

# The Voice

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## Central Office, Marion County Intergroup

Monthly Newsletter of Marion County Intergroup

OCTOBER 2023

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## My side of the street

BY: ALEX M. | LOUISVILLE, KENTUCKY

With spiritual and fellowship help, he's learned to step up and clean up when the time comes

**STEP TEN:** *“Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it”*

Step Ten is our “acid test.” Can we “stay sober, keep in emotional balance and live to good purpose under all conditions” as we grow in understanding and effectiveness, putting our AA way of living to practical use? Specific and detailed suggestions are given in the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions and in our Big Book on how to tackle this test.

As I progressed through the Steps, oldtimers would tell me they called the last three the “maintenance Steps,” implying these were the ones I had to do daily to keep myself sober. My sponsor said all the Steps were maintenance Steps and I needed to do all of them every day, beginning with not drinking.

I quickly realized that Step Ten was similar to Step Four but with some add-ons, such as the spot-check inventory, which is done with

our sponsor or adviser. It's described as a more thorough annual or semi-annual inventory, along with an occasional AA retreat.

The spot-check inventory helps me the most. I always get agitated or irritated with someone or something during my day, and I've never gone an entire day without a spasm of selfishness, dishonesty, resentment or fear. Learning how to pause and immediately ask for spiritual and fellowship help, make an amend—if needed—and to think of someone else quickly settles me down. The more I practice this “prayer and share” approach, the easier it is to deal with life's daily ups and downs.

Once during an AA meeting, I was becoming increasingly frustrated with a longtime member who was going on and on about the number of years he had been sober, and I assumed he was bragging about his length of sobriety. I rudely interrupted him,

*continued on p 2*

### Important Dates

- **October 8th**  
Intergroup/Central Office Representative meeting @ **Noon**, Lost & Found Club
- **October 26th**  
District 17 monthly meeting, 7:00pm, Unity Place, 525 NE Sanchez
- **Every Thursday** Area 14 Service. Workshop, 6:00pm; Hospitality, 5:45pm—New Topic every Thursday—Zoom Meeting ID: 828 5682 4762; pw: service

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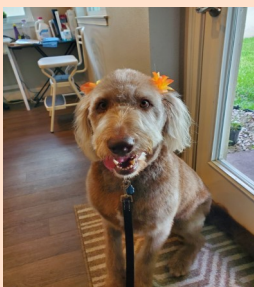
### **FAITHFUL FIVERS**

**Contribute \$5/month or \$60/year**

Contributors:  
Joe S, Phil H, Ralph W

Your membership directly supports 12-Step work in District 17 and the Central Office Operation

\*\*\*\*\*



Sheba



Bandit

**Intergroup's 4-legged Visitors are always welcome**



## My side of the street *continued from page 1*

telling him in no uncertain terms that his pride and arrogance were not setting a good example for the newcomers in the room. He became incensed and explained that he was simply trying to impress upon others that anyone can build sober days in AA one day at a time.

I immediately realized I had made a huge blunder but said nothing at the time, nor did I say anything to him after the meeting. On the way home I realized I had been totally wrong and owed the man an amend, not just for what I had said, but also for not having apologized immediately. Unable to contact him, I waited until the next meeting when we were both present.

My sponsor and I attend several meetings together each week, which provides an opportunity for me to discuss with him any anger, fear or relationship issues that I'm stuck on. Although I've been on only one AA retreat, I've always done an annual housecleaning


during the Step study groups I regularly attend.

Cleaning up my side of the street as soon as I can prevents me from developing resentments. Performing a more in-depth inventory once a year allows me to discover new shortcomings to address, such as my tendency to be inappropriately judgmental of chronic relapsers and to be critical of the conduct of certain members of my family. Regularly speaking with my sponsor about my defects provides additional insight into my faults and flaws.

Of course, simply identifying improper behavior is useless if I'm unwilling to change. It's easy to minimize my defects and tell myself, That's just who I am and at least I'm not drinking. But I've found over the years that if I continuously take action to improve my character after regular self-examination and think more of others than myself, my days are much more constructive and satisfying.

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**Calling all AA Authors  
of Marion County**



**Where are you? I know for a fact there is much experience, strength and hope to be shared by AA members.**

**Raise Your Voice.  
Tell Your Story.**

Each month The Voice would like to feature a local member to share their experience, strength, and hope about the step of the month. We invite you to submit yours for consideration and possible publication. Choose a step that's particularly meaningful to you and put "pen to paper." Keep it between 500 and 700 words.

**Call Central Office for more info**  
and to claim your step  
352-867-0660

**AA Historical Events in October**

**October 3, 1945** - A.A. Grapevine adopted as national publication of A.A.

**October 1954**—The "Alcoholic Foundation" renamed the "General Service Board of A.A."

**October 1, 1957**—"A.A. Comes of Age" published.

**October 9-11, 1969**—1st World Service meeting held in New York with delegates from 14 countries.

**October 1972**—2nd World Service meeting held in New York



## STAYING FOCUSED

BY: GEORGE H. | KINGSTON, NH

A member shares his thoughts about opinions, judgments, outside issues and our primary purpose  
**TRADITION TEN:** *“Alcoholics Anonymous has no opinion on outside issues; hence the A.A. name ought never be drawn into public controversy.”*

One day a man barged into our meeting room and hijacked it while it was in full swing. His profanity-laced, hate-filled tirade continued unabated to the dismay of all those attending. Everyone was stunned.

The only thing that came to me in the shock of the moment was a flash of Tradition Ten containing these two words: outside issues. So I yelled back at him, “Hey, those are outside issues!” That seemed to catch him off guard. He paused his vocal abuse long enough for someone else to be able to whisk him out the door and away from the meeting to diffuse the situation.

The phrase “outside issues” may be AA speak, and the person in this example may have been merely confused by my choice of words. But to those of us in the Fellowship, that phrase contains an important concept ensuring that we focus on alcoholism and that the halls of AA remain a safe place for all. As it states in the long form of Tradition Ten: “The Alcoholics Anonymous groups oppose no one.”

We don’t take sides on outside issues—ever. It doesn’t matter what religious sect you belong to, what race or nationality one is, what political affiliation you may have, or what side of the alcohol reform debate you belong to. We leave judgments about these at the door. We clean the soles of our shoes on the way in, so to speak. I don’t pick my personal views back up until I leave. I even hesitate to mention politics or religion when I tell my story because any thoughts I may have on these divert me from being inclusive and focusing on AA’s primary purpose.

We might also take outside issues to an extreme. How closely should I as an individual adhere to this Tradition? What about talking about our favorite sports teams or name-dropping brand names in an AA meeting? Or how about

wearing teams and corporate logos? Couldn’t these things influence others, and not always in a positive way?

Going to extremes is something that I do regularly. So clearly some moderation here is needed. I’m not advocating that we only wear logo-less apparel or refrain from talking about brand names. We should just use some sensitivity to avoid brand-shaming or status gloating, which might divide rather than unify.

But what about opinions? An opinion is a judgment not necessarily based on fact or knowledge. Here’s an example: If I like doing the Steps as they are laid out in the Big Book, I might share my experience with someone about this. But to declare that the Big Book way is the only way to do the Steps or to denigrate doing the Steps by the “Twelve and Twelve” or some other method could result in dividing members. And that’s not necessarily an opinion. It’s based, I’ve experienced, through this learning curve I call sobriety, and in working with others.

My goal is to maximize the chances of someone to stay sober—to be encouraging and supportive, not authoritative and restrictive. When sharing at meetings and with members one-on-one, I have only two things to offer: my experience and the sober person I am today.

Before I had my experience with the program of AA, my idea of sponsoring someone involved trying to fix their life, work, relationships, family, and even other addictions. I was certainly proved wrong about that. Having no experience in any of these outside issues at the time, I based my course of action to help others based on my opinions. And my opinions were based on my own ideas of how life should be lived. Luckily most of these men are still sober in spite of me.

*continued on p 4*



Staying focused *continued from page 3*

Tradition Ten suggests that we practice neutrality. I can do this by being focused on what's stated in our AA Preamble: my "experience, strength and hope." We keep the group, our meetings and the Fellowship free from anything which may sidetrack us from our primary purpose.

The AA Preamble is made up of a very succinct wording of many of the Traditions. In this clearly written introduction to AA, we find our primary purpose, self-support, non-alliance and affiliation and freedom from the controversy that engulfs so much of the world today. It's a great way to engage with the world and to maintain focus on what we can all concur on—our recovery.

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## Every Day Counts ~ ~BY: RAY T. | OCALA, FLORIDA

*His wife's return from a relapse inspired him to recommit to AA just at the right time*

Like so many others, reaching a bottom of total demoralization convinced me I was out of control. I checked into a rehab and from there I started my AA journey. For the most part I did as I was told. I attended 90 meetings in 90 days, got a sponsor, worked the Steps, went to meetings and before I knew it, I had five years of sobriety. I had no compulsion to drink and life got good—except at home.

It became apparent that my drinking had caused irreparable damage to my marriage and no amount of amends, counseling or effort could fix it. Trust was lost due to my actions and could not be restored.

Our marriage ended, we sold the house, and I moved across the country to start anew. I found a great job and soon met a soulmate even though I had never believed in such things. Life got good again. I didn't even think of drinking. Slowly my attendance at AA meetings dropped off. After all, alcohol was not part of my life anymore...

But I was soon to find out that it was.

I learned that my new spouse was on a relapse after over a decade of sobriety. I had been clueless about her situation since alcohol was not in our home (or so I thought) and she was quite skillful at hiding her drinking—and it was accelerating. Fortunately, she reached a point of needing help and went to a rehab. She came out with a new outlook and a genuine interest in attending AA meetings. I wanted to support her and, even though I didn't feel a personal need to attend meetings myself, we started going together.

She got a sponsor, worked the Steps and soon the changes I saw in her woke me up. I realized that though I had not started drinking, many of my old thought patterns—anger, impatience, selfishness and self-importance—had all come creeping back into my life. I had come close to my own relapse without realizing it! Her sobriety energized my recommitment to AA. We would discuss Daily Reflections on our way to meetings and share thoughts with each other afterward.

Then a few months before my 24th AA birthday, I was diagnosed with stage 4 cancer. The variety I have is an aggressive, rare form that has a life expectancy anywhere from two to seven years on average after diagnosis.

While we could be negative about my health and make life miserable for ourselves and everyone around us, my wife and I turned to our AA teachings, especially about acceptance being the answer to all our problems today. While acceptance is not easy when faced with something like cancer, it certainly is possible.

My wife and I have faced my chemotherapy and treatments together head on. On some days when it's difficult to remain positive, the first line of the Serenity Prayer brings us both comfort and peace. Different people approach these challenges in different ways. Some drink themselves into oblivion, but that's clearly not an option for me. Life is far too precious to spend a single day in a drug-induced stupor or a hangover. Some people refuse further treatment and hasten their demise. That's not for me. There are medical treatments that can prolong my life and I'm working with the doctors to follow their program. Some people blame, complain and have a huge pity party when confronted with major life challenges like this. That's not for me either. As I've learned in AA, life happens. I try to accept life on life's terms.

AA is about living. Living with a quality of life that doesn't need artificial stimulants. I'm learning to appreciate the now, the little things. I get to focus on recovery every day. My wife and I have come up with what we consider a realistic and fun "bucket list." Sure we take things for granted sometimes. But we try to remember to live each day so it's special.

My wife, my sponsor, my family and friends and AA are my rocks, my foundation and my strength. I consider myself lucky that AA has given me the tools to appreciate the blessings that I've been given.

So, while my prognosis could be considered grim, it's just part of life. Unlike so many people, I have an opportunity to make and complete a real bucket list and go out and live it. I have a chance to continue to right wrongs, to tell people how much I love and appreciate them and to deal with any regrets that inevitably appear. I'm going forward positively and will deal with the coming challenges with hope, faith, love and trust in my doctors and this AA program I love.

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## District 17 Gratitude Dinner November 4, 2023

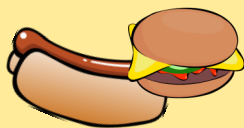
**If you plan on bringing a cake for the  
Cake Auction, please contact  
Steve S @ 661-877-5586 OR  
scvsteve@yahoo.com**

**All Groups are welcome to donate  
a basket for Raffle!**



# Hitnic

The Heavy Hitters of Ocala wish to invite our family and friends to the Annual Celebration of Recovery  
**Saturday, October 7, 2023**  
 1pm-5pm @ Unity Place  
 525 NE Sanchez Ave, Ocala, FL 34470  
 Hot Dogs, Hamburgers and Drinks ~ Games ~ Music ~  
 50/50 Raffle ~ and more  
 Speakers @ 4pm ~ Jason M ~ Chris R  
**FREE EVENT FOR ALL**



3rd Annual

## Red Eye

Speaker Brunch

**OCTOBER 19TH @ 10AM**  
 LOST & FOUND CLUB, 616 S. PINE AVE, OCALA  
*Speakers- Jackie & Jim*  
*Finger Foods and Beverages*

Join Us

# Living Sober

Celebrate

## 30th Anniversary

Friday, October 27, 2023

Our Redeemer Lutheran Church  
 5200 SW College Road  
**NO SMOKING ON**  
 Church grounds

4:00pm  
 4:30pm Dinner  
 6:30pm Speaker, Tony E

**Entree provided**  
**Please bring a dish to share**

**50/50 Raffle**

Donations Welcome



## Belleview Eye Opener

**Annual Anniversary Luncheon**

**Monday, November 13, 2023**

**Doors Open 11:00am**

**Food @ 11:30am**

**Speaker: Nicole D @ 12:00 Noon**

**FULL THANKSGIVING FEAST—Turkey, Mashed Potatoes, Gravy, Stuffing, Green Beans, Cranberry Sauce, Yams and so much More!!**

### **NEW LOCATION FOR THIS EVENT**

**St. Mary’s Episcopal Church  
5750 SE 115th Street  
Belleview, FL 34420**

### **Belleview Speaker Meeting 5th Anniversary**

**Saturday, 12/2/23**

**4pm—Pizza, Desserts  
and Beverages**

**5pm—2 Speakers**

**Location: DAV (Disabled American  
Veterans)  
9636 SE 58th Ave, Ocala, FL**

### **GRAPEVINE Daily Quote**

**September 5, 2023**

“Let today’s troubles be sufficient to today.”

“Distilled Spirits,” Indianapolis, Indiana  
August 1982, AA Grapevine



## Birthdays

### October

#### Bellevue Group

Steve H— 2  
 Gwendolen C—3  
 Ron W—9  
 Sam B—11  
 Dave P—36  
 Lou B—44

#### Breakfast Club

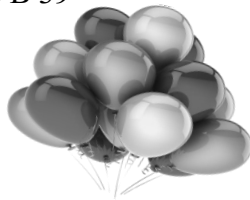
Norm—1  
 Michelle B—5  
 Glenn C—8  
 Kenny B—10  
 Don P—17  
 Fred M—29  
 Susan M—34  
 Darlene R—35  
 Johnnie M—36  
 Gail A—37

#### Head Start

revision for Sept -  
 Eddie S—34

#### October

Kendra—1  
 Johnny G—1  
 Daniel Z—2  
 Eric H—3  
 Chris—4  
 Connie C—21  
**We Give Up**  
 Randy A—14  
 Alison C—19  
 Mike M—38  
 Mike B 39



# Congrats!!!

**REMINDER** - To have Group Member's Birthdays acknowledged in The Voice information needs to be forwarded to Intergroup/Central Office [aaocalaintergroup@gmail.com](mailto:aaocalaintergroup@gmail.com) for respective month, i.e. end of October for November Birthdays.

## Contributions

### September

11th Step Meditation	\$ 100.00
Happy, Joyous & Free	\$ 115.48
Headstart	\$ 128.04
Living Sober	\$ 510.00
Mano Abierta	\$ 40.00
New Attitudes	\$ 147.00
On Awakening	\$ 250.00
One Day At A Time	\$ 167.00
Reflections Group	\$ 100.00
Shores of Sobriety	\$ 70.00
Sober Yankees	\$ 75.00
Stop Whining & Sober Up	\$ 100.00
Individuals	\$ 80.00

From the GSO Pamphlet

*Self-support;  
Where Money and Spiritually Mix (F-3)*

**10% to District 17**  
*P.O. Box 3081, Ocala, FL 34478*

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**10% to Area 14**  
 NFAC Treasurer  
 P.O. Box 6301  
 Jacksonville, FL 32205-9998  
*(Address changes every two years. Visit  
[www.aanorthflorida.org](http://www.aanorthflorida.org) for correct address)*

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**30% to General Service Office**  
*PO Box 459, Grand Central Station,  
 New York, NY 10163*

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**50% to Central Office/Intergroup 17**  
*616 S Pine Avenue  
 Ocala, FL 3447*