

RECOVERY TIMES

Vol. 36, No. 12, December 2012

The Alcoholics Anonymous San Fernando Valley Central Office Newsletter

Note: Central Office will be closed for book sales on Christmas Day, Dec. 25 and Jan. 1st

Holiday Time: Is it a Time of Gratitude or Are you Singing the Blues?



This time of year can be tough for alcoholics as it is typically a time when we celebrate with families. Sometimes, we no longer want to be with our families of origin due to their addictions. In other cases, we've lost loved ones through our own disease. Fortunately, we can spend our time with other A.A.'s in recovery and don't have to feel alone at this time of year. There are meetings to be found all over the Greater Los Angeles area and at many, there will be celebrations, parties, and Alcathons during the holidays where we can enjoy the spirit of the holidays without the presence of alcohol.

I got sober on December 22, 2003 just as the holidays were approaching. Prior to coming to A.A., I remember it was a crushingly-lonely time for me. The holiday decorations inspired rage and sadness and the happy well-wishes I got from others angered me as I compared what my holiday was going to be like to theirs: No holiday invitations, no family to spend it with, no money, no gifts, nowhere to go, and no one to spend it with. I saw the holidays as a sad reminder of how desperate my life had become and how it always was going to be. From that vantage point, suicide seemed like a good option to me.



Fortunately, an "eskimo" named John J. answered my call at the end of a "wrong number" when I was trying to reach someone else to tell them my suicide plan. John was a member of A.A. with 29 years of sobriety at that point. He intervened before I could carry out my "plan" and suggested that I "try" the program of A.A. I did and I found what I was looking for: love and tolerance in the rooms of A.A., companionship through the holidays, a New Years Eve alcathon which carried me through the rest of the holiday season, and good food to eat, hot coffee to drink, and a place where I could hang out and be a 'part of' a lifestyle that was trying to help me, instead of trying to kill me.

Today, the holidays no longer represent a threat or a judgement of who I am. Nearly 9 years of A.A. has helped me to build a base of friendships that are solid with people who are mostly positive and happy. I have found through the Steps solutions to my problems that alcohol never "fixed" and I try to use those tools in all of my affairs. Now, I look at the holidays for what they are: a chance to appreciate my life, share food and meals with others, donate to charities that do good work, and time to be still for a moment and reflect on how God worked for this alcoholic in making my wrong number the "right number," not so many years ago. I have asked members of A.A. to share their thoughts on the Holidays. Here they are: (continue to Page 4)

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Windsor Club Alcathon Dec. 7 at 8 p.m. – Dec. 9, 2012 123 W. Windsor Road, Glendale, CA 91204.
The **San Fernando Group's** 44th Annual New Year's Eve Alcathon: Friday, Dec. 28- Sun. Dec. 31.
San Fernando Group is at the storefront at 13245 Gladstone Ave. in Sylmar, CA.



SERVICE COMMITTEES SCHEDULE:

- **SFV Central Office Board Mtg: Wed. Jan. 9, 2012,** 6:30 p.m., Valley Central Office
- **SFV Intergroup: Mon., Jan. 14, 2012,** New member 6:30 p.m./Business mtg: 7 p.m., St. Innocent Ch., 5657 Lindley Ave., Tarzana
- **Gen Service, District 1: (1st Wed.) Jan. 2, 2012,** 6:30 p.m. Business Meeting, 7552 Remmet, Canoga Park
- **Gen. Service, District 2: (1st Tues.) Jan. , 2012,** 6:30 p.m. Business Meeting, 4011 Dunsmore, La Crescenta
- **Gen. Service District 7: (2nd Sat.) Jan. 12, 2012,** 9 a.m. Business Meeting, Women's Club:33201 Agua Dulce Canyon Road, Agua Dulce, CA
- **Gen Service, District 11: (1st Mon.) Jan. 7, 2012,** 6 p.m. New GSR 6:30 p.m./ Bus. Mtg., 315 W. Vine Street, Glendale,
- **Gen Service, District 16: (1st Mon.) Jan. 7, 2012,** 6:15 p.m. meeting, 15950 Chatsworth, Granada Hills.
- **Gen. Service, District 17: (1st Mon.) Jan. 7, 2012,** 6 p.m. New GSRs./6:30 p.m. Bus. Mtg, 5000 Colfax, Noho.
- **SFV H & I: (3rd Monday) Dec. 17 2012:** 7 p.m. Orientation/ 8 p.m. Business Meeting, 5657 Lindley Ave., Tarzana

SERVICE OPPORTUNITIES IN THE SAN FERNANDO VALLEY:

Central Office needs telephone volunteers for all shifts (esp. midnight – 9 a.m.). If you have a year or more of continuous sobriety, you can sign up at the office or online: www.sfvaa.org/involve.html or call Central Office: 818 988-3001.

Public Information Committee: Provides information to the general public about what A.A. does & doesn't do. Need volunteers, especially young people and Spanish-speaking AAs, for health fairs and to speak at schools & businesses.

Valley Hospitals and Institutions Committee: Carry the message of A.A. into hospitals, prisons and treatment facilities to those who are unable to get out to meetings. Call Central Office if interested.

San Fernando Valley Convention Committee: Volunteers are welcome to participate in the planning of the 2013 SFV AA Convention to be held in Woodland Hills at the Warner Center Marriott. The Committee meets the 3rd Tuesday of every month at 7 p.m. at St. Innocent Church, 5657 Lindley

San Fernando Valley Young People in AA: Committee Meeting is held the 1st Sunday of each month at Unit A., 10641 Burbank Blvd., NoHo.

San Fernando Valley Intergroup: The SFV Central Office coordinates a monthly meeting for all Intergroup reps on the 2nd Monday of each month at St. Innocent Church, 5657 Lindley Ave., Tarzana. If your meeting/group does not currently have an Intergroup Rep, please consider appointing someone to represent your meeting. Intergroup reps provide an important service to the group by sharing information on upcoming AA events in the Valley. **To serve as an Intergroup Rep, call Central Office: 818 988-3001.**

CENTRAL OFFICE: LIVE 24/7 PHONE SERVICE: Central Office of the SF Valley is open for calls any hour of the day or night. Visit us at: www.sfvaa.org for meeting info, upcoming events, service meeting info, and links to other cool AA websites or call to speak with a sober AA member: (818) 988-3001.

HAS YOUR MEETING CHANGED? If your meeting info changes (location, time, meeting name or type of meeting), let Central Office know. Please provide meeting updates in writing by mail or delivered in person during office hours.

HAVING A BIRTHDAY? By making a \$1.00 donation for every year of your sobriety, you can support Central Office in reaching out to alcoholics all over the county. Please send your donation in during the month of your birthday so we can acknowledge you in the correct issue of Recovery Times. This month's sober birthday celebrants are:

DEATHS: THINGS WE CANNOT CHANGE: If you are aware of the passing of a member of our Fellowship, please call us at (818) 988-3001 or email an obituary to: sfvaanews@sbcglobal.net

Intergroup Rep Board Meeting

Notes: November 12, 2012

Chairperson Cheryl A. opened the meeting at 7:00 p.m. with *The Serenity Prayer*. Susan read "*The Twelve Traditions*". Dawn H., Recording Secretary, accepted a motion for approval of Minutes from October's Intergroup Meeting; the minutes were approved as submitted.

Treasurer Brian H. said Central Office is in the red <\$3,603.92> MTD and in the red <-\$5,396.47> YTD. Group donations are down significantly from 2011, and all groups were reminded to be timely in their contributions. Brian also reminded the IGRs that November is Gratitude Month, and that all monies collected should go directly to Central Office, and not be split between GSR and Area 93.

Central Office: Everything is running smoothly at Central Office. As always, volunteers are still needed to cover 9 pm-midnight and 12 am-9 am phone shifts, as well as to handle in-person 12-step calls. Interested parties should contact Central Office. Central Office will be open for one-half day on Christmas Eve and New Year's Eve. Central Office will be closed on Christmas Day and New Year's Day, however phones will be answered.

Website: Everything is running smoothly with the www.sfvaa.org website.

Recovery Times: Everything is outstanding with the newsletter.

Co chair Andre W. welcomed five new IGRs. IGRs were reminded to encourage recruitment of IGRs from meetings that are not currently represented. There are currently 300+



groups in the San Fernando Valley, with only 50-60 meetings represented monthly at IGR.

Service Representatives:

District 11: The Area 93 Archives to host its 7th Annual Gratitude Day on Sunday, 11/24/12 at the archives facility in Oxnard.

District 1 elections were held, and its new DCM is Ron. New Alt DCM is Norm.

Area 93 elections to be held 11/18 in Oakview.

San Fernando Valley Hospital & Institutions Committee: H&I's annual fundraiser was a great success, and Daniel thanked all who participated. He brought the monthly H&I financial report.

San Fernando Valley AA Convention: Marathon Chair Thomas announced the next meeting for the 2013 SFVAA Convention Planning Committee. The 38th Annual SFVAA Convention's there will be "Freedom thru Recovery." He invited groups to host a meeting and golfers to register for their golfing event.

Group Reps:

Daniel: The **San Fernando Group** is hosting its 44th Annual New Year's Eve Alcahion, December 28-31.

John M: The **Burbank Group** is hosting a "Back to Basics" Workshop on 11/18 from 9AM-4PM for all who are

interested in learning more about the Steps. Suggested donation is \$10.

- **Dawn H.:** The Big Island Bash Raffle is one of the SFV Convention fundraisers, and Dawn had packets of tickets to be sold. All were encouraged to see her after the meeting to take tickets back to their meetings to sell in support of our convention. Dawn also had convention pins available at \$3/each, or two for \$5.
- **Brian H.:** Brian had 50/50 raffle tickets available for \$25 each. Grand prize is \$10,000 and all proceeds go to benefit the SFV convention.
- **Bob F.:** This year's "AA at the VA" Christmas caroling event has been scheduled for a Monday due to changing regulations at the VA. Unfortunately, it is the same night as December's Intergroup meeting, 12/10. Those IGRs who wish to participate in the VA event can still get attendance credit for their groups, providing they visit Central Office that week to pick up the monthly flyers and newsletter.



IGR Rep Birthdays:

- Mike – 1 year
- Whitney – 9 years
- Dawn – 17 years
- Niva – 21 years
- Elva – 22 years
- John – 24 years
- Mary Ann – 33 years

Motion to Adjourn: 7:20 p.m. with the Lord's Prayer. Next Intergroup meeting is Monday, Dec. 10, 2012.

Quotes from A.A.'s Founders & Others:

"Let us remember that great legion who still suffer from alcoholism and who are still without hope. Let us, at any cost or sacrifice, so improve our communication with all these that they may find what we have found - a new life of freedom under God."

AA Co-Founder, **Bill W.**, Fe. 1961, "The Shape of Things to Come," *I Am Responsible: The Hand of AA*

"Tolerance ... promotes an open-mindedness that is vastly important -- is, in fact, a prerequisite to the successful termination of any line of search, whether it be scientific or spiritual."

AA Co-founder **Dr. Bob S.**, July 1944, "On Cultivating Tolerance."

"There is a tendency to label everything that an alcoholic may do as 'alcoholic behavior.' The truth is, it is simply human nature. Emotional and mental quirks are classified as symptoms of alcoholism merely because alcoholics have them, yet those same quirks can be found among non-alcoholics, too. Actually they are symptoms of mankind."
William Duncan Silkworth, MD, January 1947, "Slips and Human Nature."

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Holiday Time: Is it a Time of Gratitude or Are you Singing the Blues?

Regardless of holiday or not, this is how I try to live each day: "Always believe that something wonderful is about to happen, because something wonderful is 'always' about to happen." Can't see and rejoice in the wonderful if I'm singing the blues. **Jeni P.**

Why wait for the holidays to give back? Grateful that I even can. **Tracee**

Having a good day - go to a meeting. Having a bad day - go to a meeting. Having a holiday - go to a meeting. Go to a meeting everyday. Gratitude is the aspirin that gets you thru the blues. **Winfield M.**

Gratitude that I know life's all about Giving; There's nothing more to get....
Lynda S.

Definitely awash in gratitude! For my sobriety, health and life!
Regina D.

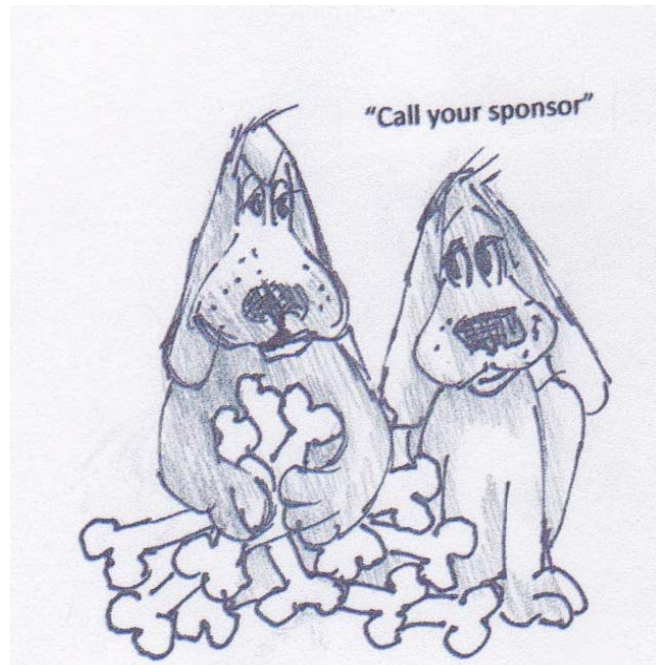


Illustration by **Leslie Z.**

I'm pretty grateful every day, as opposed to 31 years ago when my life was a mess. The holidays don't seem to bother me. My first and second year, I was worried about them prior to them coming, but there were so many things going on, that it really made them worthwhile. In addition to the holidays, I was worried about things like, how am I going to toast my daughter at her wedding?' - Well how old is your daughter? She's three! I really have no apprehensions about the holidays. I'm into 'today's the day and that's the only day that counts.' **Bob F. (Continue to page 5)**



A few years ago I learned a valuable lesson. Most of my friends seemed to be scattered to the wind. Although I had been invited to an open house held every year by two wonderful women from my Saturday meeting, and although I knew I would have a great meal and sensational fellowship, I decided (to quote Greta Garbo) "I wanted to be alone."

So I went to Denny's for dinner and then to the movies to see No Country for Old Men. And then I went home and thought seriously about blowing out my brains! Never again. This year I will take advantage of that wonderful open house where I will be surrounded by the kind of love only those of us in the program can understand. Fellow travelers, heed my words. Take advantage of the kindness of friends and don't spend Thanksgiving alone.
Carol C.

My wonderful, loving, untreated alcoholic Dad dropped dead of a heart attack on December 7th, shortly after I had just turned nine years old. Needless to say, that particular Christmas arrived with no reason in my little heart or mind to celebrate, and set me apart for many years to come. It specifically fed fuel for my budding alcoholism, providing it with a nice juicy "justified resentment" against God, his Baby Son, and all the rest of the world that went on joyfully "jingle-belling" as if all was well. My Mother, the un-treated Al Anon, understandably dove all the deeper into her religion and schlepped us to church three times a week with fervor.

That was 1958 and I didn't get sober until December 1993. Embarrassing as it is to admit, even in sobriety it's been hard to get over the hurt and resentment and to join in with the rest of the world celebrating the season. Thanks to "the God of my understanding" that I've found in the rooms of AA, I've been blessed to experience joy and gratitude and to be in a loving relationship with a sober partner and get a "do-over" every Christmas by virtue of sharing with our three grandchildren the magic of Christmas.

I would never have been able to have that delicious feeling with a bottle in my hand. Thank you for my life, AA!
"There are no perfect situations - only perfect moments - so just keep following the bread crumbs" **Di V.**

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Recovery Times is a service of your Central Office of the San Fernando Valley of Alcoholics Anonymous. It is published monthly, 12 months a year, and also available online at: <http://www.sfvaa.org>. The views expressed in the articles are not necessarily those of A.A. Please send any announcements, stories with an A.A. message or sober jokes to Editor Pat K. at: xnowisthetime@aol.com. Submission does not guarantee acceptance



The Light in Their Eyes:

A while back, I heard an AA speaker say that alcohol saved her life. When I heard this I was taken aback, but it made me think. When I look back to before I started drinking I was a mess, I didn't belong anywhere. I felt I didn't fit in anywhere. I didn't fit in at home, school, church, or in my own body. A square peg in a round hole, as they say. So when I look back I am not sure how much longer I would have made it if I didn't find alcohol when I did.



I was 17 when I took my first drink, which didn't really do anything for me. It was another three years before what I call my first real drink. I walked into a tavern for my first time one Friday evening, ordered a beer, then another, then another, and so on and so on. It was that night that I fell in love with alcohol. I knew then and there that I was going to drink again and often. It was like I was reborn. I was reunited with people whom I went to school with but never associated with because of my religious upbringing. They were glad to see me. The party had started.

I always share in meetings when talking about my drinking career that alcohol afforded me a lot of fun. I went to a lot of great parties, met a lot of great people (including my wife) and had a really good time for a lot of years. I don't think that I drank alcoholically from the beginning but I most definitely thought alcoholically.

I was always planning the next party. I always wanted to be the first one there and the last one standing. I was planning the next party before didn't care about anybody but I see now that I hurt a lot of chaos. But you know I thought I thought that everyone lived this way. I couldn't figure out why everyone was concerned about me. All I knew was that if you felt this way, you would drink too. I was 39 when I hit my bottom. I thank my higher power that I didn't have to ride the garbage truck all the way to the dump.

A member reflects on the joys of sharing his recovery

this one ended. When I drank, I myself. It was during these years people and caused a lot of that everything was normal, I

I remember thinking that there had to be more to life than this. And then the miracle happened. I came to a point in my life where I realized that I didn't want to live this way any longer.

I made a phone call that changed my life. I called a family member whom I knew had stopped drinking and asked for help. The next day he 12-Stepped me, and the following night he introduced me to Alcoholics Anonymous. I can remember after attending about a dozen meetings, I felt that I could finally stop searching. I was home.

I joined a home group and became very active in the program. I got involved on roundup committees, became the GSR of my group. I couldn't believe that people actually trusted me to represent the group at service functions. Today I still serve this great Fellowship and I love every minute of it. I truly enjoy doing things for my home group, working with my sponsees and working with the newcomer.

Watching them experience all that this program offers, watching them grow, and most of all to see that light come on in their eyes. I thank my higher power for the passion he has given me for this program. I cannot express the gratitude that I have for this program and the people I have met on this journey. Early on, I thought that alcohol saved my life; today I say that the program of AA saved my life and for that I am grateful. —**Tim M.**, *Porters Lake, Nova Scotia, October 2012*. Copyright c. 1944-2012. AA Grapevine, Inc. All Rights Reserved. Reprints by Permission Only.



Please Support Your Central Office. We really could use more support by sending a Representative from your group to the IGR meetings. We meet the 2nd Monday of every month at St. Innocent Church at 5657 Lindley in Tarzana. Please Come! We would love to see you!

Newsletter Subscriptions: If you would like a copy of **Recovery Times** mailed to you, please complete this form with your address and a \$7.00 check (donation to cover cost & delivery) to: **SFV Central Office, 7417-E. Van Nuys Blvd., Van Nuys, CA 91405**

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____

Zip: _____



(Please circle): **New** **Renewal** **Additional Contribution**

Moving? Please give us your former address: _____

The 12 Steps through Word Search. Each month, Recovery Times features the Step of the month. In October we are featuring Step Ten. Find the words to Step Eleven below: **"Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to alcoholics, and to practice these principles in all our affairs."** Can you find all the words? Look closely and read across as well as up and down.

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

San Fernando Valley Central Office

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