portion of it) know what a horrible human being and complete incompetent Fred H. is. Anything is better than having me hang around and sniffle at you. Trust me on this.

A discussion of the future of the Hot-Line will commence at the February Intergroup meeting. If your group wants the Hot-Line to continue, make sure you have a representative there. If no one cares enough to be there, it is better that we recognize that we have done an extraordinary thing in maintaining a hot-line 24 hours a day, 365 days a year for 48 years using only volunteers and then dissolve the Hot-Line with the dignity it deserves.



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Please note:

Inclusion of articles and announcements in The Bulletin does not constitute AA endorsement. Rather, members of the fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous have been encouraged to share their experience, strength and hope through this humble publication. Opinions expressed are those of the writer unless otherwise noted. Suffolk Intergroup Association makes these articles and announcements available solely as a service to the reader, not as an endorsement.

We're on the Web!
www.Suffolkny-aa.org

*I Am Responsible...
When anyone, anywhere,
reaches out for help,
I want the hand of A.A.
always to be there.
And for that:
I am responsible.*

February Meetings

Archives Committee:

2/1/2014 7:00 PM SIA Office

Public Information Committee:

2/18/2014 7:00 PM SIA Office

SIA Monthly Business Meeting:

2/11/2014 Cleary School

6:30 PM New Group Rep Orientation

6:30 PM Share-a-Thon

7:30 PM SIA Business Meeting

SIA Officers' & Chairpersons' Meeting:

2/4/2014 7:00 PM SIA Office

Suffolk General Service:

2/21/2014 8:00 PM

Trinity Lutheran Church, Rocky Point

Intergroup Officers

Chairperson Fred H.Chairman@suffolkny-aa.org
Alt Chairperson Vikki B.Alt-chair@suffolkny-aa.org
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Committee Chairs (Not Yet Approved)

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Webmaster Martin Webmaster@suffolkny-aa.org



ViewPoints: The Hot-Line

(continued from page one)

In 2005, the telecommunications company that for years had handled the forwarding of our calls stopped providing that service. Intergroup tried to find another company to take over the service, but the technology that we had depended on for so long was outmoded and no longer available. We found that we could keep the Hot-Line operating if volunteers took over the role of the forwarding service, using more modern phone technology to do so. And so the Hot-Line has continued to function these last eight years due to the dedication of the volunteers: those who coordinate the service, those who forward the calls, those who answer the phone day and night, and those who respond to the Twelfth Step calls we receive

**“...a cherished,
but unnecessary,
relic of AA’s
past.”**

However: We have seen a continuous decline in the number of calls received. We have seen the predominant nature of calls shift from requests for Twelfth Step contacts to requests for information like meeting times and places. Most importantly, we have seen a drastic decline in the number of volunteers who are willing to answer the phone or take Twelfth Step calls. Over the last year, out of 730 people who volunteered to answer the phones, almost half were not available when they had volunteered to be, leaving either the coordinators scrambling to get people to fill in, or the phones unanswered. This situation is not acceptable. If the groups and the members are not willing to invest the effort to keep the Hot-Line running as it should, it is better to stop running it than to run it half-assed. There are other, newer technologies for reaching out to the still sick and suffering, perhaps Intergroup should be putting its funds and effort into these.

“It Seems to Me...”

By Ken, former member Centereach Open Door

I want to let you know right away that that title is not original with me although I must confess I’ve thought many a time in reading a copy of the Grapevine or listening to a GSR or SIA report in my home group, “Boy, it seems to me...”

It seems to me I was extremely lucky in the choice of my first sponsor some years ago. Paul had the patience of Job as he listened nightly to my complaints. But Paul, also, in directing me towards and through the Steps, more subtly taught me manners and a sense of responsibility in AA.

Actually, a news reporter, one Heywood Broun, used it as the title to his column some 65-70 years ago. Of course, this was right about the time Bill and Dr. Bob were laying the ground-work for AA, and I guess old Heywood could perhaps have used some of Bill and Bob’s wisdom, because Broun was also one of the original Algonquin Round Table people-known for their wit and (what else) for their drinking.

He directed me to be considerate of the room in which we met. We were only guests in that facility, regardless of whether we paid rent or not. If the place the group met was a church, I was to take my cap off, out of respect for that group’s house of worship. I was to help pick up the ash trays (we could smoke back then) even though I didn’t smoke; and put away at least two chairs, although I only sat on one. My primary obligation was to attend and support my group, including business meetings. If I would stay up late drinking many nights in a row, why couldn’t I stay up once a month for a business meeting?

Be it as it may-now that could be another title to a column series-there are some things about AA today that seem to me to be troublesome. I’ll mention only two of them here: First, I’m disturbed to think of the trouble our Intergroup is having manning the Emergency Hotline. And given the number of groups in Suffolk County! Granted, some groups don’t even have the fourteen members although their meetings may attract many dozens more. Is it because too many other people are doing too many other things, that we spread the available personnel too thin? Or is it because too many people are putting other things in front of AA?

If memory serves me correctly, when I first came into the rooms, we had the Hotline for a 24 hour period then. And, I can remember early in sobriety-before I had enough time in the program to qualify to take the Hotlines -going over to Lynn’s, a fellow member’s home somewhere in Patchogue to help out for a while, so that once I got the hang of the thing, she could take her kids and go food shopping.

And this leads me to the second of my concerns: Sponsorship. Now this is only one man’s opinion (Hey, there’s a title for yet another column!) but I wonder if somehow the trouble with the Hotline is not tied up with the responsibilities of Sponsorship.

I was taught responsibility. And it helped me, subtly, to get over that self-centered, selfishness that at that time was so much a part of me.

And it’s helped to keep me sober for over two decades.



Is this the AA Hot Line?

My sponsor taught me that gratitude is an action word; not a word to say, but to do. Back around 1984, he told me to come over to his house and help answer the Hot Line phones with him. I immediately rejected his order by telling him I knew nothing about these Hot Line phones and don't know how to take the calls, (I was only about a year sober). His answer was "Stop and bring coffee on the way over."

Everything was going ok, as long as the phone did not ring. My sponsor then said he was going to take a shower and told me (not ask me), to pick up the phone when it rings and answer it. (Holy *)%#, I said to myself in panic). What do I do? I asked my sponsor. "Tell them your name and ask how can you help them today", as he walked out of the room.

The first call came in. I picked up the phone like a little puppy dog and said "Hi, this is Lou, how can I help you?" Thank God, the caller only needed meeting information. I could give him that! I logged the call in the log book and waited for the next caller. My confidence grew with each call, but I knew my sponsor was not far away (Boy does he take long showers!). I did not drink.

My sponsor taught me about the service part of the fellowship. He taught me how service will keep me sober. I always take the phones when they come around to my Home Group, and volunteer on the Emergency Hot Line List. (This is a list of people they call when group members don't fill the commitment for various reasons (which I don't understand).

One year, my home group could not fill a commitment for the 8am-8pm shift. I was the owner of a luncheonette at the time and was working days there. I could not let the Group miss this commitment, so I had the

By Lou C., Hauppauge Touchstones Group

Hot Line number transferred to the pay phone at the luncheonette, and put an "Out of Order" sign on the pay phone. We set the phone books up on a special "Reserved" table. Members of my home group stopped in during the day to take the calls and hang out (drinking free coffee!) We all did not drink that day; and most are still sober today!

“What is the best excuse for not taking the call from an alcoholic in need?”

The list of Twelfth Step volunteers is another tool of the Fellowship. My sponsor explained how important this tool is to maintain my own sobriety, and needed to be taken seriously. “Don’t sign the List if you won’t take the call!” were his words if I remember correctly. “When the call comes, it will come when you are too busy living your life, thanks to the AA Fellowship!” What is the best excuse for not taking the call from an alcoholic in need? We haven’t heard it yet! The best answer you can give the Hot Line Volunteer when you are called is, “hold on while I get a pen and paper!” I have to found this to be the serious member’s attitude. I take my program seriously.

The bottom line is that I am responsible today. In my book, it is a numbers game, with life or death results. The longer I stay involved in service, the greater chance I have of staying sober. That's why I continue to be a part of AA, rather than just be around it. The hotline has been helping me to stay sober for over 30 years, so why would I stop now? Instead of calling in sick to work from a hang over, call in sick to take the Hot Line one day a year and stay sober! If I don't have time for the Hot Line, I don't have time to stay sober!

Step One – We admitted we were powerless over alcohol – that our lives had become unmanageable.

Tradition One – Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends upon A.A. unity.

Concept One – Final responsibility and ultimate authority for A.A. world services should always reside in the collective conscience of our whole Fellowship.



In the Office: Joe M., Office Manager

“Rarely have we seen...”

...our own SIA office. Strategically located in beautiful downtown Patchogue. Hello, my name is Joe and I'm your new office manager. Come down and visit! We are open 9:00 to 3:00 Monday through Friday and 9:00 to 1:00 on Saturday. We have meeting lists available and all our literature is available for sale on premises. Most importantly, we have great volunteers who give of themselves to answer the phones and give hope to the hopeless.

Have a healthy and sober year, one day at a time!!

From the Grapevine Traditions Checklist

Tradition One: Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends upon AA unity.

1. Am I in my group a healing, mending, integrating person, or am I divisive? What about gossip and taking other members' inventories?
2. Am I a peacemaker? Or do I, with pious preludes such as "just for the sake of discussion," plunge into argument?
3. Am I gentle with those who rub me the wrong way, or am I abrasive?
4. Do I make competitive AA remarks, such as comparing one group with another or contrasting AA in one place with AA in another?
5. Do I put down some AA activities as if I were superior for not participating in this or that aspect of AA?
6. Am I informed about AA as a whole? Do I support, in every way I can, AA as a whole, or just the parts I understand and approve of?
7. Am I as considerate of AA members as I want them to be of me?
8. Do I spout platitudes about love while indulging in and secretly justifying behavior that bristles with hostility?
9. Do I go to enough AA meetings or read enough AA literature to really keep in touch?
10. Do I share with AA all of me, the bad and the good, accepting as well as giving the help of fellowship?

INSTITUTIONS UPDATE

Thanks to all who have turned in temporary contact sign-up sheets. . To get the Temporary Contact Program going The Institutions Committee needs the help of the people who have institutions commitments. YOU are the only people that can bring this program to the facility that hosts your meeting. If you or your group has a treatment facility commitment that Intergroup is not aware of, please tell us about it. The Committee also has some commitments available that need chairpeople and/or speakers. Get in touch with us if you are interested. The Committee meets the third Wednesday of every month at 7:00 PM at the SIA Office. Show up and make a difference. Bring a sponsee or another group member and share the commitment. There are still-suffering alcoholics who need your help! Thanks, Tommy M.



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Dear Brian,

I just had to say thank you for the opportunity to write for the Suffolk Intergroup Bulletin. I can't begin to describe to you the look of envy on my friends' faces every time one of my articles or letters appear in print. I know it's a character defect, but I can't help but enjoy the attention I've been getting from the opposite sex, either!! Amazingly enough, the Most Interesting Man in the World has been calling me to chat! Granted, I think he's had more than "dos" equis when he's called, but which of us has n't pulled that stunt in the middle of the night?

Thanks again,

Regular Contributor

Brian,

If I don't get the alimony check THIS WEEK, your butt is in court, pal! And don't use this letter as filler for that damn Bulletin, either!

You Know Damn Well Who!

Brian,

Do you really expect anyone to believe that the blatant ploy to attract contributors masquerading as a "letter to the editor" two letters above this one was written by anyone other than you? We may be drunks, but we're not stupid. And, by the way, the subject of the second sentence in that letter is "one of my...", so to match the number of the subject, the verb should be "appears" rather than "appear". Learn your job, will you?

John D.

Retired Proofreader

The Pit

Bay Shore

Help Wanted

Poor Pay, Great Benefits

The Still Suffering Alcoholic Needs Your Help!

The SIA Public Information Committee brings information about what AA is and what we do and don't do to members of the public who might deal with the still sick and suffering alcoholic at work or in social or religious contexts.. We could use your help. You do not need to be a group rep to join us. The PI Committee meets at the SIA office in Patchogue on February 18th at 7:30 PM. The best Public Information tool we have is the living example of a sober member of A.A. We need each of you to help show that it works.

LICYPAA, the Long Island Committee of Young People in Alcoholics Anonymous has a new committee meeting location. LICYPAA will now meet at the Church of Christ, 36 Bay Shore Road in West Islip. Please visit www.licypaa.org for more information.

The committee for the 2014 Share-a-Thon will soon be forming. If your group would like to be involved in this year's Share-a-Thon, You should send a representative to the organizational meeting preceding the regular SIA monthly business meeting at the Cleary School for the Deaf in February.

