

Sober Time

The Newsletter of Central Jersey Intergroup

Spring 2024 Issue



Inside

Committee Info and Stories

Answering Service (Hotline)

Corrections

Hospitals and Institutions (H & I)

Libby S. Story

Literature

Meeting Lists

Newsletter

Website

Kenny G. Story

Public Information (PI/CPC)

Social

Unity

Rob P. Story

7th Tradition Thank You

H & I Flyer

Welcome to the Spring 2024 issue of *Sober Time*. A few months ago we found ourselves in need of a Newsletter Chair. Being a new panel at Intergroup it was a little intimidating. I can tell you, though, within 6 weeks we had a vision, a plan, and I hope we executed it well enough. Thank you to Jami D. for stepping up to bridge the gap and layout a vision for this issue. Everyone at Intergroup contributed to this issue! I hope we are sharing with you everything that CJI has to offer in terms of service to you, your groups, to our AA community in Central NJ, and also of the many opportunities for you to join us in service. My hope also is that you can feel the excitement, enthusiasm, and level of engagement this panel has to truly do the best we can for Central Jersey. It's exciting to be a part of. Whether you have 1 year or 30+ years it will enhance your sobriety and be a lot of fun working along side fellow AA's. Come join us!

My favorite part of putting this together was getting to ask three individuals from the Central Jersey AA Class of 2019, who celebrated 5 years in the last few months, to write what that achievement means to them. All three were very appreciative of the opportunity. I remember when I made it to 5 years it was the first time I really thought I had a chance to stay sober

for the rest of my life, one day at a time. We have 3 really good stories for you. Enjoy!

I am the best version of myself when I am fully immersed in AA.

In Service,

Dean W.



Answering Service (Hotline)

Jim G: 609-271-9693 jimgraz13@gmail.com

Kim C: 609-902-5758 Kimberly.connell2014@gmail.com

The hotline is a great way to volunteer and be of service, you just need 1 year of sobriety and these calls can be forwarded to your cell phone. We send you an instruction packet and 12th step lists so you are fully prepared. Plus, Kim can be reached if there are any questions a volunteer may need help with.

Central Jersey Intergroup Monthly Phone Commitment

OPEN	FILLED								4/15
Week	Time	Sun-day	Monday	Tues-day	Wednes-day	Thurs-day	Fri-day	Satur-day	
1	12:00 AM - 8:00 AM	Ken	A-town Men's BB	Mary	Anthony V	Fred	John K	Lou	
	8:00 AM-1:00PM	Kim C.	Camille	Jamie C.	Camille	Jay F	Beth B	Joel	
1	1:00 PM - 6:00 PM	Lou	Lamonte	Eric D	Rita	Steven N	Eric D	Murr	
	6:00 PM - 12:00 AM	Shelly R	A-town Men's BB	Clint	Angie N		John F	Live & Let Live	
2	12:00 AM - 8:00 AM	Ken		Brian B	Anthony V	Fred	John K	John M	
	8:00 AM-1:00PM	Kim C.	Camille	Jamie C.	Steven N	Jay F	Beth B	Joel	
2	1:00 PM - 6:00 PM	Lou	Lamonte	Eric D	Rita	Steven N	Eric D	Murr	
	6:00 PM - 12:00 AM	Shelly R	Nellie	Clint		Nicole M		Todd	
3	12:00 AM - 8:00 AM	Ken		Mary	Randi J	Fred	John K	Lou	
	8:00 AM-1:00PM	Kim C.	Camille	Casalon	Linda C	Jay F	Beth B	Joel	
3	1:00 PM - 6:00 PM	Lou	Lamonte	Eric D	Rita	Steven N	Eric D	Murr	
	6:00 PM - 12:00 AM	Shelly R	Nellie	Clint	Randi J	Pen-WedNight	Eric D	Todd	
4	12:00 AM - 8:00 AM	Ken		Brian B	Anthony V	Fred	John K	Lou	
	8:00 AM-1:00PM	Kim C.	Camille	Casalon	Camille	Jay F	Beth B	Joel	
4	1:00 PM - 6:00 PM	Lou	Lamonte		Rita	Steven N	Eric D	Murr	
	6:00 PM - 12:00 AM	Shelly R	Nellie	Clint		Nicole M	Eric D	Todd	
5	12:00 AM - 8:00 AM	Ken	Judy	Judy	Anthony V	Judy	Judy	Judy	
	8:00 AM-1:00PM	Kim C.	Camille	Steven N	Camille	Jay F	Steven N	Joel	
5	1:00 PM - 6:00 PM	Lou	Lamonte	Eric D	Rita	Steven N	Eric D	Murr	
	6:00 PM - 12:00 AM	Shelly R	Nellie	Clint	Angie N		Lou	Lou	



Contact:

**Men's CJI Corrections Chair
John R: 609-954-7006**

**Women's CJI Corrections Chair
Fran W: 609-477-6130**

We will walk you through the process of becoming a volunteer to carry the message to our brothers and sisters in correctional facilities throughout the state.

There but for the grace of God...

Hospitals and Institutions (H and I)

Chair: Allyssa T. Email: h&i@cjaa.org

Co-Chair: Beth B. Email: bethbyrd1@gmail.com

Committee meets the 3rd Tuesday of the month at the CJJ Office:

3525 Quakerbridge Road, Suite 5000, Hamilton, NJ 08619.

Come and join our committee!!

Hospitals & Institutions Commitments							
Last Updated: 4/21/2024		Contact: Allyssa T h&i@cjaa.org					
		2024-2026 Committee Chair	1st Week	2nd Week	3rd Week	4th Week	5th week
Princeton House - Women (Women Only)		Monday	Filled	Filled	Filled	Filled	Filled
1000 Herrontown Rd, Princeton		11:30am					
Princeton House		Mon - Fri	Open	Open	Open	Open	Open
741 Mt. Lucas Rd, Princeton		9:30am					
Princeton House		Wing 1	Filled	Filled	Filled	Filled	Filled
905 Herrontown Rd, Princeton		(Dual Diagnosis) Saturday 8:00pm					
		Wing 1	Filled	Filled	Filled	Filled	Filled
		(Dual Diagnosis) Sunday 8:00pm					
		Wing 3	Filled	Filled	Filled	Open	Filled
		(Detox) Saturday 8:00pm					
High Focus Centers		TBD	Open	Open	Open	Open	Open
15 Princess Rd, Lawrenceville, NJ							
Trenton Psychiatric Hospital		Tuesday	Filled	Open	Open	Open	Open
101 Sullivan Way, Trenton		5:30 or 6:00 pm					
Avant Rehabilitation & Care Center		**YOU DECIDE**	Facility will work with your availability. Except 8-9 am, 12-1 pm, and 5-6 pm.				
1314 Brunswick Ave, Trenton							
Rescue Mission of Trenton (Men Only)		Tuesday	Open	Open	Open	Open	Open
96 Carroll St, Trenton		7:00pm					
		Thursday	Filled	Filled	Filled	Filled	Filled
		7:00pm					
We Level Up		Wednesday	Filled	X	X	X	X
276 Bakers Basin Rd, Lawrenceville		7:00pm					
		Sunday	X	Filled	X	X	X
Filled by facility		7:00pm					
Notes:		Open = Commitment needs to be filled					
		Filled = Commitment is filled by CJIG					
		X = Commitment is filled by facility					

Please see our flyer on the website at cjaa.org or the back cover of this newsletter.

CLASS OF 2019 Libby S., January 1, 2019

I thought if I gave up drinking all the sparkle in my life would turn to gray dust. What happened was life began to sparkle and shine like never before. Anyone in my life knows how important God and AA are to me. Not just in prioritizing my recovery, but in feeling so grateful for my life every single day. Sobriety has saved me and changed me. The past 5 years have had their ups and downs for sure. The really good, the not so good, and the heartbreaks of life on life's terms. I recently heard a speaker say, "God doesn't give you anything you can't handle, and that's true, but life does and that's when you need God the most". All of those things can be true, and I can still acknowledge that I struggle with some of the same things even after 5 years in recovery.

In December of 2018 I was spiritually, mentally, emotionally, and most definitely financially bankrupt. I was an empty shell of a human. No God, no solution, and no way out of the never-ending cycle we as alcoholics create for ourselves. As I was planning to try to piece my life back together, I never really planned on getting sober or staying sober. My grand idea was to come back to AA. I had, at this time, been in and out of the rooms since 2017. I knew that when I was going to meetings things were better. I mean I had the desire to stop. I wanted what those AA's had! I just didn't know how to stop or what I was doing. People would say just stop, and that's a genius idea, but as alcoholics we can't just stop! At least I couldn't.

I had to say the simplest and yet the hardest 3 words for someone like me. "I need help". That's when my journey began. My grand plan was that I was going to come to AA for 30 days and clean up my entire life. Oh, the insanity, right? I was under this illusion that my life would immediately get better. Well That 30 days turned to 31, to 32 to 60 days. 90 days turned into 1 year and here we are 5 years 3 months and 20 somedays later. (1939 days give or take depending on publishing date). I knew the work would start once I removed the substances and I'm learning the work is never done. In the past 5 years I have learned about The Big Book of Alcoholics Anonymous. There in that book I found my story and my solution. In the meetings I found my fellows-the people with minds like mine, who been where I had been, saw what I saw, who lived like me, and came out the other side. My fellow miracles of God's grace. I learned about Unity, Service and Recovery. And every day I work on them all because I don't know which one I'm going to need on which day. Like any good alcoholic I need more. During the Covid 19 crisis, service kept me sober. I held meetings in my yard, and I knew a lot of old timers didn't agree with it. I would remind some of them that when AA was starting out, we sought safety in the homes of fellow AA's. On page 160 of the Big Book, it talks about a man and woman placing their home at the disposal of this strangely assorted crowd. Our primary purpose is to help the next alcoholic.

After two years I had my spiritual awakening. I always believed in a God because of those I shared meetings with. I believed because they believed. One day I found my God because of AA. Once I started doing the work the promises started coming true too. I knew a new happiness and freedom.

Some part of me thought that if I stayed sober long enough, I could be at complete peace. Free from any addictive tendencies. I'm not. But I am a whole lot more at peace than I was when I was in active alcoholism. That peace isn't the negation of negative feelings. It's the knowledge that you have the skills to cope with whatever happens.

A few months shy of 3 years I lost my grandfather to brain cancer. The strongest man I had ever known was taken away in 6 months. AA taught me how to get through grief without a drink. I learned to feel my feelings here and know I was going to be ok if I didn't drink or drug. I learned how to be a mother in this program. I even joined the PTA. 5 years ago, I would never have put myself out there. Having the 12 steps of Alcoholic Anonymous in my life I can work with others. I replaced most of my Fear with faith. I can do my best and know it was good enough each day. This past year was probably the most challenging of my sobriety. Because of the tools AA has given me I could handle those situations which used to baffle me. I am employable today. I am an active participant in my life and my recover today.



I have been told many times this year: “You got your marbles back, now it will take you another 5 to learn how to use them”. So, I’m just going to keep coming back. It doesn’t matter what got me sober or what has kept me sober, what matters is the willingness I had to allow myself to have when I came in this last time and continue to have today. I hear all the time: the last thing I tried was the first thing that worked. It’s that simple. If you are looking to get sober, you have a lot to look forward to. There is no better time to ask for help than now. This is a we program.

My grandfather said this to me when I first came to AA. I don’t know where he got it, but I will share it with you because this has been my experience: “I sought my soul, but my soul I could not see. I sought my God, but my God eluded me. I sought my brother, and I found all three.”

We find our people in the Fellowship, and therein lies our spiritual strength. In the rooms of Alcoholics Anonymous, in service working with others, and leaning on my Higher Power are my favorite places to be today.

Libby S.

Trenton, NJ

Sober since January 1, 2019

Come Get Involved In Service!

Central Jersey Intergroup Needs YOU!

If your homegroup does not have an Intergroup Rep-Volunteer-It’s Easy!! Just come to the body meeting: hear what is going on with all of the committee’s reporting; hear what is going on at Area 45; take all the info back to your home group and help announce our events, workshops, and where help is needed.

If you think you might want to join a committee, come and speak with the committee chair. Or look at the Committee Section on CJIAA.ORG and join!

The CJI Body Meeting Is The First Wednesday Of The Month at The Hamilton Library At 7PM. The Meeting Lasts 1 Hour. Come Join Us!

Literature

Chair: Laura F. 609-641-8861 or literature@cjiaa.org

Co-Chair: Tara M. 609-571-8777

AS BILL SEES IT

Alcoholics Anonymous co-founder Bill W. once wrote that this collection of excerpts from his writings was “meant to serve as an aid to individual meditation and a stimulant for group discussion,” and since its publication in 1967 it has done that and more for millions of A.A. members around the world. Hundreds of brief passages — excerpted from the Big Book and other A.A. literature — address the principles of gratitude, spirituality, acceptance and a host of other themes central to living a serene life free from alcohol.

With a topical index to point readers to subjects of particular interest, *As Bill Sees It* is an easy-to-use resource of inspiration, comfort, and humor that provides a sense of belonging for those on the path of recovery. Whether seeking insight on a specific topic or opening the book at random, readers will find that there is always more to discover. The passages are perfect for discussion in group settings or for personal reflection. \$11

FUN IN SOBRIETY

Features 50-plus inspiring stories by members of Alcoholics Anonymous about the many ways they’ve learned to have a good time. Getting sober is not easy, but through taking action and developing a sober network, life can begin to take on new, exciting adventures. The stories in this book show how AA members have enhanced their lives now that they’re sober. Chapters include: travel (road trips, cruises, etc.), outdoor activities (hiking, biking, camping), arts & hobbies (dancing, singing, painting, carpentry), social events (parties, holidays, events) and, of course interesting AA activities and sober events. \$14

These books and all conference approved materials are available at the Central Jersey Intergroup Office from the CJI Literature committee. Please contact Laura F. 609 649 8861.

The **LIT ON WHEELS** Team is available to attend all of your AA events, anniversaries, picnics, etc, to display and sell conference approved literature.

You can contact us by calling or texting Laura at 609-649-8861 or Tara at 609-571-8777

Meeting List

Chair: Rick S. 609-963-7669 or email: meetinglist@cjiaa.org

The Meeting List Committee publishes and maintains the CJI Meeting List of Alcoholics Anonymous. If your home group needs to edit their information or you need to add or delete your group from the meeting list please contact Rick. There is also an e-form to do this on cjiaa.org under the heading "Important Forms".

Newsletter

CJI is in need of a **Newsletter Chair**. If this might be of interest to you please contact us. Also, if you are proficient in Microsoft Publisher and would be interested in volunteering to assist in layout of the newsletter please contact us.

Jami D., Intergroup Co-Chair, is currently leading the newsletter team. Please contact Jami at cochair@cjiaa.org to inquire about the position or to provide newsletter input.

Dean W., Financial Secretary, 610-420-7486 or financial@cjiaa.org is a contact for this also.

Website

Chair: Pam R. 609-915-8745 email: webmaster@cjiaa.org

Co-Chair: Rick S. 609-963-7669 email: webcochair@cjiaa.org

CJI hosts and maintains a very informative website. Please visit cjiaa.org ! The website team is looking for volunteers to join the committee to learn about website management and to assist in maintaining our site. Please contact Pam or Rick to get involved today.

BE THE DOT IN THE MIDDLE
BETWEEN GOD AND AA.



CLASS OF 2019 Kenny G., March 19, 2019

I've been coming in and out of the rooms for over 20 years and have celebrated 1 year 4 different times. I always see people I know celebrate 5 years and they say the cobwebs have finally cleared!! I now see what they mean. I read somewhere statistics say you have a greater chance to remain sober the rest of your life as long as you continue to work the program. For me, I must keep God in charge. I firmly believe I have a great chance of a lifetime of sobriety, growing old with all my AA friends. I spent a lot of years just doing AA. This time around I chose to live AA. God & AA everyday continue to keep me going.

These past 5 years have by far been the hardest, most trying, and most rewarding years of my life. I lost everything: wife, kids, family, dog, house, and business. I found myself homeless and sober with only God and AA to rely on. Which rebuilt me into a stronger better person. At 9 months of sobriety, I fell 14 feet and broke both my heels. 10 screws and 10 months learning to walk again. Going through all this as an ex-heroin addict was a great test to show myself and family how much I wanted to remain sober. It took me years to figure out that it doesn't matter what ya use or drink. *The problem is me.* As long as I continue to work on myself and remain sober, everything seems to fall in place in God's time, not mine.

The pain of losing my family was by far the worst thing I've been through. I am so blessed and grateful I have them back in my life today. We all made it through COVID together. There have been a lot of ups and downs. Re-building my business has taken a lot of time and effort. We recently purchased our dream home. All of these blessings bring life's stressors. As my sponsor likes to remind me, they are privilege problems. God & AA have walked me through all of it. I am forever grateful. I'm here with a little over 5 years sober now. I feel like I have finally arrived at a wonderful point in life. Life is great! I'm proud to be sober and a member of AA with amazing friends and support.

I feel moving forward is maintaining sobriety and continuing to work on myself and be a productive member of society. In these past 5 years my life has become so full of life, kids' activities, and lots of love. I strive to keep balance in my life the best I can. I strive to be the best husband, father to my 3 little kids, son, brother, and friend I can be. I will continue to live AA one day at a time. I plan to enjoy this upcoming year after the past crazy 5 years of trials and tribulations. It has all made me the person I am today. Thank You God & AA!

Kenny G.

Columbus, NJ

Sober since March 19, 2019

Public Information

Public Information/Cooperation With The Professional Community

Last summer I went to an Area 45 Assembly with the intent of finding HOW I could get involved in service. Guess what, IT'S EASY - ANYONE CAN DO IT! All it takes is a DESIRE and a COMMITMENT to help. As a sales professional I've learned that sometimes it's as SIMPLE as providing INFORMATION and then let whomever DECIDE on their own IF they are interested. Public Information (PI) and Cooperation with the Professional Community (CPC) is very similar. These committees provide INFORMATION about HOW to get HELP from AA.

ANYONE can do it... You don't even have to leave your home to HELP!

I have accepted the challenge of being the Committee Chair for the Central Jersey Intergroup as a way to serve and GIVE BACK to those who HELPED save MY LIFE. Mainly Alcoholics Anonymous and the many members over the years who SHOWED me what LOVE is... GRATITUDE is and ACTION WORD!

PUBLIC INFORMATION is just that - INFORMATION... the GOAL is to provide accurate information to the public when requested. Sharing information with First Responders, Libraries, Community Centers, Schools, Houses of Worship on WHAT AA IS and HOW TO FIND MEETINGS.

COOPERATION WITH THE PROFESSIONAL COMMUNITY is very similar to PUBLIC INFORMATION - just a little more specific. The GOAL is to provide INFORMATION to those who in their daily professional lives may come in contact with ALCOHOLICS who are looking for HELP. Examples of these are: Social Workers, Clergy, Nurses, Doctors, Therapists, Educators, Military Professionals, Human Resource Departments, Police, Fire, Rescue...

HOW to get involved? JOIN A ZOOM CALL on the FIRST THURSDAY of the MONTH, give me a CALL, send me a TEXT, or send an e-mail to PI@centraljerseyintergroup.org

TIME 7PM

ZOOM-ID 861-5262-9444

PASSCODE 484741

We need folks to help put together packets, capture contact information, drop off pamphlets, and continue to keep an open mind on HOW to fulfill the RESPONSIBILITY PLEDGE.

Social

“We are not a glum lot” – Big Book pg. 132. Nothing could be truer, especially with the launch of the 2024 Social Committee. This group focuses on organizing entertaining events to encourage fellowship in addition to the typical AA meeting. These functions demonstrate to the newcomer that you can have fun without drinking, while also reminding other members of the need to stay connected in AA.

The committee is headed by Libby S. and the current members include Jen C. (Co-Chair), Kerri B., Nadiah J., Laura F., and Meg S.

The group opened their season with an axe throwing event on March 3rd at Stumpy’s Hatchet House. Our 45 tickets sold out in **10 DAYS** and the event was a huge hit! While axes were being hurled in the air, you could grab a bite to eat and share some laughter with friends. The 2-hour time slot flew by due to the contagious fun had by all! Next year we plan to rent the full facility so many more of you can join us for a fun time.



Social Committee (L to R)
Laura F., Nadiah J., Jen C., Libby S.,
Kerri B., Not pictured Meg S.



Jen C. shows off her bullseye

Our next event is a Trenton Thunder game slated for June 9th. This will be a full family event, including an all you can eat buffet. Arrival time is 12:30 pm and opening pitch is 1:00 pm. Tickets are only \$28/pp. **UPDATE: Unfortunately, we are SOLD OUT for this event! 100 tickets were sold in only 23 days! Thank you for your support!!**

In addition to the items above, the committee has a few more gatherings planned for the rest of the year, so stay tuned for more details. To ensure you get all the latest information on every event, make sure your homegroup has a CJI representative to hear it firsthand to report back to your meeting.

If you'd like to join the social committee, we meet the second Wednesday of the month at 6pm in the CJI office, 3525 Quakerbridge Road, Suite 5000, Hamilton Township, NJ 08619.

Unity

The Unity Committee schedules and books commitments for CJI representatives to "take a meeting" to groups in the area. The purpose is for one alcoholic to go to groups to talk about what CJI does.

This is the basic explanation of Intergroup Services:

- CJI assembles and publishes meeting lists.
- CJI has AA literature – including Big Books, 12 and 12 books and other AA related publications, such as the Grapevine - available for groups and individuals to purchase at cost. We can bring literature to your event or anniversary meeting as well.
- We create and maintain our website, CJIAA.ORG. Any changes to your meeting dates and times can be posted on the website.
- We create and organize AA social events.
- Also, we schedule AA meetings into prisons, jails, hospitals, and institutions. This is a great way to provide AA service to other alcoholics and support your own recovery as well.
- We let the general public know about AA's availability in the community for the alcoholic who still suffers.
- And we organize and maintain a newsletter.
- A 24-hour hotline for AA members and others in need of help or information. This includes people who think they might have an alcohol problem as well as family and friends.

All these services are available for your group and for you!

To contact Unity with questions or TO GET INVOLVED, please reach out or come to our monthly committee meeting. The CJI Unity Committee Meeting is held on the 3rd Monday of the month at 5:30 PM.

Zoom Meeting ID – 691 077 4153

Chair: Sam A. email: Unity@cjiaa.org



AA has always felt like home to me, although for many years, any period of abstinence from alcohol felt like punishment. I went to my first meeting in 1987, while in my first rehab, just a few months before my 15th birthday. I had yet to experience the hopelessness and misery of decades of active alcoholism, but from an emotional standpoint, I had been suffering from end-stage alcoholism.

Trying to be a good boy, I attended meetings upon discharge from treatment. In AA I discovered a sense of camaraderie and belonging that was missing from my relationships with my teenage peers. I was warmly welcomed and included in any AA meetings or events I chose to participate in, and adults I met were excited that I was getting sober so young. I felt, however, like I hadn't really had a fair chance to try to "control and enjoy" my drinking. Older members would comment on how much pain I'd been spared, but secretly, I felt as if I'd been ripped off! I was envious of people who had somehow managed to drink for 20 or 30 years before they had their fun taken away.

For the rest of my teenage years, the doors of AA revolved for me, as I tried time and time again to go out and drink successfully. I always knew that if it got bad, I could just go back to AA and "reset". I didn't know then that the discomfort I felt during these periods of sobriety was indicative of the spiritual malady of alcoholism.

By the time I was 20, I had hit a pretty hard and painful bottom. I stumbled back into AA, and fueled by desperation, I kept coming and stayed sober for nearly 5 years. This period of abstinence was made possible by immersion into AA... the meetings, the events, the culture, the *fellowship*. Yet, the discomfort and spiritual emptiness of untreated alcoholism slowly became more and more painful for me. I would apply the principles that I learned in AA only if I agreed with them, and I wanted absolutely nothing to do with God. I sought relief in various things outside of myself: possessions, romance, hobbies, etc., but no matter what I tried, I was always discontent and moody.

I'm sure that there were people urging me to get into the step work and service, but I also had people telling me that if I "don't drink and go to meetings" I'd be ok, and that seemed like an easier, softer way to go. I was still clinging to the erroneous idea that I could determine what was good for me, and at almost 5 years sober, a drink seemed like something that would offer some relief, and after all that time, I might be able to make it work. So, I drank.

It took me 20 years to make it back to AA. It would have been merciful if this disease had hit me hard right away, but rather, it allowed me periods of relative manageability. Over the course of those years, I had a couple careers, I had become a husband, a homeowner, a father, and a partner in a respected business, and there were enough times that I drank without consequence to give me the illusion that I had control. Very gradually, the price of my alcoholic life became greater, and towards the end, I couldn't lower my standards fast enough to meet the consequences that were raining down upon me.

By the time I got sober, I was divorced, unemployed (and unemployable), I owed more than \$100,000 in various debts, I had lost the right to see my child, I was living in a car, I was emaciated at 130 lbs., I smelled terrible, I had sores all over my body, and I was dying of alcoholism. It seemed like too far a distance to travel to get back to anything resembling a normal life, and I continued to drink, knowing that the only thing that offered any relief from the pain of what I'd become was the very thing that made me that way. I was hopeless, in the truest sense of the word.

Finally, in a moment of despair, I said the first honest prayer of my life. I didn't think much of it at the time, but a couple of days later, a thought occurred to me that must have come from something outside of me. It hit me like a freight train, and I believe that God answered my prayer with a miraculous and merciful moment of perfect clarity. I suddenly realized that I had been wrong. Wrong about EVERYTHING. I realized that every ounce of determination I had to live well was no match for the poor decisions I would inevitably continue to make, and that those decisions would make

perfect sense to me when I made them. I realized that I had absolutely NO IDEA how to live my life, drunk or sober. I realized that I was no different from any other alcoholic in AA, and that those people had found a way to live free, happy, usefully, and satisfied. Thus, I became teachable. This was the beginning of my *real* sobriety... the only freedom from alcoholism that I've ever had, despite so much previous involvement in AA.

I celebrated 5 years sober on March 9th, 2024. When asked to bring my experience to bear upon the topic of "5 years sober" I have reflected on how different my life is than it was when I sobered up, of course, but also how different it is when compared to the years I put together while in AA, but without working the program presented to us in the first 164 pages of our big book.

My life today is drastically different (and better) than ever before. The beauty of this is that it would be a great departure from collective AA experience if it were not! Externally, of course, my circumstances have improved tremendously. My financial debts have all been settled and I'm respected, trusted, and paid well by my employer. My relationship with my daughter (now 12) has been repaired, and my correspondence with her mother is cordial. I got remarried last May to a wonderful woman I met in AA. She and I agreed early in our relationship that we'd never be able to be more than a third priority to each other; God and AA had to come first for each of us. We're honest and respectful with each other. We average about one argument per year, and these disagreements do not include yelling or throwing things.

The real rewards, however, are less visible. I have moments of great peace and satisfaction as the result of having cleaned house in steps four thru nine, and also as the result of setting "self" aside and focusing instead on service to God and others. I *think* differently. Life *looks* different to me; it's far less doom and gloom, and I see beauty and humor where before I could not. The 10th step promises have come true for me, which is the grand prize, in my opinion. I don't think about drinking. Ever.

I remain active in AA. I sponsor three men, and I maintain regular contact with my sponsor. I always make sure I have an AA job, because that was suggested to me early on. Right now, I'm the treasurer of my home group.

So at 5 years sober, my life doesn't resemble the life I came in with, but this beautiful life is only possible for me with constant effort. Although I don't think about drinking, my alcoholic ego is constantly repairing itself. My past periods of abstinence during which I suffered from untreated alcoholism have provided me with a valuable tool: I believe that it's easier to identify the problem when I've slipped into self-reliance than it would be without those past experiences. During these (thankfully) short periods, I'm in a state of mind where I find myself fearful, opinionated, and overbearing to those around me. This usually occurs when I've been slacking in prayer and/or service. When this happens, I take a look at my 10th, 11th and 12th steps, and try to get back to that moment of perfect clarity in which I realize that still, I have no idea how to live my life, drunk or sober.

I've worked hard in these 5 years, but it hasn't *been* hard, if that makes any sense. Homelessness was hard. Not being able to bring myself to open the mail was hard. Constantly fabricating excuses for my poor behavior was hard. At the end of my drinking, waking up was even hard. By comparison, working AA's program of recovery seems easy. I'm so incredibly grateful for the unconditional love shown to me in AA, and for the grace of a merciful God in whom I spent decades afraid to believe.

-Rob P.

Hainesport, NJ

Sober since March 9, 2019

7th Tradition Donations

February

Venture To Help
Unshakeable Foundation
Plainsboro 1935
HOW Group
New Way to Live
Steps in Succession
Feelings in Sobriety
One Day at a Time
West Windsor Group
Cranbury Noon Group
Allentown Saturday Afternoon Group
1 personal donation
1 unidentified group

April

Princeton Alternative
Live and Let Live
Hightstown Early Birds
Friday Night Prospect
No Complaints Group
Bordentown Sunday Nite
Keep The Faith Group
Lawrenceville Women's Meeting
Women's Big Book
Mixed Nuts
Venture To Help
Casalan
If You Want What We Have
Cranbury Noon Group
Contribution-New Jersey & Friends

March

Pennington Wednesday Night
Group #000257571
Crispy Critters
Rule 62
Prospects for Sobriety
Hightstown Winners
Noon Serenity
Slackwood Monday Night Step
Turtle Cove Big Book
Step Up to Sobriety
If You Want What We Have
1 unidentified group

All Groups: Please Note Your Group
Name On Checks Or Venmo Transactions
So We Can Recognize You.

Thank You To All Groups For Your Support
Of Central Jersey Intergroup!

Please Mail Contributions to: CJI, PO Box
4096, Trenton, NJ 08610; or use the
Venmo link on the website at: cjiaa.org
There Are 2 Links on the home page.

You Are Helping Us To Carry The AA Mes-
sage To You, Your Groups, And The Still
Sick And Suffering Alcoholics In Hospi-
tals , Institutions, and Correctional Facili-
ties; as well as provide awareness to the
public and the professional community.

HOSPITALS & INSTITUTIONS COMMITTEE

**MEETS EVERY
3RD TUESDAY
7:30PM**

“Practical experience shows that nothing will so much insure immunity from drinking as intensive work with other alcoholics. It works when other activities fail.”

– Alcoholics Anonymous, p. 89

**MEET US AT
3525 QUAKERBRIDGE ROAD.
SUITE 5000 HAMILTON
08619**

**Make an impact
in our Area**

**Find out how to take
an AA meeting into
your local treatment
centers**

**WE NEED
YOUR HELP**

h&i@cjaa.org

