

# Sober Times

Williamsburg, VA- AA District 38

December 2018

## 3 Female AA Perspectives:

AA # 1.) *What is it like to be a woman in AA?*

Being a woman in AA I'm sure, nowadays, is quite like being anyone else in AA. When it comes to the literature that we use I did need to talk to my sponsor about the masculine language and assuming roles of the house wife. It was never an issue that required me to write a fourth step over, because one thing that I kept an open mind about was that this literature and this program has worked for many women before me. One of many things that this program has taught me is to stay right sized. I am no different and no more special than anyone else who walks into these rooms with the desperation for sobriety. We are all miracles. In the rooms of Alcoholics Anonymous I get to be equal to, one amongst many staying sober and helping others to achieve sobriety.

*Do you experience any safety issues?*

I am safe in AA. Now that's not to say I haven't had my run-ins with that awkward reach for a hug I didn't want to provide. With the guidance of a sponsor I have asked men to talk to the man in the room who may have the tendency to test the boundaries. Learning from other women I also know the importance of making sure that if there is a new woman in the room that I do what I can to greet that woman and connect her with like others. When approached by someone who I may not be comfortable to talk with I can do the same for them- connect them with like others.

*What strengths do females bring to our district?*

The strength that women bring to our district is being able to share their experience, strength, and hope to the newcomer and the ability for newcomers to hear their story and to know that sobriety is possible for them too. This is a beautiful fellowship and I am so grateful that our district has welcomed me as a young woman in AA just like it welcomes any other alcoholic, with patience, tolerance, kindness, and love. I am forever grateful for AA and District 38 for my life.

AA # 2.) *What is it like to be a woman in AA?*

I love womens' meetings. For a long time I was only comfortable with men. I still have to practice relating to women and spending time. So the sponsorship recommendation of women with women has been super helpful to me building relationships and trust. So important. I came in at 28 and recently divorced. So when my sponsor recommended I wait a year to date it helped me form friendships with guys and then shift toward women who I could truly relate to for continued sobriety.

*Do you have any experience with safety issues?*

No

*What strengths do females bring to our district?*

Solidarity, togetherness, longevity.

AA # 3.) *What is it like to be a woman in AA?*

It's a better time to get sober now. Twenty-five, fifty years ago, there was a huge stigma for women alcoholics. I mean, there has always been a stigma against alcoholics, but it was much worse for women. Now, there is much more of a 'level playing field' for women and men coming into AA.

When I got sober, the ratio men-to-women in my original home group was something like ten-to-one, and that reflected AA in this area as well. Now, there are more women getting sober.

*Do you experience any safety issues?*

I've never felt unsafe, but I've felt uncomfortable, particularly when I was new in AA. For example, when I was newly sober, there were men who would invite me to go to meetings with them that were, say, fifty miles away, just the two of us. Also, there are some men who may hang on too long for a hug, or who can be overly familiar when touching. They may be completely unaware of how their behavior is inappropriate. While I have never been hypersensitive to male-female relationship issues, I worry about how someone who may be more vulnerable, coming into the rooms, may interpret this. These days, I've learned to disengage from people who exhibit this kind of behavior.

Really, I'm more uncomfortable when people yell in meetings. I can't 'hear people' when they are yelling. If someone is yelling, I will sometimes need to leave the meeting, not because I feel unsafe, but because I feel uncomfortable with that kind of behavior.

*What does our district do well for women in sobriety, and what can we do better?*

It may not be the district's business, but, there are some women with long-term sobriety who discourage any interaction between men and women in AA. I believe we are learning in AA how to grow up, how to be in right relations with others. That includes people of the opposite gender. If I'm working with a newcomer and they balk at some of the suggestions about learning healthy relationships, I suggest they look at their motives. Really, I don't think we should worry so much about someone else's gender or sexuality as much as how to do the next right thing.

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## “Writing to an AA Member in Prison”



I met D\_\_\_ early in 2012. A fellow AA member encouraged me to become a letter writing volunteer in a correspondence program sponsored by the General Service Organization’s Corrections Committee. I wrote to the New York Office and received D\_\_\_’s name and address. He is incarcerated in a California State Penitentiary.

D\_\_\_ has spent almost 25 years in prison. In one of his letters to me he wrote, “I know that my addiction played a heavy role in the person I used to be, and I am thankful that my God blessed me to wake up in that holding a cell with a sober mind that set me free on the right path.” In another, he went on “I continue to live one day at a time talking about and working the steps. I am now one of the key figures (at our AA meetings.) That men in our group look to me for guidance and support means so much to me. I am always being watched and I welcome it because they know that I practice what I preach. Kindness, Service, Patience, and Sobriety.”

During the time that D\_\_\_ and I have been corresponding we have gotten to know each other well. We have developed a close friendship. We have shared our experiences as active alcoholics and our coming to Alcoholics Anonymous with its spiritually based 12 step program of recovery. We have shared his accomplishments and his setbacks. For example, he has completed his certification as a drug and alcohol counselor and has received his California State License as a heating and air conditioning technician. He wanted to develop that skill so that he could support his family and himself when he is released. He is currently taking classes in a prison based community college program. He has made amends to his family members and both he and they celebrate the healing process that each has experienced.

D\_\_\_ has known the disappointment of being twice denied parole. Recently he was advised to submit a third application. That is a positive development. He asked me to write a character reference letter to the Parole Hearing Board. I was honored to do so, and I wrote in support of his request for release. I sent him a copy of that letter and he answered “I am deeply grateful for your willingness to write to the Board. You have been willing to do that without hesitation from the time we first met, and I have to admit that no one in my life has ever done that LOL. I am getting choked up with emotion as I write this. I thank you and appreciate you more than you will ever know.”

I share this account about my correspondence with D\_\_\_ to let you know, and perhaps feel the impact that our letter writing has had on each of us. I am in awe of a man who tries to live his life as a sober alcoholic willing to lead by example, as one who demonstrates that even in a most difficult environment one can know the peace that comes from a closer connection with a Higher Power through service to others.

Perhaps anyone reading this might consider becoming an AA volunteer letter writer. If past practice is an accurate guide, you will exchange one letter per month with your inmate. You can begin by writing to the Corrections Desk:

**Corrections Desk – General Service Office  
Box 459 Grand Central Station  
New York, NY 10163**

You will receive the name and address of an inmate along with guidelines regarding the content of your letters. You may use printed applications often found at home group meeting’s in the Literature section. You may wish to use the special Intergroup mail box at the downtown Williamsburg Post Office as your return address. It is:

**Your name and home group name  
Williamsburg Corrections  
Box 617  
Williamsburg, VA 23187**

Corrections Committee members check the PO Box at least twice each week. Having your home group name will help us get your response letters to you in a timely fashion.

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## From the Editor:

Alcoholics are funny; I always find it hilarious when sponsees tell me, embarrassed ... "I have to tell you something... I thought of drinking." Well, let me tell you something; you're ALCOHOLIC! You're going to think of alcohol! My best friend is also one of us; she relayed something to me years ago that I take to heart: Birds fly, fish swim, alcoholics drink. Whether you are sober one day or many years; you are a damn MIRACLE! Believe it!

My sponsor says, "Get comfortable with being uncomfortable." What is best is not always comfortable; I have come to find this true during my recovery journey. Looking at your past, making amends, 4<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup>, and 10<sup>th</sup> steps are often unpleasant tasks to undertake. Admitting your faults is rarely fun. Understand that you are ALLOWED to have flaws: to be and look imperfect. You are not damaged; you are HUMAN... perfectly imperfect. No one is perfect; it's progress not perfection.

If you have very little time (I don't have long myself) or if you have a while; you need not beat yourself up over mistakes. Simply correct them and carry on! I am CONSTANTLY making mistakes and learning from them. I make them, but I am NOT one. I have just come out of the tail end of something that in the past would have EASILY caused me to drink in the past. Instead, I reached out and constantly made amends; I am grateful that the obsession to drink has left me. Yes, I am far from perfect, but I do my best... and that is good enough!

Arlyn S.

## Perspective: Annual Gratitude Dinner

The Williamsburg Area Intergroup annual Gratitude Dinner was a great success; I sat with members who ranged from their first week to long-timers. ALL (about 170 of us!) enjoyed themselves (special thanks to those AAs who worked so diligently to make the night successful and to those who brought delicious food to share; your efforts did NOT go unnoticed!) There were so many from our district in attendance that I did not get to see everyone. It gave me great joy to look around the huge room and see so many enjoying themselves and celebrating their gratitude for AA and what it has done for them. It was a wonderful evening of food, fellowship, and love; I am grateful for all members, at every stage, and look forward to future district gatherings!

Arlyn S.

## Clubhouse Update:

The Triangle Stepping Stones (TSS) clubhouse celebrated its 5th anniversary with a pot luck cook-out in October. TSS provided the burgers, hot dogs and such and people brought a favorite side dish or dessert. It was a rainy Fall afternoon – as the universe didn't get the memo about our plans; but the event was well attended despite the weather and the unforeseen conflict with Charlie's memorial service. We estimate that between 85 to 100 people showed up to help us mark TSS's 5th anniversary – including a sizeable contingent from The Farley Center and Williamsburg Place.

TSS currently hosts over 20 Twelve Step meetings weekly (and growing), with an estimated weekly meeting attendance of more than 300 people. Some newcomers to AA, NA, or Al Anon are initially put-off by churches, and the TSS clubhouse provides an alternative to the commonplace church basement setting for 12-Step meetings.

In 2017, the membership of Triangle Stepping Stones turned over responsibility for managing the affairs of the non-profit corporation to the Board of Directors. (Not unlike what Bill W. and the AA pioneers did at the first GSO conference almost 70 years ago.) We are pleased to report that TSS finished 2017 in the black (revenue exceeded expenses) and we are working towards the same outcome for 2018.

The Mission of TSS is "to provide and maintain a place for the meeting and fellowship of 12-Step groups." We could not accomplish this life-changing mission without the support of TSS's members, volunteers, and the donors who make it possible for us to serve the Historic Triangles' recovering community.

If you would like to become a member of Triangle Stepping Stones, volunteer, or otherwise support the clubhouse's mission to provide a place for Twelve Step meetings and fellowship, please go to our website at <http://www.trianglesteppingstones.com/>, visit the clubhouse at 3279 Lake Powell Road, or speak with one of the TSS Board Members listed below.

Doug B. 2018 Board Chair  
(757) 647-1555

Triangle Stepping Stones Board of Directors (Nov. 2018)

Kat C, Mike L, Doug B, Clark F, Tim M, Thurman W, Sarah K, Greg P, Karen H, Arlyn S, Vivian M, Dennis W.

The Triangle Stepping Stones clubhouse is asking for holiday decoration donations. Please contact one of the board members above.

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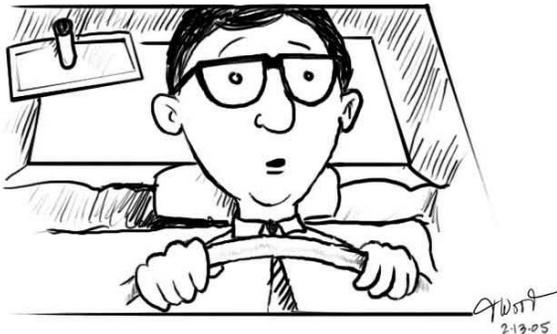
## Babysitting at Room to Grow:

Childcare is now available for AA members with children in the Williamsburg area. The Room to Grow meeting is offering a babysitting service during meetings. "Leave the bottles for the babies," smiles a homegroup member.

Another says, "Babysitting at Room To Grow is designed to allow an alcoholic to get to a meeting when otherwise they might not be able to." The meeting set out to enact this program after realizing no other meeting in Williamsburg offered childcare. They began passing a blue can every meeting and slowly built up seed money to pay for the service.

One group member involved commented, "It was difficult to find the right babysitter, but when the time was right, it happened." The group conscience committed to support the service for six months as a trial run. Room to Grow is hoping if they build it, they will come. Other groups can get involved by announcing the service at their meetings or passing a blue can to collect funds.

The Room to Grow meeting is held every Saturday at 2pm at the St. Stephens Lutheran Church, 612 Jamestown Rd.



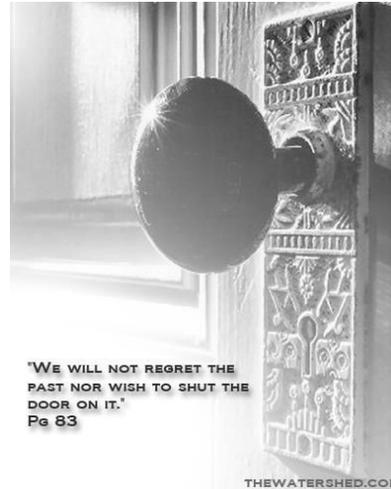
Grant O.

**IN THAT INSTANT, ED REACHED TOTAL ENLIGHTENMENT AND SERENITY,  
THEN LOST IT COMPLETELY WHEN THE LIGHT TURNED GREEN...**

## New Meeting: 12:30 Sunday at TSS

Consider allowing AA to guide you like a beacon of light, out of the dark towards your RECOVERY. Join us in fellowship at the Lighthouse Meeting. This open meeting has a rotating format, including; Open discussion, 12 Traditions, Big Book Study and Speakers. We welcome newcomers, young & older members; newcomers, old timers and anyone in between! Children are always welcome. "Recovery begins at exactly that moment when you are completely broken and willing to surrender to unfamiliar ways in order to be rebuilt into who YOU were meant to be"-Unknown

Evelyn S.



Sober Times is a publication made possible by the Williamsburg Area Intergroup in District 38. Opinions expressed are strictly those of the authors and do not reflect those of AA as a whole. Contributions, suggestions, and comments are welcomed. So is help. Write to

[newsletter@aawilliamsburg.org](mailto:newsletter@aawilliamsburg.org)

Intergroup meetings are held the 2<sup>nd</sup> Wednesday of each month, 630PM at 4925 Centerville Rd. For more info go to [www.aawilliamsburg.org](http://www.aawilliamsburg.org) or call (757) 253-1234

## Mark Your Calendar

### Christmas Day & New Year's Day

**Holiday Alcothons**

**Wesley Foundation**

**526 Jamestown Rd.**

**8am to 8pm**

**Meetings on the even hours**

**Fellowship and food on the odd hours**

### New Years' Eve

**(non-AA sponsored recovery event)**

**Masquerade Dance Party**

**Meeting 8pm, Dance to follow.**

**Spirit Works**

**5800 Mooretown Rd.**

**info call Jeffery 757-239-1462**

### 43<sup>rd</sup> Annual Oceanfront Conference

**Feb 15, 16, 17, 2019**

**info [www.oceanfrontconference.org](http://www.oceanfrontconference.org)**