

Get Your Program On!

It's a new year and as we live a new sober day, we get to also have new experiences, whether that be a new commitment or a chance to be of service to a meeting or to others. But Alcoholics Anonymous is not just about local meetings and step studies. It's also about fellowship where we learn how to live with others beyond our meetings. These events are just a few that offer sober people a chance to participate in local, regional, national or international events to get to know other sober people who share this lifestyle. Look for these upcoming events to be a part of the fellowship:

January 27 – 29, 2017: 42nd San Fernando Valley AA Convention, Warner Center Marriott, Woodland Hills, CA www.sfvaaconvention.org

February 16-19, 2017: 53rd International Women's Conference, Cleveland, OH
www.internationalwomensconference.org.

March 3 – 5, 2017: All Ireland Convention of Young People, Gormanstown, County Meath, Ireland
www.ireypaa@gmail.com

April 14 – 16, 2017: 32nd Orange County AA Convention, Doubletree Hilton, Orange, CA
www.oaac.org.

April 13 – 16, 2017: 40th San Diego Spring Roundup, Town and Country Hotel, San Diego, CA
www.sandiegospringroundup.com

morning Spiritual Breakfast with its main AA speaker. There's also an AA Golf Tournament (by registration only) and meetings for Al-Anons, Alateens, and Spanish speaking AAs.

Due to a special arrangement with the hotel, guests of our convention can stay at the Warner Center Marriott for a discounted rate of \$125.00 per night (Friday & Saturday, 1/27 and 1/28/17) by using the discount code "SFASFAA."

Support your SFVAA convention and "get your program on" with fun, food, sharing & fellowship. For more info, email: info@sfvaaconvention.org and register online at: www.sfvaaconvention.org.

Our local convention is this month at the **Warner Center Marriott, 21850 Oxnard Street, Woodland Hills, CA.** For three days, we get to see nearly 2,000 of the A.A.s who live and work or like to visit our San Fernando Valley. For \$25.00 (or \$20.00 in advance), you get to attend meetings day and night as well as the opening skit, Friday Night Speaker, and two dances.

There is the popular Saturday night banquet which is followed by an A.A. speaker and a major entertainment act, and there's the Sunday

SAN FERNANDO VALLEY CENTRAL OFFICE: MINUTES FOR INTERGROUP MEETING

December 12, 2016

OPENING: Cheryl A.

- Cheryl opened the meeting at 7:00 p.m. with The Serenity Prayer
- Tina read "The Twelve Traditions"
- Sandy R. accepted a motion for approval of the November Intergroup Minutes.

TREASURER'S REPORT: Joel S.

MTD is \$1,917 and YTD is <\$9,269>, as compared with last year's YTD which was <\$5,391>. Contributions from Gratitude Month are beginning to come in to Central Office.

CENTRAL OFFICE EXECUTIVE SECRETARY'S REPORT: Bob F.

- If contributions for Gratitude Month are on par with last year, Central Office should end the year right around even, or just slightly in the black or red.
- This month, Central Office printed the Recovery Times on site for the first time! This will save us outside printing costs.
- *Recovery Times*: Stories of recovery are always welcome. Deadline for submissions is 15th of the month; send to Pat K. at xnowisthetime@aol.com.

MEETING RELATED BUSINESS: Larry S.

- 3 new Intergroup Representatives this month:
 - Chris C., We Are Not Saints, Saturdays at 10:30 am in North Hollywood;
 - Helen D., Try God, Wednesdays at 12:30 pm at Colfax and Addison in North Hollywood;
 - Gia F., Big Book Study, Fridays at 7:30 pm in Reseda.

SERVICE REPRESENTATIVES

- General Service District 1: Aaron for Lee: Had elections; new officers selected.
- San Fernando Valley 42nd AA Convention: Joel S: Will be held Jan 27, 28, and 29, 2017. "Acceptance Was the Answer" is the theme. Website, www.sfvaaconvention.org, is up and registration forms are available. Must be registered to attend all Grand Ballroom events. Tickets for the Luncheon, Banquet and Spiritual Breakfast must be obtained through pre-registration. Tickets will not be sold on site.
- Santa Clarita Valley AA Convention: Bernard: Date for next year's convention available next month.

OLD BUSINESS

- Literature Sales are CLOSED on holidays and the last Friday of each month, but OPEN on weekends. Central Office doors remain open; phones are still answered.
- Reminder for groups to report upcoming group events, and remove expired event flyers from literature tables. Continue to send meeting changes IN WRITING to Central Office.

NEW BUSINESS Cheryl A. announced new Board of Directors' positions for 2017:

- Chairperson: Cheryl A.
- Co-Chair: Larry S.
- Recording Secretary: Sandy R.
- Treasurer: Adrian I.
- Director at Large: Josh S.
- Director at Large: Tina K.
- Director at Large: Loretta N.
- First Alternate: Joel S.

ANNOUNCEMENTS FROM AA GROUPS & SEVENTH TRADITION:

- Bob F.: Help us say farewell to a piece of AA history: Meetings where it all began in Los Angeles, at the Cecil Hotel (renamed Stay On Main) from noon to 10:00 pm on December 17, 2016.
- Pam, Burbank Group: New Year's Eve Dance, December 31, 10:00 pm to 2:00 am following the 8:00 pm meeting; 3217 Winona Ave.
- Cheryl M., The Valley Club: Christmas Eve: Fellowship, starting at 9:00 pm following 8:00 pm meeting, through 5:00 am Christmas morning, followed by meeting at 5:30 am. Includes potluck starting at 9:00 pm, followed by meetings at 10:00 pm and midnight. New Year's Eve through New Year's Day: 4 speakers starting at 8:00 pm. Will be open all night for fellowship.
- Lee, The San Fernando Group: 49th Annual New Year's Eve Alcathon, beginning at 5:00 pm Friday, December 30 through Sunday, January 1, 2017; 13245 Gladstone Ave., Sylmar. New Year's Dance, December 31, 9:00 pm to 1:00 am. Bring in the New Year without a beer!
- Cheryl A.: Reminder that groups should bring at least 350 flyers for upcoming events so that each meeting can have at least 5 copies. Flyers must be for "AA-related events" (defined as "an event that includes an AA Meeting as part of the event").

ACKNOWLEDGE BIRTHDAYS FOR THE MONTH OF DECEMBER – 203 YEARS OF SOBRIETY!

- Tamara, 2 years on 12/20;
- Scott R., 7 years on 12/13;
- Norm, 8 years on 12/4;
- Kate F., 10 years on 12/14;
- Alex B., 14 years on 12/14;
- Dennis B., 22 years on 12/12;
- Herb., 34 years on 12/23;
- Cheryl A., 34 years on 12/7;
- Pam, 35 years on 12/25;
- Ken J., 37 years on 12/7.

VACANCIES ON BOARD - There was one vacancy on the Board which Lee A. was elected to fill as 2nd Alternate Director at Large.

CLOSING: Cheryl A.: A motion to adjourn was recognized and seconded. Meeting adjourned at 7:28 pm with *The Lord's Prayer*. Prepared and submitted by: Sandy R., Recording Secretary

SERVICE OPPORTUNITIES IN THE SAN FERNANDO VALLEY



San Fernando Valley Central Office Board Meeting: Feb. 8, 2017, 6:30 p.m., Central Office, 16132 Sherman Way, Van Nuys, CA 91406.

San Fernando Valley Intergroup Meeting: Feb. 13, 2017: Orientation for new IGRs: 6:30 p.m., General Meeting: 7 p.m., St. Innocent Church., 5657 Lindley Ave., Tarzana.

San Fernando Valley H & I (3rd Monday): Jan. 16, 2017, 7 p.m. Orientation, 8 p.m. Bus. Meeting, St. Innocent Church, 5657 Lindley Ave., Tarzana.

General Service Dist. 1: (1st Wed.): Feb. 1, 2017: 6:30 p.m., 7552 Remmet, Canoga Park.

General Service Dist. 2: (1st Tues.): Feb. 7, 2017: 6:30 p.m., 4011 Dunsmore, La Crescenta.

General Service District 7: (second Saturday) Feb. 11, 2017, 9 a.m., Women's Club: 33201 Agua Dulce Canyon Rd, Agua Dulce, CA.

General Service District 11 (1st Mon.): Feb. 6, 2017: New GSRs – 6:00 p.m., general meeting 6:30 p.m., 315 W. Vine Street, Glendale.

General Service District 16 (1st Mon.): Feb. 6, 2017: 6:00 p.m., 15950 Chatsworth, Granada Hills.

General Service District 17 (1st Mon.): Feb. 6, 2017. Orientation for new GSRs, 6:30 p.m., Business Meeting: 7:00 p.m., 5000 Colfax, NoHo.

A.A. Central Office maintains 24/7 Phone Service for AAs. Go to: www.sfvaa.org to find meeting info, upcoming events, service meeting info, or download a copy of Recovery Times. **Want to be of**

FROM THE FOUNDERS

“We are operating a spiritual kindergarten in which people are enabled to get over drinking and find the grace to go on living to better effect.”
As Bill Sees It, pg. 95

“If we neglect those who are still sick, there is unremitting danger to our own lives and sanity.”
Twelve Steps & Twelve Traditions, pg. 151

“Our very lives as ex-problem drinkers depend upon our constant thought of others and how we may help meet their needs.” AA, pg. 20

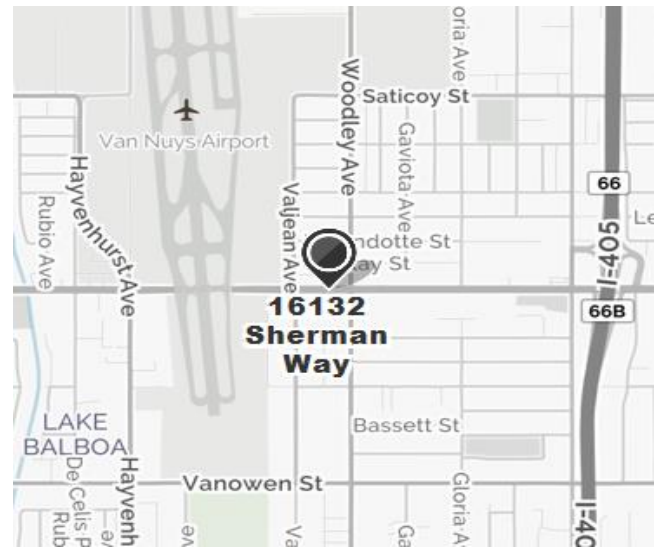
“Let it never be said that the spiritual way is a cowardly or escapist approach to life. On the contrary, it requires maximum diligence and persistence to seek divine guidance when all the evidence of our eyes and ears tries to tell us that life is largely physical, intellectual and emotional.”

*Jackson, Miss.,
November 1964*

*“Let Go and Let God,”
AA Grapevine*

service? We are always in need of volunteers to answer phones, especially on weekends and holidays. If you have a year or more of continuous sobriety, please call **Central Office: (818) 988-3001**.

Central Office is located at 16132 Sherman Way, Van Nuys, CA. (SW corner of Woodley & Sherman Way, west of the Mobil Station) and remains open every day for book sales (including weekends) except for holidays and the last Friday of the month for Inventory. Our large warehouse has all of the A.A. approved literature and pamphlets that your group needs plus medallions and chips. Central Office is a legitimate non-profit. Personal donations cannot exceed \$3,000 per year and must be from members of Alcoholics Anonymous, not from outsiders. **For more info, call: (818) 988-3001 or check out our website: www.sfvaa.org.**



Public Info. Committee provides info to the public about what A.A. does & doesn't do. We need volunteers, especially young people and Spanish-speaking AAs, for health fairs & to speak at schools & businesses. **SF Valley Hospitals and Institutions Committee (H & I)**: Temporary contacts are needed to pair the alcoholic leaving rehabilitation, treatment or jail with A.A. in their home community. Contact Central Office for info. H & I also needs volunteers to carry the message of A.A. into hospitals, prisons and treatment facilities to those who are unable to get to meetings. See meeting info above. (SFV H & I).

San Fernando Valley Convention Committee: Volunteers are welcome to participate in the planning of the 2017 Convention. The meeting is the 3rd Tues. of the month at St. Innocents, 5657 Lindley Ave., Tarzana.

San Fernando Valley Young People in AA: 1st Sunday of the month @ 1 p.m. at Unit A., 10641 Burbank Blvd., North Hollywood. (Regular weekly meeting: Monday night at 8 p.m.).

San Fernando Valley Intergroup: Central Office holds a monthly meeting for all Intergroup reps on the 2nd Monday of each month at 6:30 p.m. for orientation with the general meeting to follow at 7 p.m. It takes place at St. Innocent Church, 5657 Lindley Ave., Tarzana. Intergroup reps provide an important service to the group. IGRs share information on upcoming AA events in the Valley. **To serve as an Intergroup Rep, call: (818) 988-3001**. Please Support Your Central Office by sending a rep to the monthly Intergroup meetings the 2nd Monday of every month at St. Innocent Church, 5657 Lindley, Tarzana. We would love to see you!



Celebrating an A.A. Anniversary? Please consider making a \$1.00 donation for each year of your sobriety during your birthday month and we will list your name and birthday year in the next issue. **Thank you everyone for your support!** This month, we received donations from the following: Dennis B. – 22 Years, Anonymous – 26 Years, Anonymous -34 Years & Learning to Live Men’s Stag – 14 Men/212 years of sobriety.



Deaths: Jerry R. – 5 Years

Has your meeting changed? Please provide meeting updates in writing to: **The Valley Central Office**, 16132 Sherman Way, Van Nuys, CA 91406. If you would like a copy of **Recovery Times**, please send us your name, address and payment with \$7.00 to cover cost & delivery. Also include information on whether you want a new subscription, are renewing, or if you are enclosing an additional contribution. If moving, please give us your former address. Thank you~

THE RECOVERY TIMES would like to hear your story. Please keep it to 600 words and focus on sobriety. Please include your sobriety date and an email or phone number then email Pat at: xnowisthetime@aol.com.



NEED SOMEONE TO TALK TO? CENTRAL OFFICE APPRECIATES ALL OF THE VOLUNTEERS WHO HANDLE PHONES EACH DAY. WITHOUT THEM, ALCOHOLICS WHO NEED INFORMATION MIGHT NOT KNOW WHERE TO GO. TO BECOME A PHONE VOLUNTEER, PLEASE CONTACT CENTRAL OFFICE: (818) 988-3001.

CENTRAL OFFICE WEBSITE: FIND MEETING SCHEDULES, BACK ISSUES OF RECOVERY TIMES, AND LOTS OF OTHER HELPFUL INFO: WWW.SFVAA.ORG.

BUY YOUR AA LITERATURE, CHIPS AND MEDALLIONS AT CENTRAL OFFICE.

Shop at Central Office: Did you know that you can buy books, literature, medallions and chips at the lowest price at San Fernando Valley Central Office? Please visit us at: 16132 Sherman Way, Van Nuys, CA. (SW corner of Woodley & Sherman Way, west of the Mobil Station). Central Office’s hours are: 9 a.m. – 6 p.m. M-F, 9 a.m. – 5 p.m. Saturday & Sunday. (Literature closed last Fri. of every month for Inventory and on major holidays). **To reach our 24-hour telephone hotline and speak with a live person call: (818) 988-3001. For more info, email us at: sfvco@la.twcbc.com**

End of the Road: when his wife threatens to walk out, he goes to his first AA meeting

I stumbled through the door of my house. It was 7 in the morning. I knew I would have to come up with some excuse. But when I went to the bedroom to see if my wife was sleeping, the door was locked. The woman who'd adored me, stood by me and loved me had locked me out of the bedroom. With a head full of booze, I knocked on the door and she did not respond. I knocked again, and this time she opened the door without saying a word. I was about to lay into her, but I could hear that she had been crying by the sniffs and noises she was making. Who the hell was she to get mad at me? I was working; I was bringing home money; she had food on the table and gas in the car. Two could play at this game. I decided not to speak with her either and I lay down and tried to sleep. But as the booze filtered through my kidneys, I began to feel the sickness that I had become accustomed to. After about an hour, realizing that she was not asleep, I asked her what was wrong. I hoped for some smart remark so that we could go at it and I could put her in her place. Instead, she just said that something was wrong with me and that she would be leaving in a few days. Her reaction scared me. (continued, next page)



Drinking made the painful reality of my mediocre existence disappear. I was a fun guy on booze, and I could talk to people on booze. This is what my wife could not understand--drinking and drugging was not just something to do on a Friday or a Saturday; it was a way to fit in with the world. The truth was that I was completely unequipped to deal with life on life's terms; I had the emotional capacity of a child. I'd never grown up. I stuffed down everything I experienced, both good and bad, and let alcohol dictate my outlook on life.

When I started drinking at 13 years old, it was not about the taste. It was about not feeling the way I felt most of the time; it was about having the confidence to do things I would never normally do. Growing up, I had a severe phobia about people and places; I think that is where my alcoholism took root. I had a difficult time talking with people, unless I was drunk or drinking. When I was drinking, I would go anywhere and do anything. By the time I graduated from college, I had also graduated to hard liquor.

My first job out of college was a disaster, between calling in sick and neglecting my responsibilities. Every day at 5 P.M. was a vacation waiting to happen. It might only be temporary, it might only last 12 hours, but saddling up to the bar for the first drink was like heaven; it was like God's reward for putting me through the workday. I knew everything would be OK. The next morning, with two hours of sleep and a mouth full of copper, I would call in sick. I left after less than one year.

My second job was more interesting but not much more rewarding. I wore out my welcome real fast. I was the lackey in my office; I went from being the new guy to being the floor mat. I worked shift hours, 4 P.M. to midnight, I drank incredible amounts of alcohol by myself, and was convinced that the world was an awful place full of dumb people. I lived in an apartment that looked more like a cave; I never opened the windows, I never used the porch, I just drank and drank and never went out. This was the life I was destined to live for many years, alone.

When I was in college, I went to London for a semester. It was the most amazing experience of my life. I knew that I wanted to go overseas to live again, I just did not know where, how, when or why. It occurred to me that the Peace Corps would be awesome. I could help people, immerse myself in a foreign environment and maybe learn a new language. This all seemed like wonderful stuff to me. My desire to explore the world could help make me the man I'd always wanted to be--a worldly, man's man. I would never have to explain my decisions because they would be tempered in grit and experience. It was a pipe dream. As fate would have it, I was accepted and assigned to Uzbekistan. I had never really been on my own before, least of all in a Third World country. It would have been a disaster. I would have fallen on my face, only this time I would have been 5,000 miles from home. I was prepared to go, though--that is, until I got a call from the folks at Peace Corps headquarters in Washington, D.C. They said my health was in serious question due an astronomically high cholesterol level, and they were delaying my trip for six months. Like an idiot, I had already given notice at my job and my apartment, and my car would soon be gone. I quickly went from diplomat to dog. I had no place to go and no way to pay for it if I did.

Luckily, my sister was the angel I was looking for. She told me I could live with her rent-free--dangerous words for an alcoholic to hear--and of course I took her up on her offer. I was now officially a drifter. I had nothing to do and there was nothing tying me down, so I pretty much did what I wanted when I wanted, which meant I drank, slept and pontificated on my sad life



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and how everyone had done me wrong. The only time I thought of God was when I was asking him to make somebody's life miserable. Most of the time I walked around, hoping that an anvil would fall from the sky and kill me, because I did not have the guts to kill myself. I thought I was a useless, miserable, sorry excuse for a human being. I couldn't go to the grocery store during the day because I was embarrassed and ashamed of what had become of my life--and I might see somebody I knew who would want to talk to me. I thought that people could just look at me and see that I was worthless; I'd gone my whole life running away from that thought. It never occurred to me that the problem was drinking; drinking was the only thing that made me feel good.

Forgiving myself for the things I did when I was drunk has not been easy. I insulted friends and strangers; I made women feel uncomfortable; I was a creep. I can never take back what I did and the way I behaved; I can only say, "Sorry." I carried my faults and mistakes in a bag slung across my back; that was my life, and it was heavy. Then came that cold February day when I came walking into the house drunk and my wife said she was leaving. I left the house that day and stumbled into my first AA meeting. It was a surreal experience. It was one of the very sunny, very cold days we get here in Buffalo; cold enough to freeze you to death, but still beautiful. There I was at an AA meeting in the basement of a church. There were eyelevel windows all around the room, the sun was streaming through the windows, the room looked beautiful, and I felt safe. We all sat around a couple rickety old tables that were pushed together. A couple people shared and then I spoke. Actually, I sobbed. The words would not come out. I was at the end and I knew it. I was close to losing my wife, my house, my car--everything. God sent Jon R. to help me that day. In my opinion, Jon's intervention saved me. The meeting was over and I was about to walk out when Jon stopped me and gave me a few gruff orders to call him. He sounded serious--and a little mad--so I took down his number and I promised to call.

That is what I did; that is how it started. In the beginning months I did the old "fake it, until you make it" routine. I showed up early for my home group and made coffee. I put the chairs back in place after the meeting, and I called a lot of guys who had given me their numbers. Jon R. introduced me to the guy who would become my sponsor. My sponsor and I became quick friends; I guess it's true that when the student's ready, the teacher appears. I experienced so much in the first months of sobriety. I was riding a so-called pink cloud. It was tough, though; I had no contact with the guys I used to drink with--and the tough part was that they did not notice I was gone.

Like a little kid swinging blindly at a pinata, my first sober year was confusing, exciting, funny and rewarding. I did my first Fourth Step, and wrote out a gratitude list. The thing was, I was enjoying the hell out of it. I met so many people who looked at me like I was normal. I originally thought my story was going to change the principles of AA; I thought they were going to have to add an extra step for me to follow. But they just told me I was in the right place. I would confess my angst to my sponsor and he would just laugh at me and give me some work to do. I still go to about four or five meetings a week and try to work the Steps as best as I know how. I still screw it up and I still lose my head over silly things, but I don't have to drink over it. Eighteen months later, I have a great sponsor and a great home group. When I got my one year pin, my whole family showed up. Alcoholics Anonymous gave me the only real life I have ever known. I am grateful every day for the blessings I now know exist in my life. A little simpler, a little slower, my life overflows with promise and hope one day at a time, thanks to AA. **CHRIS M., Buffalo, N.Y. Copyright © The AA Grapevine, Inc. Reprinted with permission**

Central Office of SFV

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