

Sober Times

March 2017

New Meeting Started March 2

A new meeting is in the Williamsburg area, begun March 2nd at 7PM at Triangle Stepping Stones at 3279 Lake Powell Rd.

Named "Peace and Serenity Group," the meeting will focus on serving the LGBTQ members within the recovery community, although the meeting is open to all who wish to attend. The meeting will be every Thursday at 7PM, and format most weeks will be open discussion if there is a topic or concern brought up by any attendee, or reading from the Big Book if not. A speaker will be featured on the last Thursday of the month.

Said the chairperson for the new group - "I see a big need for an LGBTQ meeting in our district. Currently, people are going to Norfolk and Richmond on Saturdays to attend LGBTQ meetings. Certain things may be difficult to talk about, and so, just like a men's or women's meeting, we hope to allow people who are openly gay, closeted, or questioning to be able to discuss matters in a relaxed setting. As both alcoholism and drug use are issues of concern within the gay community, we think talking about drugs should be okay, too. We hope to provide an atmosphere where people are comfortable, where they can seek peace, love, and happiness in their lives, and work on staying sober. Anybody who wants to attend will be welcome. The format we selected was patterned after one of the LGBTQ meetings held in the Richmond area. We felt that it would work here in Williamsburg, too. We are holding the meeting at the Triangle Stepping Stones because the clubhouse is trying to diversify the kinds of meetings that they offer to the recovery community, trying to attract more kinds of people to the clubhouse, and because rent is cheap."

From a member of Triangle Stepping Stones - "We think this meeting is important because it provides a niche for potential meeting-goers. We hope that meetings, and the club, will be welcoming to everybody."

Another AA member - "My choice to support this meeting is in accordance with the responsibility statement. When the hand of AA reaches out, in any way, regardless of race, creed, or sexual orientation, I am responsible to help if I am able. I respect and admire all those involved in helping to make this meeting possible."

For more information or to contact the meeting organizers, send an email to the newsletter chair at newsletter@aawilliamsburg.org

Take Your Sponsor To Dinner

The annual "Take Your Sponsor To Dinner" event will be hosted by the Williamsburg Area Intergroup on Saturday, April 29th at King Of Glory Lutheran Church, 4897 Longhill Rd. The dinner will begin at 6PM, but attendees are encouraged to come to the meet-and-greet at 5PM, and volunteers are needed for set-up of this special event, starting at 3PM.

From one of the dinner organizers - "The 'Take your Sponsor to Dinner' event in our district is held annually in Spring. Just so you know, you do not have to have a sponsor nor would you be kicked out of the event if you do not bring your sponsor. There is no cap in how much or little time in sobriety you have to be able to attend. We'd like to encourage everyone to come, especially those who are sponsorless and might have some misgiving about the subject. All in all it is a time of AA fellowship geared towards our support towards sponsorship. In the last 4-5 years I have attended, the presentation after dinner has varied, from plays, to panels sharing their experience as sponsees, as well as experience as sponsors. We don't know yet this year what format we will use, or what kind information we will have for the presentation, but ideas are welcome from the AA community. This event, just like all other AA events, is self supporting through our own contributions, except that with this one we suggest a \$5.00 donation to cover dinner. Where else are you going to have a nice lasagne dinner, dessert included, with a nice show at the end for that kind of money?!! Anyways, this year's event will take place April 29, 2017 at the King of Glory Lutheran Church. Meet and greet will be at 5:00 and dinner will start at 6:00. We always appreciate and welcome anyone to join the Special Events committee for set up at 3:00 of the same afternoon."

SERCYPAA Bid Meeting

A committee meeting for the Virginia bid for the 2018 SERCYPAA conference will be held Saturday, March 11th at 4PM at the Triangle Stepping Stones Sober Club, 3279 Lake Powell Rd. in Williamsburg.

From a SERCYPAA committee member - "The Virginia SERCYPAA bid committee is simply a group of people who have come together to put together a plan to host the Southeast Conference of Young People in AA in Virginia. We will take our bid, along with a few other states, to the 2017 conference in St. Petersburg Florida June 1-4.

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We just want to create more awareness to young people in AA in Virginia so that young people can find the fellowship they crave like we did. We still want to stay sober and help other alcoholics to stay sober, we just wanna have a lotta fun doing it. My first YPAA conference blew me away, and so has every other conference since. That is why I get involved, and hope that by bringing the Southeast Conference of Young People in AA to Virginia, or at least trying to, other people may experience the same gift that I have received. Sobriety.”



VIRGINIA BID FOR SERCYPAA

March 11th, 2017 @ 4pm
Triangle Stepping Stones Sober Club
3279 Lake Powell Road
Williamsburg, Virginia

Stated another AA - “A couple years ago, our home group, which had drunks of all ages as members, was asked to help host a hospitality suite at a past YPAA conference. One of my newcomer sponsees and I brought two pots of chili, financed by our seventh-tradition basket, to the conference, and together we served about 70 hungry guys and girls in about an hour. We met people from all over, had a blast, and, most importantly, my sponsee was inspired by the experience, was able to relate to other young people at the conference, and recently picked up a two-year medallion. That is what being in service is supposed to be all about.”

Regional SERCYPAA conferences include speakers, social gatherings, and workshops, and would be a chance for young sober people to connect and have fun. All ages are welcome to both the conference and the bid committee meeting, as 'you are young if you say you are.'

Already planned is VSCYPAA21 (the Virginia State Conference of Young People in Alcoholics Anonymous) which will be held June 30 – July 2 in Richmond, VA at the Hilton Downtown. The theme is 'The Sky Is The Limit.' Pre-registration is ongoing, and more information on the state-

level conference can be found by speaking with one of the YPAA members at the bid meeting. The VSCYPAA conference is also seeking people in service for both conference outreach, and volunteers at the conference itself.

Serenity Weekend In Williamsburg March 24-26

The Serenity Weekend Conference will be held this spring from Friday, March 24, to Sunday, March 26 at the Clarion Historic District at 351 York St. in Williamsburg. The tentative schedule of events includes a speaker Friday night, four speakers, including an Alanon, a workshop on AA history, and ice cream social on Saturday, and a speaker Sunday morning. Pre-registration is no longer available, and the deadline for dinner buffet reservations has passed. Registration at the door is \$30.00 per person.

Said one of the organizers - “The Serenity Weekend Conference is a Virginia tradition, and has been held for many years in Williamsburg. The purpose of the conference is fellowship, to hear good speakers from all over the country, and a gathering of people who are 'doing the deal.' It's popular, so we expect the conference to sell out. The fliers have been out for months.”

More information can be found at the conference website at serenityweekend.net

Acrostic Puzzle

E	O	F	M	E	M	O	R	I	E	S	T	V
A	E	D	Q	N	U	Z	A	O	B	K	X	N
S	Y	G	C	O	O	P	E	R	A	T	E	S
U	N	D	E	R	S	T	A	N	D	I	N	G
H	E	L	P	S	L	I	K	E	O	H	Z	R
L	R	W	Z	A	L	P	O	F	W	L	L	F
A	F	R	I	E	N	D	S	H	I	P	I	R
U	H	K	I	N	D	N	E	S	S	N	S	I
G	O	N	M	R	E	S	P	E	C	T	T	E
H	S	P	E	C	I	A	L	P	W	H	E	N
T	C	T	I	H	P	L	A	Y	B	P	N	D
E	V	D	C	A	R	I	N	G	K	L	S	L
R	X	B	T	U	A	C	C	E	P	T	S	Y

Accepts	Helps	Memories
Caring	Kindness	Play
Cooperates	Laughter	Respect
Friendly	Like	Special
Friendship	Listens	Understanding

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

Intergroup meetings are held the 2nd Wednesday of each month, 630PM at 4925 Centerville Rd. For more information go to www.aawilliamsburg.org or call (757) 253-1234

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Area Spring Assembly April 7-9

The VAC (Virginia Area Committee) Spring Assembly will be held April 7th to 9th 2017, at the Hospitality House Hotel in Fredricksburg, VA. The assembly is the business meeting for AA at the Area level, and attended by GSRs (Group Service Representatives) and DCMs (District Committee Members) from across the state.

From our DCM - "The focus of the VAC Assembly Apr 7-9 is to review the Concerns of Conference. We do this to prepare the Delegate for the General Service Conference meeting in NY Apr 23-29. At this point the Concerns of Conference, a 1,277 page document containing the agenda and background information, was forwarded to all Virginia DCMs via the Delegate."

All groups are urged to send their Representatives. Further information can be found at the District 38 meeting, held on the 1st Wednesday of the month at 630PM at 4925 Centerville Rd.

For hotel information, call 540-786-8321. Reservations must be made by March 24.

Time For DCM Reports

It is time once again to invite our district DCM (District Committee Member) or ADCM (Assistant District Committee Member) to your home group meeting for a short presentation.

From the DCM - "The District 38 Guidelines describe the DCM as an essential link between the GSRs, the Area Delegate, and the General Service Conference. The DCM attends and represents District 38 at the Area level, reports on the District status, carries the District's conscience to the Area, and reports back the District about Area meetings and GSO. The DCM report generally explains the service structure, and how the groups, as the ultimate authority within AA, participate in decision-making process. The report will share concerns that are currently under consideration within the District, Area, and General Service Conference. It may highlight specific concerns such as exploration of an Instagram account, Facebook page, or Twitter account. It may share which pamphlets and publications are being considered for revision or creation. It will explain what group contributions are coming into AA and how the money is being expended.

The primary purpose of a DCM visit is to share information and maintain open lines of communication between the individual groups and

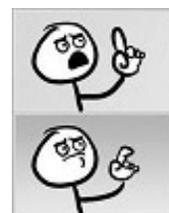
wider AA. The District 38 Guidelines place an expectation that the DCM will visit home groups at least annually to inform them of service opportunities. When a meeting becomes a group, it decides to participate in the service structure and make decisions based upon an informed group conscience. When a group is asked to weigh in on decisions which affect other groups or AA as a whole—such as, 'should AA have a Twitter account' the group has a responsibility to gather information before making a decision.

The group's GSR and the DCM visits can contribute useful information. The DCM visit also gives the group members an opportunity to have a one-on-one dialogue with the DCM to express specific concerns."

Participation by the group is voluntary. Please invite your DCM/ADCM to your next home group meeting by speaking to your GSR.

Along with DCM reports, the Virginia Area Delegate is scheduled to give a report Saturday, May 20th, from 5 to 8PM at a location to be announced. There will be a potluck dinner, followed by the Delegate's report.

This is an annual event, allowing district members to get information directly from someone who attends the General Service Conference meeting April 23-29 in New York. Come meet our Area Delegate, and find out what's happening in our fellowship worldwide.



Anonymous Opinion and Comment: Switching Sponsors –

When I first arrived in the rooms of Alcoholics Anonymous, I was told that if I wanted to stay sober I had to do four things: a) get a sponsor; b) work The Twelve Steps; c) go to meetings; d) pray. We've all gotten this same advice, and it is no accident that the one thing that remains constant every time this advice is dispatched—whether it's via a meeting or a one-on-one conversation—is that get a sponsor is always first. The reason for this, I'll posit to you, is that having a sponsor is one of the most crucial moves somebody can make in the rooms of Alcoholics Anonymous. I've been reflecting a lot recently on what it was like in my first few months of

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sobriety, partially because I've recently switched sponsors. My sobriety date is October 15, 2015. I came to the rooms of Alcoholics Anonymous as the result of a suicide attempt. The combination of my alcoholism, my severe depressive condition, and social anxiety formed a compendium of barriers between Self and Other that I knew had to be, at the very least, incrementally liquidated; however, I had no idea how to go about doing that. I eventually decided on a sponsor after hearing him share in a meeting one night, and what struck more than anything else he had said was the fact that the guy appeared smart, real, but above all, funny. It's safe to say my sense of humor had regressed to very un-stylized self-deprecation and condescendingly mordant buffoonery. I felt the most comfortable sharing the familiar woes with this gentleman and worked the Twelve Steps as diligently as I could. He taught me to laugh at myself; however, in more healthy ways; and the subsequent impact that that relationship had on me—both as a member of AA and as a person—has meant more to me than I can put into words. Change is one of the most difficult things that the human psyche has to grapple with in many ways, and for alcoholics it can crush us if we're not careful. It came as a surprise to me when I found out that my sponsor was moving an hour away and I began to try to quickly calculate how I could keep my sponsor, diligently work the Steps with that sponsor, and maintain that relationship despite the distance. In the midst of trying to figure these sorts of things out, one of my own sponsees had informed me of his decision to switch sponsors since he and I had already gone through the steps and he wanted to gain a different perspective from somebody else. Despite my rather non-Western beliefs and interpretations of conscious contact with God as we understand him, I felt like this was some sort of indicator into a possible solution for my own predicament; thus, I decided that I would also switch sponsors, which created within myself several conundrums and obstacles that I had completely forgot that I'm prone to. A small army of anxieties began to rouse themselves from their sleep when it came to choosing a new sponsor. One of my biggest hang-ups as an individual also happens to be one of my strengths. I'm a voracious reader, a fiction writer, and an intellectual; therefore, my predilection for philosophical omphaloskepsis thrives in the arenas of abstract thought and creative innovation, but can, if left unchecked, serve as an unknowing accomplice to the perpetual coup d'état that my disease has waged against my sobriety. Finding somebody who understood these areas of my personality without feeling the impulse to stifle them or to write them off was necessary. In the end, however, it was also important for me to

remember that one of the tools that I have been given in sobriety is the concept of faith—I had to have faith that a Power greater than myself would help me find the right sponsor, and much to my continual surprise, It did. I found a sponsor who occasionally submits himself to the cerebral navel-fingering that I do, but who has done it enough to know when it is too much. The next hang-up I had in this process was informing my then current sponsor of my decision to switch sponsor. With that simple action came the irrational fear that my sponsor, who had only proved himself to be a very kind, understanding, and well adjusted person hitherto, would react harshly to my decision to switch sponsors. I tarried and procrastinated my way to having this conversation. My anxious mind created scenarios where my sponsor would feel betrayed or hurt by my decision and when I finally had the conversation I was more than surprised. The first thing he said to me when I told him of my idea was, "Do you have somebody already in mind?" which, the more I think about it, is the mark of a great sponsor—his first question was geared to make sure that I wasn't planning on sponsoring myself, or going rogue. He was very gracious and very understanding, and the whole conversation reaffirmed my faith in the program of Alcoholics Anonymous as being a Fellowship of men and women who truly care enough to do whatever is necessary to help the newcomer get and stay sober. The conclusion to this scattered and loquacious diatribe is that switching sponsors has been a great move for my sobriety. The difference in perspective and approach to the Twelve Steps between sponsors is much like—albeit on a more personal level—analogous to the phenomenon that people experience reading The Book in meetings; the way the person sitting next you can and most likely will interpret the same passage in a totally different way than the way you might at home, by yourself. I opine to my reader(s) that sponsorship is the same way. My new sponsor's insight never contradicts or counteracts what my first sponsor told me; in fact, it's just the opposite. The level of understanding I have of life and the disease of/recovery from alcoholism is only deepened and strengthened by learning new approaches to life's problems and the subtle ways that my disease tries to make me drink over them. Not to mention the fact that the more people that I expose myself to in AA, the less fear I have of people wanting to help me. It's important for me to always keep in mind that my sponsor is much like my symbolic connection with the rest of the fellowship; the more I am open with him, the more likely I am to be open with the others in the Fellowship; and the more that I work the Steps with him and confide in him, the more I can be useful to those in need.