

FRIENDS of BILL W.

District #30

www.aadistrict30va.org

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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. 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

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SERVICE OPPORTUNITIES

Hot-Line Volunteers Needed: Call (540) 752-2228, email to hotline@aadistrict30va.org, or reach out to xxx.

Jail Meetings: If you are interested in and qualify* for joining a Rappahannock Regional Jail meeting, please email corrections@aadistrict30va.org, or reach out to xxx. Women's meetings are Tuesday and Thursday from 7-8pm. Men's meetings are Monday, Wednesday, and Friday from 7-8pm. Applications can be found on the District 30 Website in the Service section.

*Qualifications: 1. One or more years of sobriety 2. If you have ever been an inmate of RRI, two years must have passed since your release.

Southeast Regional Forum. District 30 will be providing service support for this conference November 16-18, Washington Dulles Marriot Airport, 45020 Aviation Drive, Dulles, VA. Contact District 30 DCM, xxx.

DISTRICT 30 CORNER

Sept 2018 – Elections will be held for DCM, ADCM, Treasurer and Secretary.

June 2018 –Seed money for the 2019 4th of July Picnic is fully funded.

January 2018 - District 30 has voted to support SERCYPAA (Southeast Regional Conference of Young People in Alcoholics Anonymous) if Fredericksburg hosts the conference in 2019.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Halloween Dance

When: Saturday, October 27, 5pm to 10pm

Where: American Legion Post #55, 461 Woodford St, Fredericksburg, VA 22401

Details: Pizza and drinks provided. Please bring a covered dish.

Costume Contest: Individual, Children, Couples/groups – 1st, 2nd, and 3rd places awarded

Enter the Grapevine Annual Photo Contest

Each year, Grapevine holds a competition for photographers to be featured in our Wall Calendar. We'd love to see your most striking photographs that reflect the joy of living, serenity, and other sobriety themes. Contributors of selected photos will receive a complimentary copy of the new Wall Calendar in which their photo appears and a Grapevine Pocket Planner.

You may enter as many photos as you wish. **ENTRIES MUST BE RECEIVED BY DECEMBER 1, 2018.**

Digital files must be high-resolution—300 dpi minimum. Submit digital images at www.aagrapevine.org/photocontest.

New Meeting: Without a Prayer, Tuesday 7pm, Unitarian Universalist of Fredericksburg, 25 Chalice Circle. Closed Meeting. Secular focus.

Stafford Women's 12x12 meeting: If schools are closed due to weather there will not be a meeting that day.

EVENTS

Oct 12-14 – VAC Fall Assembly, Doubletree by Hilton, Richmond, VA

Oct 26-28 – 2018 VSCYPAA (VA State Conference for Young People in AA) Holiday Inn, Virginia Beach, VA. <https://aavirginia.org/event/vscypaa-2018-virginia-beach/>

Nov 16-18 - Southeast Regional Forum, Washington Dulles Marriot Airport, 45020 Aviation Drive, Dulles, VA

ANNIVERSARIES

SEPTEMBER

For anonymity purposes names omitted

OCTOBER

For anonymity purposes names omitted

REFLECTIONS

An inspiration by District 30

VAIN ATTEMPTS

Countless vain attempts... The first time I read that phrase in the Big Book of Alcoholics Anonymous, nearly 20 years ago (I celebrated 2 years of sobriety about two weeks prior to writing this), I didn't really understand what it meant or how it would be applicable to me. Me? Of all people? I am different than you. I am the guy who, when he puts his mind to it and makes a decision, will attain anything he desires. I am successful at everything I attempt, and will continue to be. I am better than you. I am smarter than you. I will succeed where you failed. I don't need you, you need me. I will soon be The President of AA. Such were my thoughts when I read those words, *Countless vain attempts...* nearly 20 years ago.

My introduction to alcohol was almost 40 years ago with some baby sips from my dad's gin stash. A few sips, chased with milk (interestingly). But that was it, just a few sips, no wild drunken spree, no blackout, no vomiting, no trip to the hospital (those would all come later). Also, no trip back to the liquor cabinet (that would come later). Of course, I was only 10, but I liked alcohol and my body liked it, and I liked that my body liked it. I never forgot that! It wasn't until about four or five years later that I rediscovered what I had been missing, thus my drinking career truly began.

There was no slow progression for me. I was all in from the start. My father, a "functional alcohol", had a prestigiously stocked liquor cabinet, which meant I had a steady supply of booze. I was a daily drinker almost immediately! I lived the next seven years pretty much like my father, as a "functional alcoholic". I did well in school and positioned myself to get into the career of my choice (did I mention I get shit done). I was trained to get shit done. I was raised with the attitude that anything you want in life you can achieve. When things are going bad, 'pull yourself up by your bootstraps' and take care of business. I had "intestinal fortitude galore" and could overcome anything. The only person you can count on and should rely upon is yourself. That worked for a while, actually on most things, but that attitude of self-driven success would come to hinder any chance of sustained sobriety.

Vain Attempt #1

Life was going pretty good as a "functional alcoholic". I was having the time of my life in Orlando, living large, spending big and drinking hard. I was young and

invincible. Then came the phone call! My father, who had been in failing health due to his drinking was in the hospital, yet again. This time he would not leave. I flew the 986 miles from Orlando to Philadelphia to be at my father's bedside when we pulled the plug. During that flight, I remember thinking how weak my dad had been. All his talk of internal strength, will power, and ability to overcome any obstacle... he preached it, yet didn't possess it. Where was his resolve? He was weak. I would not become like him (how ignorant I was of alcoholism). Like any budding young alcoholic, I got drunk the night we pulled the plug. Awaking the next morning, I swore I would never drink again, lest I end up like my father. Once a proud, strong, successful man; he was in and out of consciousness the last three days of his life, unable to leave his hospital bed, he died jaundice and bloated. Never able to say goodbye to his youngest son.

So, I swore off alcohol. Knowing very little of the nature of the disease and nothing about AA, I developed a seemingly brilliant plan; marry a teetotaler. I married a woman who had never been drunk, not touched any drug nor did she ever (God forbid) smoke a cigarette. This would be the answer. She didn't drink, so neither would I... simple. I had this figured out! Well this plan for sobriety lasted about five years. But when life stresses began to build (nothing out of the ordinary) and things did not work out the way I wanted, I started getting uncomfortable. So, I turned to what I knew could make me feel better... my old friend alcohol. For a long time, I blamed my ex-wife for my retreat back to alcohol. But as I understand things now, I was feeling restless, irritable and discontent. As my drinking increased so began the marital issues which lead to more drinking. Then, divorce! And back to life as a "functional alcoholic". The next six years of debauchery included me experiencing some of the "have nots" in the way of several tumultuous relationships, the totaling of three vehicles, the repossession of two others, a bankruptcy, two job losses, and three DUIs. The third DUI held the potential for some significant other charges involving some "party favors" procured from my place of employment. With the STRONG recommendation from my attorney and boss (who would not press charges if I went to rehab), I went to rehab.

Vain Attempt #2

After a 10-day detox in a local hospital, I entered a 30-day inpatient treatment program approximately 70 miles away. Here was my introduction to Alcoholics Anonymous. I went full force into AA. I did what was asked of me, and did so with great gusto and enthusiasm. I was going to be the best AA member of all time. If you were doing 90 in 90, I was doing 100 in 90. I was the first guy from my group in the treatment center to "complete" the steps and I collected sponsees like baseball cards. The more sponsees I had, the better AA member I was (right?). I often referred to myself as the "One Chip Wonder" or the "Poster Boy of AA". If there was a president of AA, I was gunning for him! I was quick to tell you what you were doing wrong and how I was doing everything right. I could speak some pretty good AA talk, but there was no substance backing it. Looking back now, I see that AA was a sort of challenge, a game, and I was in direct competition with my fellow AA members. Amazingly, I managed to not drink for over 4 years. Over that time, life got significantly better and suddenly AA was less important. I exhausted everything I needed from AA. I no longer needed AA, AA needed ME, but my time was much too important. I was kicking ass in life, and besides I figured out this drinking thing. I learned all I needed from AA. I could stop and start whenever I wanted. I didn't need you, or meetings, or applying steps to my life. I was empowered with knowledge and that would be enough. How wrong I was. This time the progression of the disease was actually comparatively slow. I drank a few times over the next couple of months and was sure I was able to stop when I wanted too. However, the intervals between my little binges became shorter and shorter and in about 6 months I was back to being a daily "functional drinker" again.

Vain Attempts Become Countless.

The next ten years saw me using AA as a band-aid for my problems. I was in and out of AA (more out than in). Whenever my proverbial a** was falling off, I came crawling, tail between my legs, back to AA. I would hang around until I felt better, cleared my head, and then I would go out with my "knowledge" and try to do this on my own again. And again, and again, and again. A few months here, a few months there. Never reaching any semblance of true sobriety. Ultimately this solution landed me in the hospital (three times in 44 days). I would spend 25 of those 44 days hospitalized as a direct result of my drinking. My body was giving up. My family was done helping me (well that's how I perceived it). My friends in AA were tired of my "boy who cried wolf" patterns and I basically got a serious ultimatum. The only person that was willing to still help me (well that's how I

perceived it), offered to take me to a long-term residential 12 step-based program. If I refused, they would be out of my life. I acquiesced, for I was at the gates of insanity and very near death. I remember during the hour-long ride (which seemed like 10 hours), my friend asked me if I was scared. I simply replied "No. I'm ready. I'm excited." I didn't even think prior to responding, it just came out.

The Real Attempt.

I came back (this time) with the attitude that I needed to do things differently. A man, who eventually became my sponsor, suggested I begin my day with The Set Aside Prayer, and not to just say it, but internalize it. We read The Big Book together; well I followed along as he read it to me (weird). Soon we got to the chapter "More About Alcoholism". In that first paragraph he read the words *Countless Vain Attempts...* We stopped after that paragraph. I went home and looked up exactly what *vain attempts* meant. I found that *Vain Attempts* means an empty act, one that lacks value or effect, without success, futile. OR it could be an act performed that is full of pride and conceit, often without humility. In my case, "or" can be replaced with "and."

I suddenly saw that my pride and my ego had been standing in my way of ever knowing true peace and a feeling of relief and comfort. My first attempt to stop was purely based on pride and ego. Granted I knew little of AA, but looking back, I remember my (then) wife suggesting I consider checking out some meetings. I, however, was stronger than those weaklings and needed NO help (contempt prior to investigation). Then when I finally did discover AA, it became all about me. I failed to recognize that the gifts in my life were a direct result of my involvement with AA and having a relationship with my higher power, which I found through AA. That relationship, while intense at the beginning (when I was desperate), began to become less important and without attention, eventually withered and died.

I see now, that the focus of not just recovery, but life in general, has to be off of me and on you. I was not God's gift to AA or to you— AA was God's gift to me and to you, and we are God's gifts to each other. Just finding my higher power is not enough, I have to continue to keep nurturing and developing that relationship. I can do that through my relationships with you, by being there to offer support and help. That does not mean telling you that you are wrong and I am right. I also need to ask for, and most importantly be willing to accept help from you and God. By the way, accepting help from you IS accepting help from God.

Those previous attempts to stop drinking might have been *Vain Attempts...* yet they were not done *in vain*. I have discovered a great deal about myself and most importantly I have accepted this new way of life. In which, I am experiencing peace, love and joy and I have found release from care, boredom and worry.

xxx