



Sara-Mana InterGroup

The April 2017 Issue

District 4, Area 15

AASRQ.org

Central Office 2017 Fund Drive at an **ALL TIME LOW**

With only one-and-a-half weeks to go, the 2017 Central Office Fund Drive stands at \$18000.00. We are \$14000.00 short of our goal. Your individual contributions keep the doors of the Central Office open to serve our Groups, Members, Committees, and individuals walking in off the street wanting information about AA or help to stop drinking.

We thank those of you who have already contributed so generously this year and in past years. We are asking those who have not yet contributed this year to please do so. As always, we thank all of our members for your continued financial, physical, and spiritual support.

Early in Sobriety: How AA is Changing My Life

Thad H. has been coming into the rooms since 2008. "I was the guy that would show up 1 minute before the meeting, sat in the back row, and left as soon as it was over," Thad says. "I talked to my sponsor only once, and that's when he called ME."

Thad explained that he had no 'tool kit' for sobriety. Before long, he was going to fewer and fewer meetings. Nine months later, after a major life event occurred, so did his relapse.

With Thad's second attempt at sobriety, armed with nearly 4 months, he made a major geographic move to Florida (it's often advised NOT to make any major decisions or changes the first year of sobriety). "I was in a new environment, away from my sponsor. I had begun to explore spirituality and had begun to incorporate the steps into my life.

The major move to Florida, however,

proved too disruptive to my program, and I relapsed."

"I think the third time is a charm," Thad states. "I stopped lying and came clean to my family, a huge support system to me. I surrendered in front of them."

"I knew my Higher Power was ever present in my life the moment my parents and their respective new spouses all came together to be with me as I detoxed myself. They surrounded me with their unconditional love, compassion, and support those exhaustive days and nights, taking turns keeping a watchful eye on me – all under the same roof. I knew how hard it was for all of them – but they did it for me."

"I hooked up with an amazing sponsor who immediately had me involved in service work and social interaction. I can remember, only a few weeks into sobriety, at St. Bernard's Church, my sponsor handing me a green ticket (for the Gratitude Dinner), saying, 'by the way,

you are going to this and helping me work the dinner!"

Central Office hours of operation changes for the summer months!



As it was voted on and reported in October of 2016, the Central Office hours of operation this summer will once again be 9:00 AM – 4:00PM Wednesday, Thursday & Friday, beginning May 1st thru Oct 31st.

These hours will continue in following years. We will also be open the 3rd Saturday during General Service District meetings and on the 3rd Tuesday from 6:00 PM and during the Intergroup meeting.

("Early in Sobriety" Cont'd)

Thad also remembers how his sponsor asked him to pick up other struggling alcoholics who needed rides to the Gratitude Dinner. "At first I was annoyed, until I realized that this

became an incredible opportunity to immerse myself in interaction with other alcoholics. My normal high-anxiety level was gone, and I realized that this was my first successful sober-social occurrence in a very long time. Since then, I am convinced that service work is a big part of my success thus far."

Thad settled down into his home group. "I went to the 11th Step Meditation Meeting in Palmetto. The group meditates for 20 minutes of silence – I think it was my fifth day of being sober, and I ran out of there in 5 minutes, anxiety-ridden! When I first moved to Florida and still sober from Ohio, I was consumed with finding a fancy meting 'right on the beach.' I was in sunny Florida after all! But today, the Palmetto Group, in a church basement, is my home, and the Palmetto Meditation meeting is my FAVORITE meeting!"

Thad left with an interesting tidbit...."On page 417, the Big Book talks about ACCEPTANCE. Whenever I get angry, or I need to express myself to my family, it's like a secret signal, I shout out, 'Page 417!' and I simply take some time to myself, reflect, and pray about what's bothering me and let it pass. Then, I move on."

"I made it through the holidays, my birthday, and through a major death in the family for the first time since I was 15. The program is working for me, because I am teachable and open."

Stephen H.
Sobriety Date: 2/28/17

Steven's attempts at sobriety included trying to unsuccessfully detox for 3 days and several hospitalizations. He tried to stop drinking on his own, and, finally, after some physical problems –a stroke, and a small heart attack – he

collapsed in the street on his way to catching a bus to get sober!

"After drinking for over 30 years, my drinking was no longer working for me anymore!"

"My brother has been in AA for over 5 years and has encouraged me to join. When I finally decided to become a part of the program – I achieved a different outlook that I didn't know that I needed – AND that I didn't know I NEVER had!"

"My self confidence, something I hadn't realized I'd lost to drinking – soared! I became part of a group who is moving in a positive direction."

"After becoming a part of the program, I realized I was able to achieve an amazing feeling that's hard to explain, but could not be felt in any other surrounding, other than AA."

Friends of the Pelican Celebrates 37 Years



Almost 100 Group members, family, and friends attended the recent Thursday, February 23, 2017 Anniversary of the Friends of the Pelican at Roser Memorial Community Church on Anna Maria.

The speaker for the evening was Tony F., the Office Manager of the Local Sara-Mana Central Office, Inc. He shared his experience, strength, and hope with the Crowd assembled after a wonderful assorted pot luck dinner.

If you care to share in this experience next year, please mark down on your calendar the last Thursday in February (February 22) 2018 for our 38th Anniversary Meeting.

I Don't Feel As If I Belong Anymore



Some time ago, I was shocked to hear a few old-timers say they didn't feel as if they belonged to AA anymore. I was shocked mostly because I felt the same way. I had to ask myself, whose responsibility is it if I don't feel I belong?

Upon reflection, I recalled that when I first joined AA in 1976, I didn't feel like I "belonged" for a long time – not until I worked through the Twelve Steps with a sponsor. To this day, that same sponsor still works with newcomers and participates at the "entry level" in the AA program.

When I first came in, I was willing to go to any lengths for my sobriety. How did I feel about that now, in my twenty-third year?

I realized that maybe I wasn't as willing as I used to be. The thrill of early sobriety was gone. Could it be recaptured? Was I willing to make myself available? When asked, would I do anything requested from an AA member?

I soon admitted that even though I still went to meetings and sponsored people, my attitude had changed from the zeal of a newcomer to the complacency that comes with not participating to the extent I needed to. I realized that just because I was an old-timer of sorts, I was not giving at the level I was capable of. I was participating on a qualified basis at a level convenient for me. Maybe it was time to change my attitude and become more open to the things I'd found so satisfying in my early recovery.

With this new attitude, I was soon blessed with several new people to work with. I found much more enjoyment and enrichment at meetings. I began to reread the AA books about our co-founders and the Traditions. I tried my best to provide my experience, strength, and hope in those situations I'd been leaving up to others. I tried to truly participate. Now I feel connected again and am enjoying AA every bit as much as I did as a newcomer.

Chances are every old-timer goes through this. When it happens, the best solution is to seek humility and realize that we are only one drink away from a drunk, no matter how long we have been in the Fellowship. Numerous old-timers have paid the price for complacency. If we feel out of touch, let's take a personal inventory, not about what we are doing or not doing, but about our attitudes, motives, and especially our First Step. We are either alcoholics or we are not. If I am an alcoholic, have I slipped out of recovery into complacency?

Alcoholism is cunning, baffling, and powerful. It can strike no matter how long we have been in AA if we become spiritually unfit. And besides, the Fellowship needs us. I often ask myself the question, Where did all the old-timers go?

Bruce T., Highlands Ranch, CO
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September 2000



"What we have here is two tickets to paradise; destination AA!"

**Dee D., Louisville, Ky.,
 Grapevine, August 2013**



**Back of the Book:
 Helping Others**

Bill Wilson felt that the personal stories in the back of the Big Book would be more helpful than the main text. In this story, "The Vicious Cycle," (page 219 ff, 4th edition), Jim Burwell, one of the "forgotten founders" of A.A., tells what helping other A.A.s meant to him. Burwell wrote: ". . .in telling newcomers how to change their lives and attitudes, all of a sudden I found I was doing a little changing myself. . . if I expected him to change, I would have to work on myself too. . . the dividends have been enormous."

Dear Alkie

"Alkie" is a long-time member of A.A. His comments are based on his own strength, hope, and experience and do not represent any official A.A. position or practice.

Q. My drinking is out of control. I've been to a few AA meetings and it didn't work. I'm terrified – how can I get help?

A. DON'T LOSE HOPE! 1) Go to one of the 300+ meetings listed in the Sara Mana Where and When, 2) walk up to someone similar to you in terms of sex and age, 3) tell them 'I'm terrified – how can I get help'. It's best to do this when you're sober (hung over's ok); your goal is to find people who used to be as miserable as you are now and learn from them. Find a temporary sponsor asap – a sponsor is your guide to the world of AA; a coach that will tell you what you need to hear (not what you want to hear). You ask 'how can I get help' – by being Honest, Open, and Willing. Oh, and don't drink today and come back tomorrow!

Q. I'm a first-time sponsor and it's so energizing. I'm renewing my own program and I realize that emotional health is as important as abstinence for me. How can I pass this on to my 'newbie'?

A. We know the enemies of emotional wellbeing are resentment, anger, and fear. A good AA friend explained: "resentment is I didn't get my way yesterday, anger is I'm not getting my way today, fear is I won't get my way tomorrow – notice any similarity?" The third step tells us to 'turn it over' – to confront our self-centeredness & think of others. "Relieve me of bondage of self."

Q. Fourth month – fourth step and I seem to have writers block.

A. Procrastination is a character defect, so I'll get to the point -- 'JUST DO IT'! It's not a work of art and you're not Shakespeare.

**GET YOUR NEWSLETTER
 DELIVERED TO YOUR INBOX!**

Email: newsletter@asrq.org

ANNIVERSARIES

Bay Group

March	
Bill W.	43
Jean W.	36
Paul N.	10
Wes E.	4

Bee Ridge East

March	
Jeanette K.	31
Mark H.	19

Friends of the Pelican

March	
Bob C	37
Chris C	4
Christine R.	2
Debbie B.	1

Gulf Gate Noon

March	
Edgar	32
Leslie	30
Bill M.	28
Brenda	2
Yvonne	2

Lakewood Ranch 12&12

March	
Marty K.	17
Bill M. II	2

Pass-It-On

March	
Don B.	34
Viola	11
John	9
Chris C.	4

Serenity Room

March	
Peggy F.	41
Cathy E.	41
Don S.	39

St Armand's Noon

March	
Bert C.	50
B.J.	28
Janet B.	18
David D.	15
Salena W.	10
Theresa C.	9
Jeff S.	8

Sunrise

March	
John M.	30
Lou C.	24
Tim L.	24
Mandy S.	16
Fred H.	7
Bill S.	4
Joy	3
Mike Q.	3

Groups: email birthdays to newsletter@AAsrq.org and put ANNIVERSARIES in the subject line. Cutoff for the newsletter is the last day of the month. March anniversaries appear in April issue.

The purpose of this newsletter is to inform, connect and entertain.

TO SUBMIT ITEMS TO THE NEWSLETTER:

Anniversaries, articles and meeting notices should be sent to newsletter@aasrq.org.

Submit material as attachments or directly in an email. Include your first name, group and type of item being sent. Deadline is the last day of the month. Submissions may be edited for length or content. Opinions expressed herein are those of the writers and not necessarily those of A.A., Sara-Mana Intergroup, or the Central Office, located at #B-2, 1748 Independence Blvd., Sarasota, FL 34234. Phone 941-351-4818.



SERVICE WORK AVAILABLE!

The Sara Mana Helpline needs you! One year of continuous sobriety required. For more information, contact: saramanahelpline@gmail.com

The Helpline has open shifts available from: Sun, Tues, Wed: 9-12pm

MARCH HELPLINE TOTALS

AA Meeting Time/Location	284
AA Meeting in Lieu of 12 Step Call	20
Actual 12 Step Call	8
Al-Anon	14
Special Needs	6
Miscellaneous	32
Total Calls	364

On the Move ...

The **"Men and Women of Serenity"** which meets on Saturdays at 4 PM moved their location from the Ellenton UMC (United Methodist Church) to the First Baptist Church of Ellenton located at 1707 36th Ave East (Ellenton-Gillette Road) starting Saturday, March 25, 2017.

The **Keep It Green** meeting, currently meeting at the Chart House Restaurant Complex 201 Gulf of Mexico Drive, Longboat Key, FL 34228, will be returning to its prior location starting May 6, 2017 Saturday at 5:30 PM. Bayfront Park 4052 Gulf of Mexico drive Longboat Key, FL 34228

The Fresh Start Group's

Sunday Speaker Meeting has a new start time, effective April 2nd. 7pm @ The Gratitude Room, 610 10th Street East in Bradenton.

Events ...

District IV 2017 Founders' Day Dinner: Celebrating our past, Contributes to our Future. Please celebrate 82 years with us! June 10, 2017 Bahia Vista Mennonite Church, 4041 Bahia Vista. Doors Open @ 5:30 Dinner @ 6:30 Speaker, Johnny L. @ 8:00PM

Spring into the 12 Steps!

Keep it Simple Group

presents an exciting exploration of the steps with a series of speakers! Saturday, April 22, 9am – 4pm. Morning pastries and lunch served, Tickets \$5 each.