



WHAT IS THE DISTRICT IV HELPLINE?

Meet Greg M., your new Helpline Chair. Greg has recently taken over the position of Helpline Chair and is in the process of rebuilding this vital service. The Helpline, (941) 951-6810, is the telephone number serving Manatee and Sarasota District IV and is a function of our District IV InterGroup. It is a "Help" line, not a "Crisis" line, meaning that the purpose is to "Help" to connect alcoholics with AA meetings within the District. It is not for crisis counseling or intervention. The Helpline receives calls from alcoholics new to the area, people in the area who begin to suspect that they may have a problem with alcohol, those being released from jail or rehab/detox preparing to reenter the community, and friends and families of alcoholics.

For many years we had operated our Helpline using a normal land line telephone number and an answering service. When businesses were shutting down due to Covid-19, the answering service began having their employees working from home. They could answer calls and forward them to a telephone number, but they were no longer able to forward the calls to other numbers. As a result, the previous Helpline Chair had been taking all incoming calls for about the past year and a half. Our InterGroup Chair, Matt D., finally decided that it was time to revive this vital service and he scouted answering service alternatives, deciding upon Ring Central. Ring Central is a digital messaging platform that is much more flexible at about half of the cost of the previous non-functioning service. This service will transfer calls to designated cell phones of Helpline volunteers and has the ability to roll over to the next person in line, should the slotted person not be able to answer.

Volunteers should be sober alcoholics but there is no "time" requirement. Because it is not a crisis line the call takers need not be skilled at crisis intervention. They just need to have a basic grasp of the geography of our District IV area and access to current meeting information.

This is a great way to break into service so even people that are relatively new to AA will have an opportunity to "give back" right away by manning a slot for the Helpline. .

Another function of the Helpline is gathering a volunteer list for Twelfth Step Calls. This works by sending teams of volunteers to meet with alcoholics who are struggling and may need someone in person to help them get past the crisis point and into meetings. We always send two or more people, and we always send men to meet with men and women to meet with women.

Interested parties can TEXT our Helpline Chair, Greg M. at: (941) 321-6083 or send email to gregmiles1@yahoo.com

FINALLY???

When I began this share, I am sure I was writing about something else. That lasted about two sentences. Then the direction changed without my intent. So what you are about to read below is the result of me getting lost on my way to making a point. Sometimes my GPS stalls.

Here goes---as some of you did, I grew up the oldest of a passel of siblings. I was told to set an example for them. What I heard was, "If you mess up, it's entirely your fault if they mess up." Since I knew full well, I was not perfect thus they didn't have a chance of "getting it right", I became totally ashamed of my humanness. If you thought that there was anything redeemable about me, I had been successful in my deception.

Eventually I acknowledged to myself that I am an alcoholic. This was the worst. There was no lower state. I also knew AA was my only hope. This meant I had to do everything in AA perfectly and immediately or I would surely have a slip. I was absolutely terrified and no longer had my "friend" alcohol to provide any comfort. If anyone tried to tell me I was doing well, my only thought was my deception was still working. As I began the steps, I found the fourth and fifth steps horrible and at the end of the fifth step I felt worse not better. After all, I had just confessed that I was lower than the earth. And then came the sixth and seventh steps and I began to look at tall buildings longingly. When in meetings I heard other AAs acknowledge their character flaws, I was amazed. Why were they "beating themselves up" and "how on earth did they face the humiliation?" OK, so maybe I was awful, but I was in a room with lots of other awfuls. There was a difference between the two awfuls---all the awfuls with the exception of me seemed to be willing to accept their humanness. Reading further into step seven I learned that I could not fix myself by myself. That was a Higher Power job. Did this mean I was too, and had to wait for the miracle cure????

I am a slow learner with a very hard head, and I have recently been diagnosed with mild hearing loss. This I knew for a long time---I seem to hear something helpful and believe it applies to everyone except me. Shame has magical "staying power". On the off chance that what was working for others might work for me, I took a chance. The Higher Power's job in this endeavor was to grant me willingness if I seriously requested it. The action was up to me. I am ungracious which some may say is self-centeredness. I notice something positive about someone and I would just think it but never say it. I now try to remember to say it. There are other acts of graciousness that others naturally practice that don't come naturally to me. So, I try to practice these acts in the same way in similar circumstances. If I succeed, I don't feel especially noble and don't feel horrid when I fail. This has resulted in me feeling more a part of rather than me being outside looking in. Just like

The Book says we are all a work in progress. My first sponsor used to repeatedly say, "We are sick people trying to get well; not bad people trying to become good." My prayer for you, Reader, is that you allow the Program to work its magic with as little resistance as possible and try what many others have tried with glorious success. Suggestion: Steps are easier with a step guide or sponsor. Be kind to yourself.

-Anonymous



**What did Bill W. do while staying at the
Mayflower Hotel in Akron, Ohio?
(answer on back!)**

Dear Alkie,



Q. I am sober almost a year and happy in AA. My problem. I have recently had some "drunk dreams". Is this a sign of future trouble?

A. Be grateful what happens in your head, does not happen in your life! Most of us will occasionally have flashbacks - your subconscious trying to "keep it green" by reminding us of our most humiliating escapades. If those dreams become more frequent or less terrifying, talk to your sponsor. Is there someone that deserves an amend?,

Q. I was active in AA for many years then COVID hit and I went out and now can only stay sober for a few days at a time, Do I have any hope?

A. There is always hope - only if you start at step one (the only step you have to do perfect every day). Our basic principle is that we shall find no enduring strength until we first admit complete defeat!" A retired coach said it best - "with booze everything is backward - here you have to surrender to win" So, get over your pride, accept 'utter defeat' today and every day and you will be rewarded with HOPE - and the chance of being happy, joyous and free.

Piglet noticed that even though he had a very small heart, it could hold a rather large amount of gratitude.

~ A. A. Milne



Contribution by Deborah S.

Waking to the sound of the coffee maker, now sipping on fresh coffee as the sun rises. My dreams were full of fear last night, I really can't recall each dream but I can feel the residual unease. Waking and grounding myself is even more important when I run into moments like this.

Having time or rather making time to give myself a few moments to find gratitude, to focus on the things that are good, the gift of waking up sober is one of them. Warm blankets, Winny (my dog) snores and snuggles, hot coffee, family, friends and fellowship. The three f's! Watching palm fronds blow in the breeze, listening to the cooing of the dove.

The program of recovery with its twelve steps help me to connect to the world around me with a more positive attitude. Does that mean I am going to be glowing and glittery or radiant and poised every second of the day?.... Nooo,! but it helps me to find safer places to put my feet in today. It helps me to see that my unachievable expectations that all should be gentle and exactly how I want it are just that. My mum often told me I look at the world through rose colored spectacles, (I always took it as a bitter or an unkind thing) but maybe it is not. Maybe it's being able to see the best in today and embrace it. Maybe I had been looking at it all wrong for so very long. Maybe some days I just need the perspective to change somewhat? I do know that by not drinking today, the hope I find and the courage I am given (even if I'm just borrowing someone else's) make my day easier, it helps to keep my feet planted on firmer ground.

Thankful for recovery, the wisdom so willingly shared, the reintroduction to a Higher Power that I can feel comfortable with. All this and more to carry me into today gently. That I can pause and connect to that gentleness when I find myself getting off balance, the steadying hand of AA. Hope your day is filled with light, love and many wonderful moments of peace and serenity

**43rd
Friends of the Pelican
Annual Group
Anniversary Celebration!**

**Open speaker meeting format
Coffee & Dessert after the speaker!**

**Thursday, February 24th at 7:30pm
Roser Community Church
512 Pine Avenue, Anna Maria Island**



Practicing in the New in 2022

Our General Service Recording Secretary, Molly, came up with the above slogan for our 2021 New Year's Eve sober AA party. This party was on.... what else? Friday, December 31, 2021. I was there, representing the Grapevine, but my service was not what it should have been. I was late and not fully prepared. Not to worry: Mick G. stepped up and set up and manned a Grapevine table and got started on distributing the raffle tickets. Mick stayed on and continued to serve with me, manning the Grapevine table. Thanks, Mick. I appreciate you bailing me out!

This event was a Who's Who of General Service. So much so that it would not be practical to name them all. I will name a few, though. This was the first event hosted by our new Events Committee Chair, Sally. She was phenomenal! She put in weeks of planning and coordination for this event and then she expertly M.C.'d the event, keeping us on time and on target. She did a superb job and deserves our thanks and recognition for what she accomplished. Chef Paul, as always, put on a fine meal and so many other people stepped up with side dishes and desserts. No one went hungry that night!

We had brief remarks of experience, strength and hope by three speakers: Alan T., Simone C. and Brian S. Each of these speakers, in their own words, told a little piece of my story, giving me hope that what worked for them will continue to work for me. I always enjoy that message from people with more sobriety than I have. It is always inspiring.

We had a 50/50 raffle and we had a Grapevine raffle. General Service gave out seventeen copies of, "Dr. Bob and the Good Old Timers", that were donated by the Central Office. Robert T. won the Grapevine subscription raffle. We also had a sobriety countdown, ending with the person in the room with the most time presenting a Big Book to the person in the room with the least amount of sobriety. This is an always inspiring way to cheer on the efforts of the newcomer, who has direct evidence of the powerful message of recovery held in his/her hands.

Trivia Answer:



Bill W. made a phone call in the hotel lobby instead of going to the bar Pacing through the lobby, Bill passed the bar and found a church directory. Within minutes he was on the phone with a local minister. A series of calls put him in touch with an alcoholic surgeon named Dr. Bob. Bill arranged to visit the doctor at home.

(Continued)

I'll close with a shout out to the volunteers. Most people show up when the event starts and leave when the event is over but a small corps of individuals show up early to set up tables and table cloths, table decorations, sound systems, etc. People keep the coffee, juice and water services full. Other people collect and remove the trash throughout the event. People, often the same people who showed up early, stay late to break down the room, put away the tables, sweep the floors and clean up in the kitchen. These are the invisible workers. You don't see what they are doing but it's not an event without them. Those people in the background aren't expecting any thanks but I would like to thank them. It's not a party without them. To all of the many volunteers who made this night possible: THANK YOU!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

Ross J. - Grapevine Chair - 1-5-22

Events

Chili Cook-Off!
Sunday, March 13, 3-6pm
Sarasota County Farm Bureau
7289 Palmer Blvd
Sarasota, Florida 34240
Phone : (941) 371-2043

3-430pm Chili Tasting & Fellowship
4:30pm Chili Winners & Prizes
5 pm AA Meeting

\$5 Suggested Tasting Contribution
Free Entry for Contestants. Bring Crockpot of Chili by 2:30pm



Anniversaries

Attitude Adjustment Group

January
Mike N. - 23 years
Robin C. - 32 years
Karis H. - 13 years
Steve B. - 5 years
Tessa J. - 4 years
December
Elaine B. - 39 years
Ken S. - 7 years

Gulf Gate Noon

November
Ross - 7 Years
Clarissa Z - 7 years
Judy G - 6 Years
Siri - 1 Year

December
Jeep - 50 years
Frank B. - 32 Years
Howie - 42 years
Oasis Group
January
Dick B. - 32 years
Carol H. - 31 years

St. Armand's Noon Anniversaries

December
Sue M.- 41 years
Joop V.- 32 years
Yolande W. -20 years
Pat P. -16 years
Lisa M.- 15 years
Bob M. -14 years

January
Laurel -34 years
Susan A.- 34 years
Francoise D. -33 years
David R.- 32 years
Ann F. -26 years
Jeanne P.- 17 years
Beth B.- 16 years
Sue S. -16 years
Larry L.- 14 years
Kelly E. -12 years
Mike C. -10 years
Steve B.- 5 years