

Spring 2017

# KENTUCKIANA NEWS

The Voice of Area 26

## Safety in AA

### Safeguarding Ourselves and the Newcomer



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The goal of Kentuckiana News is to inspire recovering alcoholics through articles on AA topics that share the experience, strength and hope of AA members.

**The topic of our Summer Issue 2017 Articles will include Steps Four, Five, Six and Seven.**

Please submit your articles for the Summer issue to [Kentuckiana@area26.net](mailto:Kentuckiana@area26.net)

Deadline for article submission is June 1, 2016

#### ON TOPIC:

### Safeguarding the Newcomer

Over the last few years, I have started paying closer attention to our fellowship through my home group and my district. A lot of questions have been popping into my head after group and district inventories. One question is why there are almost no people of other ethnic groups. Given the number of groups in my district and the size of my district, why are there not usually more than five home group members in each group? Is our turnover rate excessive? Why do we

not feel welcome in most meetings; walking into a meeting, not one person bats an eye to welcome us because socializing amongst their friends is more important. Why are we not surrounding these new people with greetings upon arrival and leaving? I feel we should be welcoming, letting down our walls of fear and selfishness so they know they are welcome, into our group and into our lives, but without mothering or smothering them. For example, I see a guy in a meeting almost every week and every time I see him I welcome him and ask if he needs anything and tell him that he is welcome to sit with us if he would like. Yet, he is still the fastest thing on two legs after the meeting is adjourned.

It is really important to recognize first-time A.A. attendees. I did not get greeted by anyone when I first arrived in the Fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous. Not saying that people weren't friendly once the meeting started, but I had no one to show me where the literature was, no one to ask me if I were an alcoholic or not, no one to get me a cup of coffee while asking if it is my first meeting or just my first time at that particular meeting and if I would like to sit with them. There was no one person or group of people asking me to go out to dinner or coffee with them to discuss the meeting's topic further. Most of these things I have had to learn through literature and other enthusiastic groups and members from miles away. After three years of not drinking, I was still attending meetings and just as standoffish as I was when drinking because I wasn't taught to greet people and be neither welcoming nor our primary purpose. Just because I had enough willingness to sit in meetings without being welcomed doesn't mean that everyone will, and I have discovered that through the sponsorship of many men. I guess I could use the age old AA excuse that if "God" runs them out of the meeting then alcohol will run them back in. I found that through my experience "God" wasn't actually *God as We Understand Him* running prospects out of the meeting; it was my religion. You see, to get where I am today, I have made many mistakes, mostly out of ignorance of our program. "My" program is a real turn off to most people. "My" program landed me in institution after institution in rapid succession. Therefore, I must be careful in running my thoughts and shares through our Steps, Traditions and Concepts, which is a filter for if what I am sharing is Alcoholics Anonymous appropriate or not. And guess what? I am still a human being and sometimes things still slip by my filter. I am by no means Mr. A.A. Out of all the literature I study with my sponsor and home group, I am still frequently wrong. My home group uses anything from our book or other A.A. Conference-approved literature to close our meeting so as to not appear religious or exclusive to anyone. We try to remember that people do not have their religion or lack of religion tattooed on their forehead, and we want to stay in accordance with our Tenth Tradition because it keeps us as a group of people who **do** mix.

We strive to provide a safe environment both inside and outside of our meetings. First, we have a sign at our home group that hangs outside the meeting place so that newcomers or visitors know they are at the correct place upon arrival. We also make sure that everyone makes it to their cars after the meeting.

Additionally, newcomers can take a group bookmark that has our meeting time, day, and place on it as well as all of our home group members' names and phone numbers. Our group conscience fully empowers meeting chairs and making them aware of their responsibilities and to maintain order and safety in meetings so that

the group as a whole will benefit. Our group conscience discussions include emphasis on Tradition One and the importance of the unity of the group having precedent over the individual. We do not believe that the newcomer is the most important person in the room. That would go against Tradition One, and when we look at our upside down triangle there are no individuals at the top of it, only groups. Our group knows that a newcomer has a better shot of staying sober in a healthy group that is involved in all three legacies than in a group where anything goes. We want to offer our entire program to our newcomers, not just the Steps off the wall or a couple of one liners to send with them. As our literature says, "...the group must survive or the individual will not." If we were going out to shoot clay pigeons and we all have 12-gauge shotguns, but yet a new guy shows up and we give him a .22 caliber pistol, he does not have the same odds of success as we do. Every individual's voice is heard in our group and every person in our group has a service position from greeter to "dictionary person" to GSR. Also, we are currently discussing a planned format in our structure on what to do with disruptive behavior. We gently address disruptions when they occur.

Our group currently meets at a member's house for informal meetings on our 3<sup>rd</sup> Legacy, A.A. History and Safety in A.A. once a week. We are currently brainstorming ideas on how we can better handle disruptions within our group. We have already read and discussed A.A.'s newest service piece on safety, SMF-209, which was released onto aa.org on 1/25/2017 and a summary of the sharing during the 62<sup>nd</sup> General Service Workshop, "Safety in A.A.: Our Common Welfare." We have found through experience that it is better to be prepared with a format of how to handle these touchy situations instead of telling ourselves that it will never happen because they do happen. The single most important thing I have learned through my experience is that usually groups in a district don't seem to just decide they want to "get better". The groups that get better are the ones where sponsorship is strong. Our sponsorship family tree is built on firm bedrock of all 36 principles. We recover by the Steps that we take, not by the meetings that we make. I think one of our co-founders, Bill W., would agree with his statement from the 1961 Grapevine Article, "Though three hundred thousand did recover in the last twenty-five years, maybe half a million more have walked into our midst, and then out again. No doubt some were too sick to make even a start. Others couldn't or wouldn't admit their alcoholism. Still others couldn't face up to their underlying personality defects. Numbers departed for still other reasons. Yet we can't well content ourselves with the view that all these recovery failures were entirely the fault of the newcomers themselves. Perhaps a great many didn't receive the kind and amount of sponsorship they so sorely needed. We didn't communicate when we might have done so. So we AAs failed them. Perhaps more often than we think, we still make no contact at depth with those suffering..."

# MEET THE OFFICERS AND COMMITTEE CHAIRS

My name is Philip Cooper your current corrections chair. My sponsor is Jim D. And my service sponsor is Roger W. However, I can't write this without giving recognition to my prior service sponsor Brian S who was invaluable in helping me learn how to organize meetings, presentations, and reports. My sobriety date is February 18, 2006 in my home group is Soothe, a 12 and 12 step study meeting. My service work began by opening the church and setting up for our weekly meeting on Thursday evenings. I was elected treasurer of my home group in 2010. I had a sponsee who was incarcerated at the time and whom I would visit weekly. His cellmate asked if at I might talk to him about AA, which I did and actually became his sponsor also. Little was I to know for this was going to lead me in my life and in a a service. This new sponsee and I worked the 12 steps of Alcoholics Anonymous via handwritten letters. I made three trips to the Green River correctional facility in Central city Kentucky to hear his fifth step. About the same time I was elected GSR of my home group. At my first district 12 meeting the DCM asked for volunteers to serve on committees. Having had the experience with this offender, I volunteered to serve on the corrections committee. Well we know where that went don't we? I immediately became district 12 corrections chair totally ignorant of my responsibilities, sometimes you just had to be willing to be ignorant. Thank goodness for GSO's Corrections Handbook, pamphlets, and DVDs. I studied all that material and found the many various ways to be of service in corrections work. I became very aware of the importance of knowledge of the 12 traditions when dealing with corrections professionals. In 2012 I became a certified volunteer for Metro Louisville jail and that the Kentucky state reformatory in Lagrange thereby affording me the privilege of carrying the message into those facilities. I collaborated with Jim S. on alternating Wednesday nights at the KSR in Lagrange. I shared with these men all the programs available to them from the GSO.

Aside from taking a meeting into a facility, other means of caring the message are: 1. Literature procurement, 2. pink can contributions 3. Corrections correspondence service and arranging local contacts for out coming offenders. I district 12 corrections committee met monthly and strive to work on all these various areas. We attend a different meeting in our district sharing about all the services. Over the year and a half with assisted enrolling 64 people in the corrections correspondence program. As a result of that I was asked to serve on a panel at international convention in Atlanta on that particular program and what it meant and my recovery. They committee was also responsible for placing several pink cans and other meetings in our district. At this time I was also asked to serve as alternate DCM for district 12 and served that office until the end of December 2015. I was asked to serve as area 26 corrections chair for panel 66. I attempt to bring the same awareness, to the area level, which I had to learn from serving at the district level. My life is truly blessed in being of service. I assisted GSO NY in finding local contacts for out coming offenders in the respective communities to which they are being a released. I attempt to provide literature tour, when available, throughout the state. It is wonderful to go to an outside meeting and see the face of a man that I saw in prison or jail. My life is truly blessed in being of service.

Concerning service, I find the paradox - the more willing I am to serve, the more time I'm given to serve. To my best recollection I can't remember a time when my daily chores and meetings were unmet because of service work. I have had the pleasure of sharing GSO's corrections programs to several districts and home groups throughout the area. I look forward to nine more months of service at the area level. Our corrections committee is currently exploring the possibility of hosting an annual Kentucky state corrections conference. We have eight people on an ad hoc committee throughout the

state surveying for interest in such.

Thank you for letting me be of service, Philip Cooper Area 26 Corrections chair

## **Funny Jokes and Facts or Not!!**



How can you tell when AA newcomers are dating?

UHAUL IN THE DRIVEWAY

What is the different between a drunk and an alcoholic?

DRUNKS DRINK A LOT AND ALCOHOLICS GO TO MEETINGS.

## **CONCEPTS**

### **Concept 9**

#### **What a Concept!**

Concept? What's a concept? Most of us are very familiar with the Twelve Steps of Alcoholics Anonymous; the 1<sup>st</sup> Legacy of Recovery passed on to us by our Founders. Many of us are on speaking terms with the Twelve Traditions; the 2<sup>nd</sup> legacy of Unity by which we deal with each other and the "outside" world. But unless you have been involved with service, particularly at area level, you may not be all that familiar with the Twelve Concepts, the 3<sup>rd</sup> Legacy of Service.

These are the "suggestions" that helped our General Service Board, the Trustees, cope with the ongoing issues that they encountered then and are just as relevant today.

This article addresses Concept IX which in its short form is presented here:

***"Good service leaders, together with sound and appropriate methods of choosing them, are at all levels indispensable for***

***our future functioning and safety. The primary world service leadership once exercised by the founders of A.A. must necessarily be assumed by the Trustees of the General Service Board of Alcoholics Anonymous.*** A.A. Service Manual-Copyright 1962

Although Concept IX addresses the needs and requirements for choosing the best possible individuals to serve as our Trustees, the principles laid down also point to the choosing of leaders at all levels of service in our A.A. fellowship. As Bill W. points out in Concept IX:

***“First let’s remember that the base for our service structure rests on the dedication and ability of several thousand General Service Representatives (G.S.R.’s), several hundred Area Committee Members, and nearly a hundred Delegates.(1962) These are the direct agents of the A.A. groups; these are the indispensable linkage between our Fellowship and its world services; these are the primary representatives of A.A.’s group conscience, Without their support and activity we could not operate permanently at all.”*** A.A. Service Manual-Copyright 1962

Choice of leadership at area level is imperative to bring the right candidates to the table, from G.S.R.’s to committee heads, area officers and delegates. Bill W. further points to the principle theme of this Concept, which is how to best strengthen the composition and leadership of future appointees including General Service Board Trustees. When Bill W. formulized the development of our present Twelve Concepts, (Left over from the 1955 St. Louis Convention), he also anticipated his own departure from active world service work.

Bill W. quotes from a 1959 article in the A.A. Grapevine, his vision of the qualifications for choosing future Trustees to serve on A.A.’s General Service Board. These talents are also, in his opinion, the basis for selecting leadership roles at all levels of A.A. service. Bill W. Lays down his idea for four vital attributes he saw as necessary for selecting qualified candidates:

Tolerance, Responsibility, Flexibility and most important, Vision. Let us look at his thoughts on each of these qualifiers.

First of all **Tolerance**. Bill states that a balance of original ideas and the ability to listen to others, even when it seems that

their thoughts might be self-seeking and self-serving. They may be on to something even though we may want to dismiss them out of hand.

Then there is **Responsibility**. Though we may listen to many points and numerous views of a discussion, a good leader must at some instant make a final decision based on their own analysis of all the ideas offered.

Next is **Flexibility**. Give and take to achieve a goal is absolutely vital to push an idea ahead to its final conclusion. A good and qualified leader will always see the need to compromise to reach an end.

Finally there is, in Bill's opinion, the most important attribute of **Vision**. Bill W says in the 1959 Grapevine article: *"Vision is, I think, the ability to make good estimates, both for the immediate and for the more distant future..... Vision is therefore the very essence of prudence, an essential virtue if ever there was one."* Vision may be the most tenuous ability to grasp. After all, it is only an "educated guess" based on how ideas and policies work now and how we envision them working in the future. Bill's last word on this talent is: *"As a matter of fact, all of A.A.'s Twelve Traditions were at first questions of estimate and vision for the future."*

As a last thought on Concept IX, I was impressed that our founder, Bill W. took the last few sentences of the Grapevine article to dwell upon the importance of leadership in a sponsor. Using these same qualifications; Tolerance, Responsibility, Flexibility and Vision, a sponsor can help shape the future of a person new to our way of life and lead them on the road to recovery. Perhaps on their own road to becoming a trusted servant in the A.A. fellowship!

Bill E., DCM, District 21



## **Concept 10**

**CONCEPT X-** *Every service responsibility should be matched by an equal service authority- the scope of such authority to be always well defined whether by tradition, by resolution, by specific job description or by appropriate charters and bylaws.*

I have been involved in General Service for almost a year as the secretary for my home group and the secretary for District 17. Working with a service sponsor and attending the quarterly assemblies as well as a few workshops on the 12 Traditions and 12 Concepts has given me a solid foundation in all of our 3 legacies. Combined of course with the strong sponsorship I receive ongoing, studying and living our program out of the Big Book of Alcoholics Anonymous. Without understanding and living all 36 principles I am just doing those half measures which never worked for me in the past. Here is what I have learned on Concept X:

At all levels of service we need to have adequate authority to do our daily work and to discharge our clear responsibilities. We need to also have constant communication within that structure. For example: I have guidelines that are written under our district structure to follow as the secretary but they give me the autonomy to perform my duties and my responsibility which is well defined. I can create and distribute the minutes of our district meetings how I feel works best and I receive communication back from my district. Another example is when an agenda item is brought up and the area feels opposed or for the motion we give our delegate guidance on it but we never tie their hands how to vote. They have the authority to vote as they feel is the best for Alcoholics Anonymous as a whole not just what is best for our Area. As stated in The Twelve Concepts for World Service Illustrated: “It is perfectly clear, says Bill, “that

when *delegated authority is operating well, it should not be constantly interfered with.*” Otherwise, he warns, “those charged with operating responsibility will be demoralized.”

Within each part of our fellowship a job description is designed and we elect someone into that position who in turn knows what their job description is. The concept goes from the GSR all the way to the general service board. The general service board in turn is responsible to the groups. It goes in a complete circle. Kristen G., No Nonsense Group, District 17 Secretary

## **STUMP THE CHUMP**

### **1. When trying to understand the Traditions, can a meeting use Tradition 7 monies to celebrate group members Anniversaries? Is it the same when the Home Group buys the meat for their eating meetings?**

As long as the group conscience has voted to use the monies for that purpose it is my understanding of the 7<sup>th</sup> Tradition that is ok.

### **2. Why isn't going to meeting enough to stay sober?**

Meetings are great to get connected with the fellowship and to hear a story that makes us relate with one another. The Program of action and the purpose of our book, Alcoholics Anonymous is to make ourselves of maximum service to others. This by working the 12 Steps, which is our program. Meetings alone are not enough for Real Sobriety.

### **3. What is the difference between a meeting and a Group?**

“Any two or three alcoholics that come together can call themselves an AA group, provided that, as group, they have no other affiliation” (TRADITION 3)”Some AA members hold AA meetings that differ from the common understanding of a group. These members simply gather at a set time and place for a meeting, perhaps for convenience or other special situation. The main difference between meetings and groups is that AA groups generally continue to exist outside the prescribed meeting hours, ready to provide Twelve Step help when needed. AA groups are encouraged to register with GSO, as well as with their local offices: area, district, intergroup or central office. AA meetings can be listed in local meeting lists”. (The AA Group pamphlet p 12-13)

### **4. What is the best way to ask someone to leave a meeting and not come**

## **back?**

Safety and AA

Information taken from the AA Service Manual from GSO

Having safe meetings is an important issue in Alcoholics Anonymous. As tradition One states in the long form, "Each member of Alcoholics Anonymous is but a small part of a great whole. AA must continue to live or most of most us will surely die. Hence our common welfare comes first. But individual welfare follows close afterward." As members in the rooms of Alcoholics Anonymous it's our responsibility to provide a safe environment in which alcoholics can focus on getting and maintaining sobriety. Because AA is not organized in the traditional sense it's up to the individual members and groups to provide a safe environment for alcoholics to recover in. Newcomers who are not familiar with how the meetings function may not understand what is acceptable in the rooms. In dealing with safety issues inside the rooms, the group conscience determines how to deal with disruptions and safety issues. Some situations that have been addressed in various groups include sexual harassment, threats of violence, financial coercion, racial or lifestyle intolerance, pressuring AA members into a particular point of view or belief relating to medical treatment and / or medications, politics, and other outside issues. A member of the group may speak to the offender or the group may even ask the offender to stop attending the meeting for a specific period of time, (this is sometimes necessary in order to preserve the common welfare of the group and to maintain AA unity). Also, AA membership does not grant immunity from the law and illegal activity in the rooms and it cannot be tolerated. As the Big Book states, "Love and tolerance of others is our code", however safety is an important part of the group and maintaining safety and order benefits the members of Alcoholics Anonymous and allows us to be able to focus on recovery from alcoholism. Anonymous

## **5. What is the "Old Girl Network"?**

This is not a REAL GROUP or part of the AA service structure. However, it needs to be said that it is our responsibility to take care of each other. There is an unspoken group called the "Old Girl Network" that takes it real personal when a new people come into their meeting. They give the person phone numbers and the names of meetings that they go to. They invite them to social gathering and events with them. Help them to make friends, men for men and women for women. They aren't anti-men but it is their experience that women that rely on women when new in sobriety seem to stay sober. There is always special situations when this is not possible but it seems it be best. They get involved in AA and take the steps sooner. They say that women save our butt and men pat our butt!! When I see a new women being approached by a man it is my job to say something to that man about his behavior. Women know that some men have ideas that aren't good for a newcomer woman. And the same goes for a man knowing a woman's behavior. In the responsibility statement it says that it is our job, when anyone, anywhere reaches out for help we are responsible.

## **Step Two**

Came to believe that a Power greater than our-selves could restore us to sanity.

When 1st reading step 2, my thought on this step was a power greater could restore everyone else, but not me. Two reasons, 1) I was not insane, everyone else was. 2) If I needed sanity, which I didn't, I definitely

wasn't worthy to receive.

After I hit a wall with myself, I finally came to the idea of finding something, anything! Anything was better than how I was feeling on the inside. Broken, so much pain, couldn't function the way I had tried for years before, couldn't work, clean, be nice, everyone was an idiot. So I began searching for anything inside of Alcoholics Anonymous that would work.

The first part was recognizing that I had a problem, and the problem was me. Then I needed to become willing to see that there were Solutions right in front of me which equals a power greater than myself. The beginning Powers greater than myself that I was willing to accept was the group as a whole at a meeting. So the meeting place was the first idea of how I could begin to see there was a solution for my problem. Then came my sponsors help and love, without her I may not have felt love, compassion and forgiveness. The Big Book was next, WOW what a book, I could see myself! I wasn't alone. Now I could really begin to accept, practice and see there are many powers greater than me and I am worth sobriety.....and sanity!

Lynn M. GSR Speak Easy Group

## Step Three

Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood him"

In step 1, I was able to admit I was powerless over alcohol and that my life was unmanageable. In step 2, I came to believe a *power greater than myself* could restore me to sanity. Step 3 was harder for me due to the fact that I had to trust in something other than myself to help guide me through life.

This was not something that happened over night for me. Due to a lot of things that happened in my past, I have some serious trust issues. It was incredibly hard for me to even trust someone enough to let them borrow a pen let alone trust something I can't even see with my life. To have absolute faith in something other than myself, was terrifying to me. As time passed and the more I sat still, the more I could see God moving in the lives around me. That is when I made the decision to simply trust and let go and let God.

Since that moment, life has not been a fairy tale, but I have made it through learning from each experience, remaining sober, and continuing to not only maintain but expand my faith in God. Through the program of Alcoholics Anonymous, I have been given a gift of learning how to live my life through God's will rather than self-will and for that I will be forever grateful.

Kelsey R. Better Days Group

**FROM THE DESK OF THE ARCHIVES CHAIR**

- Who were the founding members of the group?

Hagan O' and Damon B. founded the group, although Hagan O' became the only official home group member.

Bob joined the group a couple of months after founding. Hagan and Bob are both members of

Alcoholics Anonymous but have different home groups as of 2016.

Brian S. joined when the group was six months old and has been a continuous member to present

(as of 2016).

- Where and when was the first meeting held?

In date order, list where later meetings have been held. Include city, state, building, residence, church, clubhouse, etc.

The first meeting was held in spring 1996. The General Service Office recorded a registration date

of October 1, 1996.

Better Days has met in three locations in its history. The first meeting was held in the basement of St. Francis of Assisi Rectory House located at 1934 Alfresco Place, Louisville, KY 40205. The group met at this location from its founding in spring 1996 until 28 December 1999. The date is fixed because the daughter of a home group member was born the following day. He had attended the meeting the night before.

From January 2000 until March 2010, the group met in Briney Hall at Douglass Boulevard

Christian Church, located at 2005 Douglass Boulevard, Louisville, KY 40205.

In March 2010, Better Days moved across the street to St. Paul's United Methodist Church, located at 2000 Douglass Boulevard, Louisville, KY 40205. It continues to meet there at present (June

2015).

- Did the group list with the General Service Office at the time the members first met?

Yes, Damon B registered the group with the General Service Office at its inception.

- What is the group's name? Have there been any changes to the group's name over the years?

The group had no official name at founding. Some group members loosely referred to it as "The Four Horsemen" for the first two months. At that time the official group name of "Better Days"

was selected.

The name was put forward by Bob. He was driving by the Better Days record store, located at the corner of Bonnycastle and Bardstown Road. 2 As Bob approached the intersection, he had the radio tuned to a local rock station, and he heard Bruce Springsteen sing "These are better days." 3 He thought, "That's the name of our group, because these are better days." The name was readily accepted.

- What initiated the meeting: was it the offshoot of a parent group; was there a split due to disagreements; did a few A.A.s simply decide to start a hometown group, etc.

Hagan O' came up with the idea for the meeting in a conversation with his sponsor Jack S. Hagan wanted to have a meeting with the flavor of the early days of Alcoholics Anonymous when members gathered in homes to talk about recovery. The idea was to have one person give a ten to fifteen minute lead followed by a group discussion explicitly about what the speaker shared. Jack said this was a "great idea." According to Hagan, Jack played a central role in helping Hagan set up the meeting (as inspiration, as a sounding board, etc.). Hagan wanted to keep it real low-key and down to earth. From the beginning the group had difficulty with the time limit for the lead. It

grew to fifteen minutes and eventually to its current length of thirty minutes.

How did the group get its name? The store has since relocated to 1765 Bardstown Road. 3 The

song is "Better Days" from Springsteen's 1992 album, Lucky Town.

About four to five people attended the first meeting. In the first few weeks Hagan and Damon were often the only attendees at the meeting.

- Describe member composition, for example, men only, women, young people, etc.

For about the first year, Better Days was majority male. This led to a running joke among members

who referred to the meeting as a "sausage-fest." Despite this joke there was a serious discussion among group members about carrying AA's message to all people. Brian, even asked his girlfriend to bring women to the group. After the first year the group saw regular attendance from women.

- How did the group experience growth over the years?

By December 1997, the group averaged about 15-20 per week in attendance. Growth occurred when the meeting moved to Briney Hall in January 2000. The meeting room was bigger. There was enough space for 47 chairs. The group began to average 35 attendees per meeting. Meeting attendance dipped when the Fox Hall Group moved down the street and changed its meeting night from Thursday to Tuesday. At that time, average attendance was approximately 20 people per meeting. Attendance rebounded soon after when Fox Hall earned a reputation for formality in dress and format. Better Days earned a reputation as a meeting where one could "be more chill." When Better Days moved across the street to St. Paul's United Methodist Church in 2010, average attendance increased to approximately 70-100 attendees per meeting.

- Are group inventories conducted regularly and have they been helpful?

No, the group has not conducted regular group inventories. However, in recent years the group has held "meetings before the meeting" to study and discuss the Twelve Traditions and other service material. In 2015 the group did a group inventory which was very useful about the

message the group wanted to put into the community.

- Who were the early group officers? List, for example, GSR, Group Contact, Chair, Group Secretary, etc.

GSR: Hagan IGR: Bob Treasurer: Hagan/Bob/Brian rotated. Secretary: None until the group moved to Douglass Boulevard Christian Church. While at that location, the secretary position was inconsistently filled. In 2013, the group elected a secretary and the position has been active and filled to present (June 2015).

In the early days, Hagan, Bob, and Brian rotated GSR, IGR, and Treasurer Positions.

- Have any group members participated in District, Area or other service to the Fellowship? Yes, group members have been and continue to be active in service to District and Area from the time of foundation. For example, Brian S. has served as District Treasurer, Area Treatment Chair and Area Treasurer. An early group member, Ron H., served as a DCM for District 12 at an undetermined date.

- How often were meetings held and has that changed over the years?

The group has met Tuesdays at 8pm since its first meeting.

- What meeting formats have been used – closed, open, discussion, etc.

Better Days has always been an open speaker/discussion meeting. See bullet point five for more information.

- Describe the group's growing pains or controversies.

The following is a sample of growing pains and controversies.

- The Screaming Child Early in its existence, the group was divided by the presence of a screaming child at every meeting. This disturbed some members. The group split around two positions, those who argued that the mother must be welcomed because she was an alcoholic who needed a meeting and those who argued that the child was detracting from the group's ability to carry AA's message at its meeting. Ultimately the group chose the former position and has been welcoming to parents with children ever since.
- The Written Format Debate Throughout the first year that Better Days met, there was no written format for the chairperson to follow from the podium. Chairs "winged" it. In the second year, Brian S. suggested the group adopt a written format. The group said, in a sense, "if you want a format, write one yourself." Brian wrote a format and brought it back to the group at which point they nit-picked it in a lengthy discussion. There were serious points of discussion. Hagan was opposed to the chair asking from the podium, "Is there anybody here in their first thirty days of sobriety?" Hagan argued that this placed undue pressure on the person to participate in the meeting. Ultimately a compromise was reached and the language was changed to read, "Are there any newcomers to AA?" At some point the language reverted to the original "Is there anybody here in their first thirty days of sobriety?"
- The Birthday Celebration There was some controversy when a group member, Rita, celebrated her token birthday by handing out flowers to everyone and reciting poetry.
- Treasury Theft During the group's time at Douglass Boulevard Christian Church, the treasurer

[NAME REDACTED], stole the group's money. At this time it amounted to about \$50.

- The Coffee Controversy There was a lot of acrimony when there was no coffee at the meeting. This happened several times in the first two years. Hagan cited a lack of money coming from the baskets at the meeting, so the group was unable to purchase coffee. At one point, Damon Beatty brought in a blue Maxwell Coffeemaker. This machine did not make much coffee, upsetting some attendees who might be in line when the coffee ran out. "There were no second cups with that machine," Brian said. This did not solve the coffee problem as the group still did not have enough money to purchase coffee. Several times, Bob "borrowed" coffee from Shamrock Group or other groups. Bob said that this debt was always repaid. Hagan, Bob, and Brian all agreed that part of the issue was that when Hagan was treasurer he bought supplies all at once at Sam's Club out on Bluegrass. He was busy with work and school and sometimes was not able to keep up. Even if he originally bought six cans of coffee there might be meetings without. "When we were out," Bob

recalled, "we were out."

- Leaving Douglass Boulevard for St. Paul's There was a lot of controversy about leaving the long-time home at Briney Hall and that the church might not have played fair with the group. There were rumors that Douglass Boulevard Christian Church wanted to sell Briney Hall. The group was informed that they would have to move because of structural reasons. The roof leaked and some drywall molded. There was some disrepair at Briney Hall.

- Trouble with Singleness of Purpose Twice the group has dealt with the meeting's variance from Alcoholics Anonymous' Twelve Traditions. The first instance occurred in the mid-to-late 1990s when meetings took on a "group therapy" tone that drifted from a focus on recovery from alcoholism. The second instance occurred in 2013. After 2011, the group saw an influx of attendees from a local treatment facility, The Healing Place. While attendees from this facility were welcomed, the group had difficulty adjusting to the increasing number of visitors. Many identified as "addicts" and shared from that perspective. Home group members grew resentful and tended to sit on the right side of the room while attendees from the Healing Place monopolized the left side of the room. Drug addiction and the principles of recovery as taught at the Healing Place quickly became the topics of speakers and of the discussion portion of the meeting. Home Group members became concerned when meetings transpired without reference to AA's Twelve Steps or active participation of alcoholics. The group struggled with how to absorb the influx of new people to the group and to maintain AA's singleness of purpose in order to effectively carry the message of recovery from alcoholism in the meeting. In deciding a solution, the group chose education rather than confrontation. The group decided to hold a weekly traditions study before the meeting. Each week at 7pm, the group reviewed and discussed AA literature on the traditions. This had the effect of educating new members, and reminding older members, in a loving and tolerant way about what AA is and what it is not. It was also decided that the chairperson for each meeting must assure that the speaker they choose is an alcoholic. The written meeting format was also revised to emphasize singleness of purpose wherever possible. Attendance dipped during this period but rebounded very quickly, including participants in local recovery programs.

- How does the group celebrate group member's anniversaries of sobriety?

At first the group celebrated each member's anniversary as it came up in the calendar. As the group grew, this became inconvenient because of the tradition of each celebrant choosing the speaker, readers etc. happened more often. Around 2004, the group began celebrating birthdays at the end of the month unless it was a member's token birthday. This is the practice at present (June 2015). Initially, the group celebrated with cookies, then switched to pizza, and finally to cake.

- How has the group celebrated the anniversary of its founding?

The group has never celebrated the anniversary of its founding. Brian Smith offered to contact the General Service Office for the specific date of the group's registration. Then the group can celebrate its twentieth anniversary in 2016. Finding out the Oct. 1, 1996, the group planned and celebrated with a "Souper

Celebration this past fall. Hagen was asked to share his AA message in the meeting.

- Describe how the group has cooperated with professional agencies (by signing court cards, supporting a meeting in an institutional setting, taking regular phone duty at the Intergroup or Central Office, etc.). Since 2004, the Better Days group has conducted a regular meeting at Jefferson Alcohol and Drug Abuse Center (JADAC) located at 600 S. Preston St. Louisville, KY, 40202. The meeting, called "Welcome to Freedom," is held every other Monday at 7:30pm. Brian Smith chaired the meeting from 2004 until December 2011. Ned V. has chaired the meeting from January 2012 to the present (May 2016).

The group has signed court slips from its inception.

- Has the group participated in special local or regional A.A. functions, such as conventions, conferences, round-ups, forums or workshops?

Group members are regular participants in local and regional A.A. functions. The group periodically hosts AA meetings at the Falls City Convention and the Kentucky State Convention.

# Events

## 26th Falls City Convention

Sept. 29th - Oct. 1st, 2017

Jennifer B.

LHC Web Master/Public Relations

[www.louisvillehostcommittee.com](http://www.louisvillehostcommittee.com)

Kentucky State Convention –  
February 16th - 18th, 2018.

[www.louisvillehostcommittee.com](http://www.louisvillehostcommittee.com)

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I want to thank the Kentuckiana Newsletter Committee and the Area 26 body as a whole for allowing me to serve for the past year and a half as your Newsletter Chairperson. I will miss all of you terribly but I'm sure we will meet again in the future. Yours in Service, much love and gratitude  
Angie S.