KENTUCKIANA NEWS

We Celebrate 80 Years of A.A. Coming to Kentucky!

The Kentuckiana Newsletter celebrates the 80th year of A.A. coming to Kentucky. In this issue, we focus on the first nine years of this history, from 1941-1949. This information was diligently researched by Joy Mc. And Peggy S., and we cannot cover everything Joy and Peggy uncovered within the newsletter. More details can be found at the <u>Area 26 website</u>. Additionally, Joy has created a presentation, which contains more historical details and photos, and it will be on display at future area meetings.

Melanie P., Chair, Kentuckiana News

IN THIS EDITION: A.A. COMES TO KENTUCKY: 1941-1949-ALCOHOL - A COMMON ENEMY OF ALCOHOLICS 4 I AM SO OVER THIS! --5 INSPIRATIONS FOR WOMEN GROUP EXPERIENCES COVID---7 WE ARE NOT A GLUM T.OT-----GETTING SOBER, STAYING SOBER IN A PANDEMIC-----10

A.A. Comes to Kentucky 1941-1949

Kentucky was blessed early in 1941 when Jim McC., a member of an Indianapolis AA Group, was transferred to Louisville. To stay sober he began his search for fellow drunks. He found a small group of men and one woman who became known as 'the six regulars.' These "regulars" were Chet I., Jim McC., Mildred Z., Rudy M., Dick S. and Harry W. This small group met nightly on a street corner and make Twelfth Step calls. They met weekly at a tavern on Third Street for dinner to discuss their problems and experiences. .

In June 1941 they moved to the YMCA to form Kentucky's first AA group. The group grew slowly.

Jim Mc. Contacted a feature writer in Chicago, who was instrumental in having the *Courier Journal* publish the first article about Alcoholics Anonymous in the Sunday Magazine on November 2, 1941, "So You Think Drunks Can't Be Cured." The author of the article, Robert L. G., wrote the compelling story of an alcoholic he called Smith. This aroused more interest with a slow but steady growth.



Louisville YMCA - First A.A. Meeting Location

In 1942, the Louisville AA group found its first home on the 3rd floor of Ewing Dairy at Third and Kentucky (981 S. Third); the spot was eventually dubbed the "Milk Room" meeting.

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Ironically, years before, the same building housed the Kentucky Brewing Company.¹



Ewing Dairy Building

For several years this space was headquarters for the group. There were ten members struggling to stay sober. Eventually some of the wives got involved and helped the other wives.

On December 27, 1942, the Courier Journal publishes a second article about A.A., "Ex-Drunks Liquidate Louisville Drunks," written by Robert L. G. The Louisville A.A. group had been in existence about 18 months at the time of

this publication. The article estimated there were more than 1000 alcoholics in the Louisville area. Also referenced, at the end of this article, is a mailing address: "Alcoholics Anonymous, Box 153, St. Matthews, Kv."

The first A.A. ad appeared in *The Courier-Journal* on April 25, 1943:

"DO YOU WANT help with your drinking problem? Alcoholics Anonymous is your answer; no charge. Box 631, Louisville, Box 56, New Albany, Box 153 St. Matthews."

On March 8, 1944, Bill W. spoke at the Seelbach Hotel in Louisville. He shared his story and talked about the beginning of A.A. in New York. Bill described Alcoholics Anonymous as a combination of science and religion and "streamlined for drunken consumption...Between 50 and 75 percent of those who are aided by Alcoholics Anonymous are cured...alcoholism has been termed the fourth largest health problem...God and hope are the keystones of Alcoholics Anonymous." This was the first time a public meeting about A.A. occurred in Louisville.²



The two Courier Journal articles and Bill's visit sparked growth in A.A. Neighboring groups were formed, more meetings began. A Steering Committee composed of representatives from the groups began to serve as an advisory body.³ Its purpose was to discuss, coordinate and assist in cooperation among the groups and their various projects; to direct the functions of the *Continued on page 3, A.A. Comes...*

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Central Office; and to assist generally in the development of the Fellowship in the Louisville area. This committee continues to function. The name changed to Intergroup Committee on October 1, 1970.

On March 24, 1945, the Courier Journal wrote about the visit of Dr. Spafford A., professor of psychiatry at the University of Louisville School of Medicine, to A.A. members at the Milk Room Meeting. He said, "It behooved all physicians to try to understand the working of the association (AA)...in the cure of the malady, he said, one for the alcoholic to admit his alcoholism and to seek the help of the power of God".4

On August 26, 1945 *The Courier Journal* published a two-page article (pp. 60-61), "They've Been Up Against It Themselves," written by Agnes S. Here are a few bits from Louisville A.A. members mentioned in this piece:

- A president of a Louisville industry had the shakes so bad he could barely write his name a year later he proudly carries a "small silver fob with the A.A. monogram" in his wallet.
- A Louisville nurse was introduced to AA after leaving the hospital where she worked to become a "private duty" nurse for fear her drinking problem would be revealed.
- Then there's the "Saga of the Fish" a member said he had been drinking at work and had convinced himself a fish fry would be nice once he arrived home. After purchasing a fish, he hailed a cab, but stopped at every bar on the way home; with the fish in tow. "It took me two days to get home, 10 miles and \$100 in cab fare. When I finally arrived, the fish was as bad off as I was...we both reeked, and I was only slightly more alive."

A.A. Endorsements and Promotions??

As has occurred many times in the early days of A.A., many mistakes were made as AA membership grew in Louisville, especially in the years before 1952, which was when the A.A. Twelve Traditions were published. Below are a couple of examples taken from Courier Journal articles:

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Alcohol- A Common Enemy of Alcoholics

For those who have recently been introduced to Alcoholics Anonymous, I certainly hope you "do not give up before the miracle happens". That miracle is the realization that you do not have to take a drink of alcohol today, and you are OK with doing that. One day at a time is an achievable goal. However, there may be times when you might be doing one minute at a time. That is when you should reach out to your sponsor, a fellow A.A. friend (member), go to a meeting or all of the above.

I have now been sober for over 5 years, and there is that occasional thought of taking a drink. But I know that it is possible that the thought of taking a drink could become more than I can handle. This is when I need to reach out for help.

To me, my addiction to smoking cigarettes was different than my addiction to alcohol. In the middle of a 14-year period of not drinking, and not being an AA member (a dry drunk), I finally quit smoking after 3 tries. I do not miss smoking. On the other hand, the thought of alcohol lurks in the back of my mind, popping up unexpectedly. I have to always remember the bad things that drinking alcohol did to me, and not just the fleeting moments of ease and comfort. "Self" is the thing I have to overcome each day by staying spiritually connected to the members of Alcoholics Anonymous, if I want to continue my freedom from alcoholic thinking.

During this time of COVID-19, it is difficult to meet as a group to casually fellowship. And Zoom calls may not be a gratifying experience to some people, where a simple call might be. I have a very long list of numbers in my phone for those occasions when help is needed or needs to be given. Also, there is much conflicting information about COVID-19 which has caused frustration and fear. Discussions may or may not help a person to be at ease with the COVID situation, but one should realize that COVID will not last forever. It is OK to turn off the news, and, back away from social media to take a break.

Reading the books of Alcoholics Anonymous is a very good idea! One book I highly recommend during this time of uncertainty is "Living Sober." In just 92 pages, there is valuable help for many situations. Start reading from "About that title..." page and be sure not to skip any pages.

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Continued on page 4, Alcohol - A Common...

I have found this book to be very helpful, up-lifting, and to the point. A checklist, so to speak, of living sober tips. The "contents" lists these tips so one can go straight to the desired topic. Some people who do not like to read may find "Living Sober" user friendly. The important thing to remember is that help is available, but you have to ask for it. Alcoholics Anonymous is a "We" program. *Mike C*.

I Am So Over This!

Hopefully by the time you read this you and your loved ones have received the vaccinations.

Hopefully we can all meet in person.... these hybrid meetings suck. Zoom sucks. I miss bad coffee (unless I make it then the coffee is awesome) and my wife's cookies that she enjoys making for us drunks. I really miss the Costco cakes and singing badly to our birthday alcoholics.

And most of all I miss the human interaction of our meetings. Just to be able to see my peeps up close. To see the joy and pain of recovery. The emotions get cloudy over the Internet. The message isn't as clear. The meeting before the meeting doesn't happen nor does the bullshit session after the meeting.

And what about the newcomers? Just how messed up is that? Not being able to go up to him and express that many of the emotions he's experiencing right now is exactly what we went through newly sober.

I was able to sponsor a newcomer over this period. As luck would have it he came in when the weather was warm which allowed for meeting outside. He was able to receive the message. He was able to drink my excellent coffee and eat cookies and experience the meeting before the meeting and the bullshit session after the meeting.

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Continued from page 5, I Am...

My sponsorship family has taken a serious hit over this zombie apocalypse. Home groups have changed. Contacts with another alcoholic have been drastically reduced. I'm afraid that many have fallen through the cracks.

AA will survive. We came through WW2, Vietnam and the Gulf Wars. Our forefathers drove many miles to attend their weekly meetings. We just need to get over our fear of being in close contact with others. I didn't fear COVID more than I feared for my recovery. My hope is we can come together soon. Recovery needs it. *Tim L, KY Jaywalkers*

Inspirations for Women Group Experiences COVID

Inspirations for Women is an open women's meeting in Lexington, Kentucky. The meeting was started in the 1980's in District 15. It is a homegroup with representation in the district. There are a few original members who still attend. This meeting has ebbed and flowed with the times. This article is about their journey with the COVID Pandemic.

Inspirations for Women meets every Monday at 7P.M. in Lexington, Kentucky. However, March 9,2020 was their last in-person meeting unbeknown to them. The nation was overtaken by an illness known as the COVID Pandemic. In order to slow it down the nation closed its doors to all public gatherings. On Friday, March 13th the group received an email stating their meeting place was suspending all meetings starting March 15 through the 21st. The group realized the importance of continuing the meeting and searched for a way to do this. One member with technology skills suggested an online meeting. She collected the members' emails, contacted an online service and signed up for the free trial. The meeting was held on the 16th. Some members met in small groups at homes while others were home. This worked. The group saw this was a way to be of service to women and subscribed to the service. This allowed the group to have fellowship before and after the meeting plus a full-hour meeting. To further serve Lexington, which had very few meetings at this time, two more meetings were added weekly. Wednesday and Continued on page 7, Inspirations...

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Friday at 7 P.M. were added. The chair for the month graciously chaired these for March.

April arrived with in-person meetings still closed. the group adjusted by continuing the three weekly meetings. A change came in the chairing part. Two additional Co-Chairs were added. Since all the groups' literature and format and what nots were locked up in the church another group conscious came to the rescue. The format was remembered and readjusted to the current situation. The technology woman put all that information on the screen at the appropriate time during the meeting. She even did virtual chips!! The 7th Tradition was mailed to the treasurer. Later an online banking account was set up.

May brought the news the church was considering closing its doors to all outside ministry work. Conversations abounded and possibilities were discussed. On June 23 the official notice of closure came. The remainder of June plus July and part of August was spent hammering out a solution. The group quickly formed a committee to search out new spaces to rent. These were discussed. However, several questions surfaced. Do we want to meet in person? Is it safe? What about exploring a hybrid meeting? Are we fearful there won't be any spaces left if we don't grab one now?

Lots of discussion occurred for several summer evenings. The final decision was to further research a hybrid meeting before renting space. So, the research showed it was a good possibility. One glitch - some members needed to be willing to commit to being there in person for an unknown length of time. No one was willing. Also, by this time there were more available meetings, so the group dropped the Wednesday and Friday meetings.

Autumn arrived. Inspirations for Women continued to meet every Monday at 7P.M. online. At the monthly group conscious meetings, the question of being in-person is considered. At this time the answer is not yet. The hope is to evolve into a hybrid meeting when the pandemic has subsided. The group has discovered a hybrid meeting is valuable for the members who have difficulty arriving in person. Newcomers show up weekly. Out of towners attend. Women in Lexington show up. Inspirations for Women is surviving and growing during this pandemic. *Peggy S*.

Pesterday... Today... Tomorrow

There are two days in every week about which we should not worry. two days which should be kept free from fear and apprehension.

One of these days is YESTERDAY with its mistakes and cares, its faults and blunders, its aches and pains. YESTERDAY has passed forever beyond our control.

All the money in the world cannot bring back YESTERDAY. We cannot undo a single act we performed; we cannot erase a single word we said . . . YESTERDAY is gone.



The other day we should not worry about is TOMORROW with its possible adversaries, its burdens, its large promise and poor performance. TOMORROW is also beyond our immediate control.

TOMORROW'S sun will rise, either in splendor or behind a mask of clouds but it will rise. Until it does, we have no stake in TOMORROW for it is as yet unborn.



This leaves only one day... TODAY. Any man can fight the battle of just one day. It is only when you and I add the burdens of those two awful eternities... YESTERDAY AND TOMORROW that we break down. It is not the experience of TODAY that drives men mad—it is remorse or bitterness for something which happened YESTERDAY and the dread of what TOMORROW will bring.

Let us therefore live but one day at a time!

We Are Not A Glum Lot!

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Getting Sober, Staying Sober in a Pandemic

Randi is a single mother, a professional who couldn't stay sober. However, after a stay in ICU she completed a 28-day program. After discharge Randi called her previous sponsor. Finally, the willingness was there. Since then, she has attended meetings daily, mostly via Zoom and is in frequent contact with her sponsor by phone, video calls or Zoom meetings. She has kept her out-patient follow-up appointments and has the support of a therapist, peers and mentors.

Of course, life happens. During a very difficult period, she voluntarily checked into a crisis unit for a few days and came out still sober and stronger. Some relationships have mended. She has regained her parent's trust and is becoming a part of a fellowship of women. She is navigating a complex process with her licensing agency as well as job hunting. All of this is occurring during a mask-wearing, limited personal contact, COVID shutdown. Randi is nearly 4 months sober.

Jessica is also a single mother who now has 2 years of sobriety. She works in a women's treatment facility, has a sponsor, sponsors other women and is active in service. She stays in contact by phone, text and Zoom meetings. Jessica told me "I just do what I was taught in the beginning: I pray, go to meetings, stay in contact. I haven't been afraid for my sobriety. There have been emotional things but God has been right there". Jessica also sends out greeting cards to a number of friends offering encouragement, expressing love and gratitude.

Berenice O, District 23

A Few One-Liners Until the Next Meeting

Me: My name is Matt, and I'm an alcoholic.

AAA: This is AAA, not AA.

Me: Yeah, I was just explaining how my car got in the lake.

If you drink too much alcohol you are an alcoholic. If you drink too much Fanta, does that make you Fantastic?

I'm not an alcoholic. Alcoholics need a drink, but I already have one.

A.A. Comes...continued from page 3

- In late 1945 (date unknown) the Courier Journal published an article, "Norton Clinic May Set Up A Clinic For Alcoholics Costing \$100,000." This was to be the first of its kind in the United States and the backers for the clinic included Norton Memorial Infirmary, the Louisville distillery industry, and Alcoholics Anonymous! (this flies in the face of AA Tradition 6: An AA group ought never endorse, finance or lend the AA name to any related facility or outside enterprise lest problems of money, property and prestige divert us from our primary purpose.)
- On May 13, 1946, the C-J published the article, "Alcoholics Anonymous Talk Scheduled for Tonight." One of the speakers is introduced as Mrs. Marty M., the first woman to join Alcoholics Anonymous, and the Executive Director for the National Committee for Education on Alcoholism. (Tradition 11: Our public relations policy is based on attraction rather than promotion. We need always maintain personal anonymity at the level of press, radio and films; and Tradition 11: Our public relations policy is based on attraction and promotion. We need always maintain anonymity at the level of press, radio and films.)

In July, 1946 the Token Club was formed. Its purpose was to function as a space for social activities of the groups. Clubrooms were rented at Third and Main streets in the Vaughn Building. In the following years a paid secretary was hired to handle the growing business functions of the Fellowship. In 1948 the office moved to the Realty Building. The Club purchased permanent quarters at 439 Baxter Avenue, the building was remodeled, becoming one of the finest clubhouses in the nation. The Central Office moved to this location, and the Gateway (newsletter) began its publications in 1946 at this location. In November 13, 1946, the "Milk Room meeting" became too crowded and was moved to The Louisville Service Club's Columbia Gym at 824 S. Fourth Street. The group took on a new nickname - the "Big Meeting". "We have continued to hold the weekly Big Meeting here each Thursday evening"⁵

A.A. Comes to Lexington

In February, 1946 Lexington became the second city in KY to hold AA meetings. Here is the story:

In January 1946 newly sober Carolyn M. returned to her hometown for an extended visit. To her dismay there were no meetings of Alcoholic Anonymous. She placed an ad in the local newspaper asking for people who had a drinking problem and wanted to quit to call her. She received several calls. It was decided to have a large introductory meeting. The Speakeasy Club, a group practicing public speaking, agreed to sponsor the meeting. *Continued on page 12, A.A. Comes...*

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On February 3,1946 the front page of the Sunday Herald headlined "Three speakers from Cincinnati and an equal number from Louisville will explain the theory and practice of Alcoholic Anonymous at a public forum to be held at 8 o'clock Wednesday night in the Commissioners' Chambers at City Hall." A follow up article on February 7 stated 200 people had attended. It gave a summary of how AA works, the Twelve Steps and that 25,000 people had recovered.

Thus, the first AA group formed in Lexington. It consisted of "Chunky" V., Dave S., Joe J., Clark W. and Clarence B. All were prominent citizens and the organization was off to a good start. For many years these men were referred to as the Big Five. Each February an anniversary was held to celebrate this beginning.

The first meetings were held on Thursday night at Christ Church Episcopal located on Market Street. They were open speaker meetings. One of the members began inviting members to their home after the meeting. This was the beginning of the first rift and growth of AA in Lexington. Alma S. started a meeting on Tuesday night above the Fayette Cigar Store on Main Street. In the early fifties the groups decided to come back together and start a clubhouse that would accommodate their needs. In 1953 The New Club opened in the old Cassius Clay home in Duncan Park at Fifth and Limestone.

In August of 1946, six A.A. members established meetings in Ashland, Kentucky. Ashland was the tird city to establish A.A. meetings. The contact information provided was P.O. Box 1125 and the secretary was Lyman S., 1609 Hilton Ave. This meeting was registered with the General Service Office (GSO). ⁶

In 1947, eight more cities registered their A.A. meetings with the GSO: 6

- In February Frankfort and Shelbyville began their first meetings. Ten members started the Frankfort meeting. The Frankfort address was P.O. Box 316, the secretary was Houston P.S. at 207 Washington St. Twelve members started the first meeting in Shelbyville. The contact information was P.O. Box 16 and Charles B was listed as the Secretary.
- In August, Bowling Green became the sixth city to hold A.A. meetings. Mc Elray M. was listed as the contact at 1400 College Street. No original membership count was provided.

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Continued from page 12 A.A. Comes...

• In August, six members in Cynthiana began holding A.A. meetings. Cynthiana was the seventh city. Contact information was given as P.O. Box 87. The eighth city was Fulton. No membership count was provided. It was registered as a lone group and contact information was listed as J.R. A. at 204 Jackson Street. Mt. Sterling became the ninth city to offer A.A. meetings. No membership count was provided, but the meeting was listed as the Mt. Sterling Raven Group. Contact information was listed as P.O. Box 386, H.H. at 45 W. Main Street. Owensboro was the 10th city. No membership count was provided and contact information was Edwin M., P.O. Box 642. The 11th city to register an A.A. meeting was Richmond. The contact information provided as Homer P.

On January 1, 1947 The C-J published the article, "A.A.s Have Big Time – And No Hangover Today," written by Eve M. The article stated "...The absence of alcoholic beverages did not make for the absence of hilarity." 160 male and 40 female A.A. members celebrated the New Year in the Junior Ballrooms at the Seelbach hotel. One A.A. member was quoted, "We're having a particularly good time of it tonight, But wait till tomorrow morning – we'll feel even better."

On February 17, 1948 the C-J published the article, "Employer Says Drunks Do Better Work for Him." "Alcoholics do better work, and they do it quicker" says the owner of 2 auto repair shops. The article claims around 20 employees are unemployable alcoholics, and somewhere in the mix are members of Alcoholics Anonymous. The owner noted about 10% of all past employees have practiced total abstinence.

On December 25, 1949 the C-J published the article, "Alcoholics Anonymous Sets Up Unit at Prison." Institutional meetings began as an experiment at LaGrange State Reformatory. Six inmates with "records as alcoholics" were "drafted". They were given no promise of any breaks on their sentence or parole for attending meetings. Their group grew to 20 members, with 10 on a waiting list, by the time of this article.

The warden said he had doubts AA would work but was persuaded to give it a go by a traveling salesman from Louisville. "One of the worst drunks Louisville ever had was in that group. His sentence was up five weeks ago and he is still sober."

We have shared many of the highlights of how Alcoholics Anonymous got its start in Kentucky, during the years 1941-1949. The Courier Journal played an important role in getting the message out to alcoholics living in Louisville at the time. Our summer edition will continue the story. continued on page 14, A.A. Comes...

References

- ^{1*}The Gateway, timeline by Art Lynch in 1981 and Jim Gardner interview on June 20, 2012 *Kentucky Brewing Company opened in 1934 and closed in 1939, oldbreweries.com/breweries-by-state/kentucky/Louisville.
- ²*Courier-Journal, March 9, 1944
- ³[*The Gateway, May 1953 *The Courier Journal, March 9, 1944]
- ⁴[*The Courier Journal, March 24, 1945]
- ⁵*Address for Columbia Gym, historic louisville.weebly.com
- *Timeline by Art Lynch, 1981 claims the meeting moved to the Columbia Gym in 1943 while *The Gateway* from May 1953 states the group moved to the Columbia Auditorium November 13, 1946. Bob W. confirmed in his 2019 interview the meeting was at the Louisville Service Club's Columbia Gym not Columbia Auditorium
- 6 * A.A. Area 26 Archive Chairperson

Area 26 Repository can come to you!

The present committee created a PowerPoint that was presented at the July Area 26 meeting.

Email or call the area 26 Archives Chair if you would want a virtual workshop in your District or Home Group



Kentuckiana Newsletter Information:

The Kentuckiana Newsletter is for all A.A. members. The newsletter includes both articles written by people like you and some fun and information about what is going on in Area 26. We are always looking for articles from individuals in the fellowship. A general guideline for length of articles is about 500 words. Please share your experience, strength, hope, jokes and thoughts with all of us.

The Committee meetings are held during Area 26 quarterly business meeting weekends. All AA members are welcome to participate. If you would like to write an article or would like us to know about an event coming up in your home group or district, please contact the Chair, Melanie P. at Kentuckiana@area26.net.