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DISTRICT #30 NEWSLETTER

FRIENDS of **BILL W.**

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Statement of Purpose: "Friends of Bill W." is the newsletter for A.A. District 30 in Virginia. It provides a VOICE that will cultivate the SPIRIT of our district's common welfare and A.A. unity. How? It communicates District 30 business; provides a forum for individual stories of experience, strength, and hope from District 30 members; provides other events and information relating to the pulse of A.A. District 30. Opinions or content in articles and letters are solely those of the contributor. The editorial team reserves the right to edit materials for length and content. Quotations from A.A. literature are copyrighted and reprinted with permission from its source.

District Committee Member (DCM)

Happy New Year Fredericksburg, I wanted to write a quick note of introduction as your new DCM. As you were knee-deep in holiday planning, I was knee deep in transition planning with Lisa, our outgoing DCM. My first goal is to assure all district commitments are covered going into the new fiscal year. Several people have let me know of their interest in being involved. There are still some slots that we need people to fill as of now. If you're interested please let me know. Don't forget the Winter January 6-7, 2017 VAC Meeting in Williamsburg, Virginia, details on page 4.

As some may know me as the chip and book guy for south of the river. Holding this commitment for the last two years has helped me to learn the local customs as I am not originally from around here. Sometimes I have learned as much from other people's mistakes as I have from my own. There is a lesson I learned from a couple in my original home group early on about taking furniture on vacation. After many years in the program they decided to retire and move to a gentler climate. We bided them a fitting farewell and shipped them off. A few months later they were back. What happened? As the story came out, I learned that in their retirement community they determined everything was not like at home. The couple had the courage to change the new town; but, not the wisdom to know the locals were not interested. After a short period of time, the furniture determined the best change would be to return to where they got sober. One of my big personal goals is not to take my furniture on vacation.

I like the second half of what Jerry says, "You have just as much a right to your opinion as I have the right to my opinion". I am excited about the opportunity to serve the district because I have always gotten back from my service work greater rewards than the effort. Hope your holidays were safe and sober. **Jim C.**

Financial Troubles - New Year's Resolution

When I came into AA, after years and years of drinking and irresponsible living, I had so many problems, including financial problems. It was no surprise with the way I had been living. It seemed there was no way out. My sponsor and my new AA friends advised me to focus first and foremost on recovery from my drinking problem, because until that is addressed, I had little chance of doing anything about my other problems. They also taught me that the spiritual principles of the 12 Steps and 12 Traditions of AA could be applied to all areas of my life. Well what about using Tradition 7 to deal with my New Year's resolution to clear up my financial troubles?

AA's 7th tradition says that "Every AA group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions." In the opening of the 7th tradition chapter in the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions, it says: Self-supporting alcoholics? Who ever heard of such a thing? Yet we find that's what we have to be. This principle is telling evidence of the profound change that AA has wrought in all of us. Everybody knows that active alcoholics scream that they have no troubles money can't cure. Always, we've had our hands out. Time after time I had been dependent upon somebody for something, usually money-wise. When a society composed entirely of alcoholics, says it's going to pay its bills, that's really news. Maybe this has something to teach me about how to handle my own financial challenges. Had I been fully self-supporting in my own life? Or had I been irresponsible, falling behind on my bills, neglecting prudent savings, wasting my hard earned money at the bar and liquor store, and going into debt to buy material things I didn't truly need. Although it took a while, I found that if I can apply the principle of the 7th Tradition in my own life, I can get a handle on my personal

financial problems. What it taught me is to live within my means and pay my bills in a responsible manner. And with the spiritual principles operating in my life, I found that I really didn't need all the extravagant material things I thought I did. Just being sober each day and looking for the opportunity to help the suffering alcoholic now brings me more peace and joy than all the fancy gadgets money can buy. -- Jeff K.

My Story

"I might as well drink, what have I got to lose?" If you've heard me speak, you've likely heard this refrain, and it used



to be the way I thought. At one point, I had given away everything that "mattered" in my life. I had cut off contact with my family and my friends because I didn't want to listen to their

concerns about my drinking. I had refused to fulfill the new requirements of a job I had held for 15 years. While I still had my physical possessions-- truck, beautiful townhome in Alexandria, money in the bank,--none of it mattered anymore. I survived in squalor. I chose to live in the basement of the home where I believed I had everything I needed-- a futon, computer, cable television, refrigerator, and the fireplace which was how I heated the space and cooked my food. After all, it was too much trouble to clean the kitchen to be able to cook properly and I was saving on utilities, so I could buy more booze.

The only human contact I had at that point was with the clerks at the grocery and ABC stores. I had convinced myself that the guys at the ABC store did not know I had an issue; after all, it was normal for a guy to purchase 6 handles of vodka every week. The fact that when they saw me coming in, they walked to the back and brought out a box containing the six handles was just good customer service. I had resigned myself to the inevitability that I would likely die in this basement amongst the empty bottles and filth that surrounded me. Then one night in the midst of my drunken musings, it came to me that what I really needed was a woman. I have since come to believe that this was a form of divine intervention-- a little kick in the pants from a power greater than myself. Anyway, I proceeded to find one. Low and behold I succeeded in discovering my wife. She, being the daughter of an alcoholic, was primed and ready for me, but this was not the end of my drinking. If possible, my drinking got worse and I had to start trying to hide it. What soon began was a long series of attempts to get sober, a lot of lip service about wanting to get sober, and alas, another divine intervention. The one constant was that I kept coming back. Once I found the rooms, I never left-- drinking or not, high or not-- I kept coming back. And what I discovered

was that, while you may not have condoned my decision to keep drinking, I was always welcomed back. It was during this relapse cycle that I began to form the friendships, that would become so important to my sobriety. I did not know how to have friendships, particularly with other men. I had worked in female-dominated professions and had become stand-offish and isolated as my drinking progressed. Since childhood, I had felt "less than", was uncomfortable in interactions with other people, and terrified of being in groups. I'm certain that none of you have ever felt this way. Alcohol was not my problem (at least initially), it was my solution. My problem was me. Slowly, in the rooms I discovered how to have conversations, to trust and confide in other people, and (if absolutely necessary) to ask for help.

When I was finally ready in February 2012, I asked for help. George M. and Joe G. met me at a meeting on a Sunday evening in downtown Fredericksburg. This began my journey (finally) of sobriety. By this time I had learned that I was to be a grandfather two times over. Not one, but two of my daughters were pregnant. I'd be lying if I said that this did not figure into things. After all, this is an honest program. Which brings me back to, "I might as well drink, what I have got to lose?" Today, I have a wife who loves me, 4 children (3 of whom like me or at least say they do), and 2 granddaughters who adores me and have never seen me inebriated. I have traveled the world and done and seen things I could never have imagined. If I think about what I have to loose, all I have to do is look into the eyes of my wife or my grandchildren and the answer is there. Remember, I was resigned to dying. Life isn't always easy or comfortable. But, for today, it sure beats the alternative. John W.

If I Can Get Sober--Anybody Can

I walked into Alcoholics Anonymous when I was 23. I was scared. I was angry. I didn't want to be there. My family had an intervention on me. I had no other choice. It was the last option for me. Everyone seemed happy & welcoming. They told me to 'keep coming back' & I did. Although I drug my feet I took the suggestion of 90 & 90 (90 meetings in 90 days). I thought it was a bit extreme at first. It is true, that "Meeting Makers Make It". I would many times do 2 or 3 meetings a day & I began to see my life was changing. I finally started to compare in instead of comparing out. I started relating to people. Finally, I got a sponsor after a few months of me thinking I didn't need one. I followed most the suggestions she gave me; although, some of them sounded ridiculous. I did them anyway because the pain was great enough & I had become sick & tired of being sick & tired. I was so done with being miserable & depressed. I just wanted happiness & freedom. By incorporating the

steps in my life, I'm able to live a life worth living. I have peace of mind. I'm aware of God's beauty around me; whereas, before I didn't have any awareness.

I can remain sober as long as I stay in gratitude. I can be useful today. The promises continue to come true as long as I do the next right thing & practice the principles in all of my affairs. God has blessed me far more than I deserve. It's because of His grace I'm sober & have a new design for living. If I can get sober anybody can. I lost everything due to alcohol & drugs-- even my 2 beautiful daughters. I lost my self-respect, dignity, & integrity. The relationships with my loved ones continue to mend. Life is good today as long as I grow along spiritual lines & keep close to my God, Alcoholics Anonymous & my sponsor. I finally feel 'alive' & 'a part of'. My step-dad passed on this program to me & for that I'm truly grateful. Thank God for recovery! My sobriety date is 9-28-09. Ashley S.

Meeting Makers Make It

I believe that our A.A. meetings are one of the most powerful vehicles for carrying our A.A. message of recovery to sick and suffering alcoholics. It has been my experience that "Meeting Makers Make It". I don't have to go to too many meetings before I hear a story about the consequences of picking up that first drink. Usually the returning alcoholic says that the first thing they did was stop going to meetings. I took this saying to heart when my husband ended his own life 3-1/2 years ago. So, I knew that I must not stop making A.A. meetings-- no matter what. When he died, I increased my meeting attendance from 1 or 2 meetings a week to 18 meetings a week. I asked myself many times-- at the darkest, lowest time in my life-- how could making meetings help me? When my soul-mate died a big part of me died too. I was so broken like Humpty Dumpty, that all the King's horses and all the King's men could not put me together again. All I could do was cry non-stop rivers and rivers of tears. My God had forsaken me.

It took me a while to realize that when I walked into the A.A. meetings 3 or 4 times every day; each meeting I felt stronger and stronger. Each meeting I felt like "maybe I could make it just one more day". I was experiencing the God-energy in the meetings. It seemed like each and every alcoholic brought their God-power with them to the meetings. We call the God-power the Atmosphere of Recovery. Three years went by and I could not feel the Sun Light of the Spirit anywhere but in A.A. meetings. Today, I attend 8 meetings weekly. I have noticed that I am gradually starting to experience the God-power in my heart again, thanks to my personal and A.A. families. When I felt so hopelessly alone, my families loved me back to life. So, I know for a fact, "Meeting Maker Make It".

There is also another slogan floating around the A.A. rooms, "People who don't go to meetings, don't hear what

happens to people who don't go to meetings". Short and to-the-point slogans, used by our A.A. Old-timers like these tend to cut through all the fluff and keep it simple. Going to meetings are not our only saving Grace; however by using meetings as a part of recovery, most of us can't deny -- Meeting Makers do seem to demonstrate the power not to take that first drink and learn how to live life without drinking alcohol. Anytime, I start feeling too bad to go to meetings or I start feeling too good to go to meetings, I remind myself-- "Meeting Makers Make It". -- Anonymous

Young People's Meeting

Fredericksburg Young People was founded in September 2016 by us, a young married couple recently relocated from Denver. We meet weekly at 8:00 pm on Thursday in the Mary Washington Hospital Cafeteria. The group is growing quickly. It typically has around fifteen attendees on an average night at present; usually in the age range of 16-40 years. Our goal is not to segregate ourselves from the larger hand of AA, but to create a comfortable space and focused group for both newcomers and those with longer lengths of sobriety. We strive to promote fellowship and outreach, both in the Fredericksburg area and among the huge population of young members of AA (YPAA) all over the country.

We frequently travel to other young people's meetings in areas such as Richmond and D.C. on other nights of the week to outreach with our fellow friends of Bill W. We also plan to attend regional, state, and international YPAA conferences, beginning with the New England Conference of YPAA over New Year's Eve weekend, 2016. We welcome anyone in sobriety and wish to never exclude any newcomer or old-timer, no matter the age or length of sobriety. We hope to see a growth in attendance, fellowship, and outreach, and to be able to provide scholarships for young people to afford our wider outreach opportunities. We'd love it if you would stop by on Thursday nights and share your experience, strength, and hope with this new and passionate meeting. Hannah A.



You know you've been in AA a few 24 hrs. when... You realize the same boiling water softens a potato and hardens an egg. It's about what you're made of, not the circumstances. *Written By Kirstin and Gang*

Readers' response to: "Happily Divorced...married and divorced twice to each other, we are both afraid of getting angry and hurt by marrying a third time. We are really enjoying the last 5 years of our divorce as best friends ...our family and friends don't understand or believe we are still divorced". Several readers responded, but none of them wanted to marry the same partner for a third time. The people who married the same partner twice, said they had come to believe that this person was indeed their soul-

mate. Some shared after working the 12 Steps they learned to forgive each other and to stop the behavior responsible for the divorce.

One single man said he had been married 4 times to 4 different women. He messed up 4 marriages by listening to what his family and friends had to say. He said he might still be happily married today to at least one of the 4 women if he had not listened to his family. He wishes he had listened more to what his wife had to say and more to his own heart. Finally, he said, "My family may have a right to love me; but, they don't have a right to tell me who to love". Thanks for your feedback. *Sincerely, Miss Gabby*

Dear Miss Gabby,

My wife does not understand why I have to go to A.A. meetings to stay sober. My sponsor told me to go to a meeting a day for my first 90 days. I heard some of the old-timers sharing that-- "Meeting Makers Make It". I definitely do want to make it. She complains that I'm gone more now since I got sober than when I was drinking every night at home. She has had enough of my dumping all the family chores and responsibilities in her lap. She has finally given me an ultimatum-- either I stop going to those A.A. meetings and stay home at night, or she is moving back in with her Mom. I'm confused! I truly love my wife and sons; but, I also love my new sober life too. *Signed, Meeting Makers Make It*

Miss Gabby would love to hear your experience, strength, and hope; email friendofbillw82@gmail.com. Want to get the word out about your anniversary, an event, or articles, no problem. The article word count should be 1 to 400 words maximum. Send to the same e-mail address above.

Birthdays and Announcements

January

- 1st Cowboy Tom 45 yrs. Misfits
- 2nd Tommy G. 7 yrs. Union Group
- 2nd Dave W. 3 yrs. Mon/Brooks Park
- 4th Woody W. 13 yrs. Sober & Happy
- 4th John L. 42 yrs. Brooks Park

- 6th LeAnne R. 1 yr. Union Group
- 10th Jim C. 26 yrs. Misfits
- 13th Toni R. 30 yrs. Lady Smith
- 14th Mathian C. 7 yrs. Fri/Just For Today
- 14th Karl K. 41 yrs. Sat/Brooks Park
- 20th Nick S. 3 yrs. Fri/Brooks Park
- 25th Antoinette B 35 yrs. Misfits 1/31

February

- 3rd Cheri P. 28 yrs. Sun Porch/Brooks Pk
- 8th Denise. 33 yrs. Misfits
- 27th Juan M. 1 yr. Fri/Just For Today

March

- 3rd Steve D. 3 yrs. Union Group
- 4th Tyler A. 1 yr. Fri/Just For Today
- 29th Lisa B. 13 yrs. KG Women Mtg

Every 3rd Wednesday, District #30 Meeting; 1201 Caroline Street, Rappahannock Library, Theater Wing at 7:00 p.m.

January 6th-7th Winter 2017 VAC Meeting; Clarion Hotel Historic District Williamsburg, 351 York Street, Williamsburg, Virginia. Rooms \$49.00 plus tax. Registration deadline 12/20/2016. Call (757) 229-4100.

January 10th GSR Workshop; All are welcomed. 7:00 - 8:00 pm; at the Northern Virginia Intergroup, 10400 Eaton Place, Fairfax, VA 22030, (703) 293-9753.

February/March 2017 Annual Spring Fling; Is still being planned by our district Entertainment Subcommittee. Stay on the lookout for flyers with time and location details.

February 25th Annual 20th Day of Sharing; 43454 Crossroads Drive, Ashburn, VA from 8:00 am - 4:00 pm. Coffee, Donuts, and Lunch will be served. Guest Speaker at 3:00 pm.

April 7th-14th 2017, Spring Assembly; Fredericksburg Hospitality House Hotel, 2801 Plank Road, Fredericksburg, VA 22401. Call (757) 499-4400.

Hot-Line Subcommittee Volunteers Needed: If you want to keep drinking that's your business; but, if you want to stop drinking, that's our business. Call (540) 752-2228.

