



The Suffolk Intergroup

BULLETIN

Volume 40, Number 10

FEBRUARY 2014

THE HOT-LINE ISSUE

Calls and Clicks

When I needed AA the most, my mom picked up the phone book, looked up the hotline number, and spoke with a wonderful unknown woman who explained how AA can help her son. The next day mom dropped me off at a local Beginners meeting. At that first meeting I was handed a meeting list with phone numbers of the men in the group. Where would I be today if those who came before me had not done all the work setting up and maintaining the hot line so that when I needed it someone was there to help get me to my first meeting? I am sure most of us have similar stories about the hotline helping us get here and stay here.

As time has gone on the numbers of calls to the hotline have declined year after year. It seems more and more people find us via the web, or use the SIA Web Site for meeting times and locations. Our primary purpose is to carry the message to the still sick and suffering alcoholic. Today intergroup is looking at how it attracts those who need us. Based on my experience, I say keep doing everything the same way you have since I got here—it worked for me. I say this kind of selfishly because I look back with love for the people who brought this message to me, but if I focus more on the principal that what's best for me is not always what's best

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ERRATUM

In last month's Bulletin, we reported that 8072 calls were received by the Hot-Line. We also reported that there were 219 no shows among people volunteering to fill slots and 113 unfilled slots. Based on these figures, we reported that 45.5% of slots had to be filled by Hot-Line volunteers at the last minute. This was in error. The corrected, end-of-year tallies follow

- The Hot-Line answered 7643 calls in 2013.
- 3016 were requests for meeting information
- 1971 were calls to "talk"
- 1082 were calls from or asking for information about other agencies
- 631 were requests for rides
- 372 were immediate help referral (people upset, worried about "stuff")
- 571 were miscellaneous (hang-ups, heavy breathers, etc.)
- there were 113 slots that no one signed up for, i.e.: "unfilled"
- there were 106 slots where, when the chairperson transferred the Hot-line, no one was there, numbers didn't work, didn't live there anymore, etc. i.e.: "no shows"
- The **total** was 219: 31% of daily slots having been filled by emergency volunteers.

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Sez You!

Got Something you want to say? Email us:

Bulletin@suffolkny-aa.org

Better to give a resentment than get one!!



ViewPoints: The Future of the Hot-Line

A New Hand At The Helm

I want to introduce myself to all of you and to ask for your continued service to Alcoholics Anonymous. My name is Dolores and I am an alcoholic. My home group is Steps to Life in Coram and my sober date is July 6, 2009. I trust you will be willing to help me during the transition of the position of Hot-Line Chair from JJ to me. I want to thank JJ for his many years of service to SIA and, especially, to the Hotline. I appreciate the hours he spent showing me the ropes.

I am excited and overwhelmed by this opportunity to serve "the still sick and suffering alcoholic" in Suffolk County. I began switching the phones on Friday January 17th and already am trying to determine a more efficient manner to do this. I'd appreciate any thoughts and suggestions from you.

The most immediate concern facing the Hotline is finding willing people to serve as District Captains in seven of our phone districts (see "Help Wanted", p. 8) The Hotline is covered through the week of February 23rd. After that, if we can't find captains, we will have to go back to groups that have recently provided service. Seems like we are punishing the good kids! I don't want to do that. I have tried to get to some of the bigger and more active meetings in the

*Are our lives just too busy
and too full...to volunteer
12 hours of our time every
few years?*

inactive districts to solicit volunteers as captains. If anyone is interested in serving as a district phone captain, please let me know.

The topic of discussion at the February SIA meeting will be the Hotline: should it continue in its present form? Has it outlived its usefulness? Should we go to an automated service? How about an answering machine rather than a live alcoholic? Are we alcoholics willing to provide service to "the still sick and suffering alcoholic"? Are our lives just too busy and too full, as a result of our coming to AA, to volunteer 12 hours of our time every few years? I don't know the answers.

If you have concerns or opinions regarding the above questions, please convey them to your SIA rep, to the SIA Bulletin Letters to the Editor, or to me at phones@suffolkny-aa.org. SIA is working for you; please make your wishes known.

Dolores K.,

Hot-Line or Cold Line??

Mike K., Sayville West

When I made my appearance in AA, the Hot-Line was very alive and active. I know at my group people would jostle to get a 24 hour slot of phone coverage. Recently, my group struggled to cover half of our week's commitment. The times have changed! This change is not only in my group, but everywhere in Suffolk, whether it be SIA or SGS. I was surprised recently to hear that 7 phone captain positions were vacant: the groups in those area will not have a chance to have the phones.

I had the phones for 24 hours shortly before Christmas. The number of calls that I got was very low compared to what I would get in the past. Most of the calls were for meeting info or people looking for a ride. I got a few regulars that needed to talk, mostly about non alcohol related

**I think the time has
come to rethink our
efforts.**

things. I think I had one call for a help referral in 24 hours.

We have a great resource in the internet, available 7 days a week, 24 hours a day, that can be used by anyone seeking help or answers to questions about alcohol or AA. I think the time has come to rethink our efforts. I think it is time to look at what is being done elsewhere. I think a system could be setup with the SIA Office answering calls during the day. After hours, an answering machine would take all the calls. In the morning the office attendant could use the Hot Line Book to refer calls to members who have agreed to do the 12th Step work.

I spoke with a past Hot-Line coordinator who said, "I would hate to see it happen, but it is time, the members are NOT responding to the needs of current Hot Line".

I always want the hand of AA to be there, and for that I am responsible, but maybe, as the hot-line is not working or being covered as it should be, it is time to move in another direction. We all have learned that if it isn't broke don't fix it, but with the current lack of member involvement it is broke and time to look at an alternate ideas to make sure the hand of AA is always there.



Group History of the Month

Smithtown Afternoon Group

The Smithtown Afternoon Group was started in the summer of 1973 by Doris. She was a member of the Smithtown evening group at the Methodist Church on Main St. in Smithtown. Tom M. moved it to the Catholic Church of the Resurrection, 37 Juniper Ave, Smithtown where he was a custodian in 1974. The group moved because the church needed the space for summer activities.

At the time the group was started, there was no afternoon meeting and this was designed to fill the gap. Simon T. moved it to the current church in 1976 and I was chairing it until 1978, when I went to work and could not be there. But, look what happened. It is growing so beautifully!

The group was moved because Tom retired as custodian because of health issues and the church needed the space, also.

The meetings were closed meetings at 1:00 in the afternoon. When the room was not available, we met a few times in private homes or on the lawn of the church. It was wonderful. Tom M. was a very special person and a great power of example to us all for his love for A.A., his caring and help to everyone that walked through that door into a meeting, and his determination to keep the meetings going when the going was not easy.

Submitted by Emmi F. 2004

ViewPoints: The Hot-Line

A MESSAGE FROM THE RETIRING HOT-LINE CHAIR

At the December SIA meeting I was asked "what do you want me to tell my home group?" This is my answer: Ask your group if they want to be involved answering the Hotline.

- If no, tell us so we will not bother your group.
- If yes, tell us so we can include your group in our schedule.
- If yes, add a "phone contact" to your group's commitment's.
- If yes, ask your district phone captain to attend a business meeting to explain the process and educate newcomers on how to answer the Hotline.
- If you are unsure of your District Phone Captain, contact the Hotline Chairperson and make your request.
- Keep stressing the importance of the need for our Hotline to stay strong and active.

For the past twenty plus years we have struggled to get people to commit and to show up for their commitment. We need to stay mindful of the thousands of lives that have been saved by AA over the years through members working our Hotline. this small, unselfish service we must do in order to practice Tradition I and V.. No one person is going to make or break the Hotline, it will take all of the fellowship to keep it going. If we continue to complain and not work to carry the message of its importance, it will not continue.

JJ, Hot-line Chair

ViewPoints: HELP SAVE THE HOTLINE!

If you or anyone you know has ever needed and used the Hot-Line you know what a tremendous help it is for the still sick and suffering alcoholic. The Hot-Line is now in danger of DYING because WE, the care takers of the hotline, are ALLOWING IT TO HAPPEN.

The Suffolk county hotline is the only hotline in the country manned completely by the live members of AA. We do NOT use an answering machine: it is still one drunk talking to another just as Bill did with Dr. Bob. It is up to all of us to keep this wonderful tool alive and well and that will only happen with the people of AA stepping up to do service. WE CAN keep this going for the next suffering alcoholic but we need YOU, ALL OF YOU, to make it work. By Ike R., Port Jefferson Group



Tradition Two:

The Group Conscience and SIA

Most of us are familiar with the concept of a group conscience as it applies to our home group and the process that our group follows in arriving at a group conscience decision. The process will vary from group to group, but most groups have some procedure by which group members arrive at governing decisions. Anyone who has ever been at a disordered business meeting where personalities have overrun principles has seen first-hand why such procedures are necessary. But what does the concept of a group conscience mean in the context of a service organization like Intergroup?

A beginning to finding an answer to this question might be to ask to whom the decisions of the Intergroup reps apply. Surely not to the individual members of AA. As Bill wrote in Tradition Nine, *"Neither [AA's] General Service Conference or its Foundation Board, nor the humblest group committee can issue a single directive to an A.A. member and make it stick, let alone mete out any punishment. We've tried it lots of times, but utter failure is always the result."* Nor can the rep's decisions apply to the affairs of the individual groups, since Tradition Four tells us that, *"Each group should be autonomous except in matters affecting other groups or A.A. as a whole."* The only scope for Intergroup's decisions is to set rules for the Intergroup reps and officers when they meet to conduct the business of Intergroup, and to instruct the officers and chairpersons as to what the member groups want Intergroup to do and how they want it done.

Intergroup's By-Laws set the rules for the reps and officers. The By-Laws define the jobs of the officers and committees and set the general procedures for conducting business. The By-Laws also set out in general terms in Article II, sec. 1, the "what to do?" part of these instructions: *"The primary purpose of this Association shall be to assist Alcoholics Anonymous Groups in Suffolk County in their common purpose of carrying the AA message to the still suffering alcoholic by performing those functions which the individual Groups cannot accomplish alone."* Section 2 of that Article lists certain functions that the groups felt important enough to specify individually, and concludes with the general empowerment, *"To perform other functions, which serve our primary purpose, as may be directed by the Groups."*

The "how shall we do it?" question is answered by the vote of the reps on motions brought before the SIA business meeting. These votes are recorded in Intergroup's Group Conscience Book. The preamble to the Group Conscience Book itself explains why the groups set up the current structure:

"The Bylaws of the Suffolk Intergroup Association are the definition of who we are, what we do and how we do it. Because the Bylaws are the structure of the organization, the process of changing them is deliberately made difficult. Because the Bylaws are difficult to change, if Intergroup is to be flexible in its response to the changing needs of AA

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Step Two:

Came, Came To, Came to Believe

I came to Alcoholics Anonymous as a "nice guy who drank too much" or more honestly as a defiant, delusional, self-centered idiot. I was impressed with how I had progressed through life despite certain unfortunate setbacks always related to the consumption of alcohol. So while I was willing to placate my wife, family and therapist by attending a few AA meetings, I had serious doubts about the possibility of being able to stop drinking. I had tried everything in my power to stop or moderate and nothing had worked.

After attending several meetings, I couldn't help but notice the 12 Steps and 12 Traditions posted at the front of the room usually near those irritating, trite and ridiculous slogans. Here is where the brain washing begins, I thought. I found Step 2 to be particularly odious because of its inference that I was insane and the reference to a higher power which, sure enough, morphed into the introduction of God in the next step. I sure as hell hadn't come to AA to find God. The only god I knew besides the god of alcohol was the god of my parents and I'd had enough exposure to religion as a child in Sunday School.

Little did I know that the god of my understanding had already directed me to the rooms of AA and had provided me the opportunity to begin my recovery and change my life. I was a daily drinker who swore every morning that I would moderate or quit and every night I was drunk again. (Most people, I believe, would consider such behavior insane.) This delusion went on for years, yet, suddenly, by regularly attending meetings, I wasn't drinking. Not only was I not drinking but I can still vividly remember the first 24 hour period I didn't even think about taking a drink. How was this possible? I had to admit that there was some power greater than myself working in my life. Here was positive proof.

I still resented the reference to being restored to sanity in Step 2, but with my sponsor's help I began to understand that I wasn't insane in all areas of my but certainly was in relation to my drinking which led to other dysfunctional behaviors. I always showed my wife, family, friends, employer etc.etc. that booze was more important to me than they were.

So I did come to believe that a power greater than myself could restore me sanity but in the following years I have come to understand that believing is not enough to insure my sobri-

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Calls and Clicks

(Continued from page 1)

for AA, then I become more willing to open my mind to change. Bill writes in the Second Tradition "the good is the enemy of the best". This makes me think, are we carrying the message the same way we did 20 or 30 years ago because it is good and/or is it the best way to carry it today? I don't own a yellow pages or an encyclopedia anymore. When I go looking for a number or information on something I don't know about I go to the internet. Based on the number of clicks the SIA website gets, more and more people use the internet to reach us every day, while the number of calls to the hotline decreases every year. I would never want to see a day where there was no Hotline or meeting list as part of the way SIA carries the message, but we spend a lot of the groups money and tons of 12 step work maintaining a 24hr hotline and printing 1000s of lists a year. Our website is a great tool for reaching out, but it is a little dated and could be better than it is when compared to other AA sites in the area.

As we look forward to where we allocate the groups money and our twelve step efforts we should realize that more and more people in need will try to find us via the web tomorrow than they do today. I think we owe it to those who look for us in the future to carry the message as best we can in all ways, but especially in the way they are most likely to reach out. I am happy that SIA is looking at these issues, only good can come from taking an inventory on how we reach out to the still suffering. Based on my experience with the great works of SIA in carrying the message, I am sure the only one happier than me about this undertaking will be those who reach out to us in the future.

Submitted by Anonymous

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Group Conscience

in Suffolk County, the scope of the Bylaws must be limited to the most essential and important rules of the organization. The less formal decisions of the Group Conscience, those that do not require a month's written notice to the Groups and a two-thirds majority vote to change, need to be recorded elsewhere: The Group Conscience Book.

In the past, all votes at SIA meeting have been recorded in the Recording Secretary's notes, which are then filed by date. If a question later arises about a policy, or a precedent, or any vote or Group Conscience decision, someone has to remember if the question has ever come up before, if it did, when, and what the Group Conscience was the last time it came up. Searching through 30 years of notes, if it yields an answer at all, is not going to yield an answer quickly; certainly not in time to provide information while discussing a motion. It is the purpose of the Group Conscience book to make finding these answers possible."

This is a very basic discussion of the structure and role of SIA. Any AA member is welcome to attend a meeting of Intergroup or any of its committees. Copies of the By-Laws may be had for free at the office or at the Intergroup business meeting. Intergroup is the servant of all the AA groups in Suffolk County in the pursuit of their primary purpose and, through your group, it exists to serve you, too. Take an interest in it.

LATE NOTICE!

The next institutions meeting will be on Wednesday February 19th at 7 PM in the SIA office. Come down and help us spread the AA message. We will be getting some new literature soon, stop by and pick some up.

Came, Came To, Came to Believe

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ety. After 6 years of sobriety I came to believe that this AA thing was working so well that I began to back of meetings, commitments and AA relationships. After all, I was the guy who was never going to drink again. No great surprise as to what happened next and that relapse lasted 9 months.

I returned to AA meetings and received the love and support that had helped me to come to believe previously. I also made a concerted effort to work a more active program in terms of commitments, attendance and sponsorship. Now I had all the bases covered to guarantee sobriety or so I thought. Sobriety will insure immunity from life's challenges! As long as I was getting my way, believing in a higher power posed no problems. Being diagnosed with bladder cancer and having my bladder removed, however, did cause problems for me. I hadn't signed for this part of the life experience. My lack of acceptance and a good case of the "poor me's" led to a relapse on prescription drugs. (Never tell this alcoholic to take painkillers "as needed")

So I took another trip to the front of the meeting to pick up a white chip. I've always known that AA works when I am honest and having continuous sobriety is the only way for me to be honest. I am now over 2 years sober and have still come to believe. The difference now is that believing means practicing all of the steps in my life to react spiritually to life's challenges as opposed to avoiding or denying them. I try to replace my relationship with the god of alcohol with a relationship with a power greater than myself to enjoy and appreciate a sober life.

Tom W., Stony Brook Unity Group



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The Bulletin

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Please note:

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

Brian C., Editor

Mary K., Layout & Design

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.

March Meetings

Archives Committee:

3/1/2014 7:00 PM SIA Office

Institutions Committee

3/19/2014 7:00 PM SIA Office

Public Information Committee:

3/18/2014 7:00 PM SIA Office

SIA Monthly Business Meeting:

3/11/2014 Cleary School

6:30 PM New Group Rep Orientation

6:30 PM Share-a-Thon

7:00 PM Hot-Line Captains

7:30 PM SIA Business Meeting

SIA Officers' & Chairpersons' Meeting:

3/4/2014 7:00 PM SIA Office

Suffolk General Service:

3/21/2014 8:00 PM

Trinity Lutheran Church, Rocky Point

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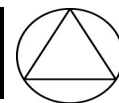
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ANNOUNCEMENTS

FROM THE ARCHIVES:

PROBLEM DRINKERS START CHAPTER OF ORGANIZATION HERE

**Known as Alcoholics Anonymous--- Has Membership of
Over 500 in Other Places in New York State**

Perhaps the strangest organization in history, with membership drawn from all walks of life in the bonds of a common slavery, is establishing a chapter in Huntington...

Thus starts the earliest published mention of Alcoholics Anonymous in Suffolk County the SIA Archives has on file. This article dates from August 7, 1941 and appeared in the Huntington newspaper, Long Islander. There are many more articles like this on display at the SIA Office in Patchogue-- and there are many more articles like this not on display because they haven't been found yet. We could use your help. Maybe you are a researcher at heart and would like to help save AA's history. Or maybe you know how to write or take photographs or know how to file or interview. We could use your talent. Leave a message for the Archives Chair at the Office 654-1150.

HELP WANTED PHONE CAPTAINS

The most immediate concern facing the Hotline is finding people to serve as Phone Captains in the following districts. Contact Dolores through the office or via email phones@suffolkny-aa.org

District 40: Centerport, Cold Spring Harbor, Greenlawn, Huntington, Huntington Station, Melville

District 50: Babylon, Deer Park, Dix Hills, North Babylon, West Babylon, Oak Beach

District 60: Brentwood, Central Islip, Hauppauge, Islip Terrace

District 70: Bay Shore, East Islip, Islip, Great River

District 80: Amityville, Copiague, Lindenhurst, West Islip, Wyandanch

District 200: Cutchogue, Greenport, Mattituck, Orient, Southold

District 260: Sag Harbor, Shelter Island, Southampton, Watermill

Meeting Changes

Selden Early Commuters Group

Beginners Meeting
Tuesday 6:00—7:45 PM
Grace Presbyterian Church
425 Hawkins Ave.
Selden
Wheelchair Accessible

Sunrise Reflections New Address

PO Box 11
Saint James, NY 11780

The Still Suffering Need 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 need your help. Any AA member can join us. The PI Committee meets at the SIA office in Patchogue on March 18th at 7:00 PM. The best Public Information tool we have is the living example of a sober member of A.A. We need you to help show that it works.

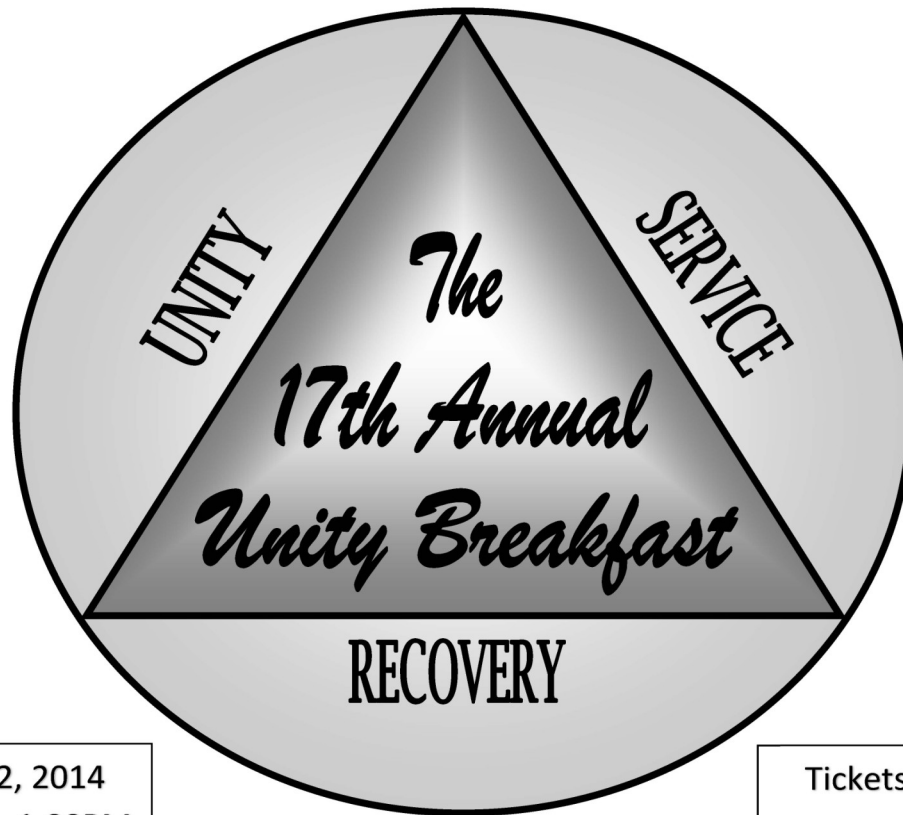
The Share-a-thon is Coming!

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 Share-a-thon meeting preceding the regular SIA monthly business meeting. The committee meets one hour before the SIA business meeting in the same location as the business meeting: either the Cleary School for the Deaf in Ronkonkoma or the Corning Cooperative Extension building in Riverhead, depending on the month.



Suffolk County General Service of Alcoholics Anonymous announces

"OUR THREE LEGACIES – THE TRIANGLE IN ACTION"



March 2, 2014
9:00AM – 1:00PM

Tickets \$23

Where: East Wind Caterers and Conference Center
5720 Rte 25A, Wading River, NY

Tickets available beginning November 15, 2013 at the Suffolk General Service meeting, Rocky Point, NY

For additional information: Contact your General Service Representative or Rick B. at UNITYBREAKFAST@AASUFFOLKGS-NY.ORG

*** Special Needs including ASL interpretation may be provided with advance request ***