

District 4 of Area 71, Virginia A.A.

Representing Great Falls, Herndon, Reston, and Sterling

Quarterly Newsletter

Q3 2020 – Volume 6

September 2020



OFFICER'S REPORTS

Greetings from District 4,

Seven years ago, and only six months sober, I was told to show up to a District Meeting, shut up, listen, and take notes. As I wrap up my final months as DCM, I am reminded of the times in service that helped me build a strong foundation for my own recovery, the wonderful like-minded people that have been brought to our District, and the events that the Dulles District has put on to carry the message to the groups and individuals across our area.

These moments and experiences have given me more opportunities to give back and grow personally than I ever thought possible. I want to personally thank all of the past and current GSRs and past DCMs that have grown our District into a thriving service body solely focused on the health of our groups and individuals across our area. Additionally, we are looking forward to the events we have coming up at the end of the year.

We will be hosting our first virtual workshop in the fall put on by the *No Winners Women's Group*, developing group Oral Histories through our Archives Committee, and continuing to establish contacts within our professional communities to provide information on meeting locations now that we have shifted to a virtual environment.

While my time at the Dulles District has come to an end, the health of our District is strong and I am very proud of the service work that continues to move forward. Thank you for the opportunity to serve and God bless.

Sincerely,

Matt S. – DCM

dcmdullesdistrict4@gmail.com

Thank you for respecting the anonymity of the contributors and confidentiality of this work by not posting it publicly or on the Internet.

ADCM – Alternate DCM

Devon H. dcmdullesdistrict4@gmail.com

[from Dulles District 4 of Area 71 Guidelines]:

The ADCM is the backup for the DCM. In the event that the DCM cannot fulfill his/her commitment—and there are less than six months remaining in the term—the ADCM shall fulfill the position of DCM for the remainder of the two-year term. The ADCM is available upon request, to assist, participate and share in the DCMs responsibilities at District and Area meetings.

- The ADCM should be familiar with the VAC and AA Service Manuals and District Guidelines as well as the pamphlet “Self-Support: Where Money and Spirituality Mix” and encourage groups to support the Area, District and Northern Virginia Intergroup.
- The ADCM will oversee the responsibilities of the Event Coordinator and may delegate such responsibilities in coordination with the DCM and when necessary act as the keeper of supplies.

TREASUER

Aline N. dcmdullesdistrict4@gmail.com

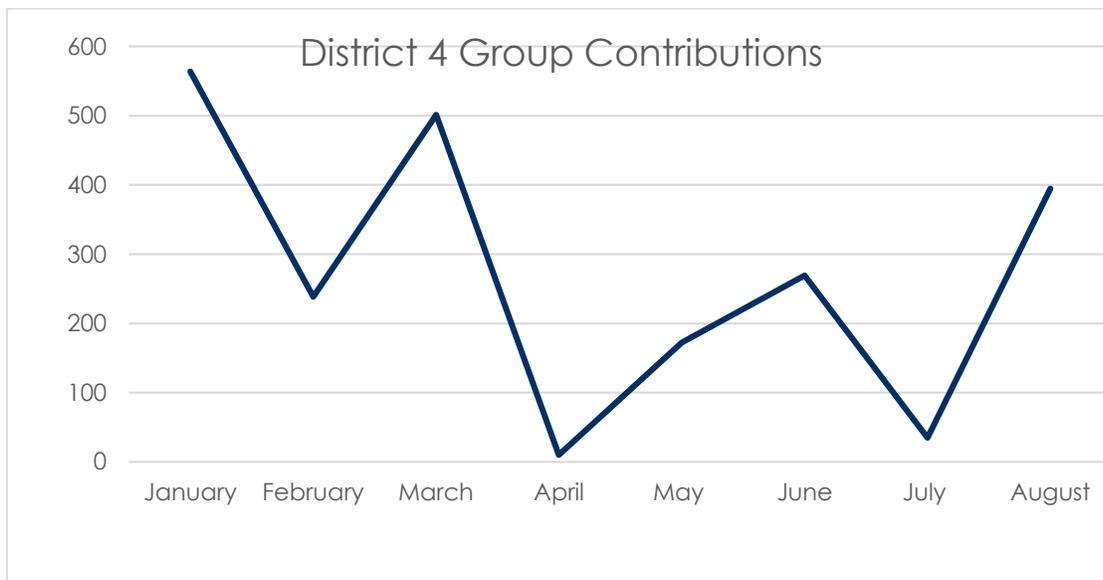
Introduction:

- Hi everyone! My name is Aline and I am an alcoholic. I am the current Treasurer of Dulles District 4 (2019-2020 2-year term).
- My journey with the district started in Fall of 2017 when I became a GSR for my home group at the time. It has been such a wonderful experience serving our District!
- My time with the GSR included experience with a few trips around the Virginia area to attend Spring and Fall Assemblies. It was so interesting to see the business aspect that goes into Alcoholics Anonymous and gave me a whole new appreciation for our members involved!
- With my term coming to an end, I am grateful for the time spent with our district and being able to serve.

Being the District Treasurer:

- Outside of A.A., I work as an accountant, so naturally, I enjoyed the responsibilities that are involved with being a Treasurer. With elections coming up and for those that may be interested in the position, I wanted to add that no prior experience is needed as all you need is a willingness to learn.
- This position involves tracking the cash inflows of contributions from groups/members, and the cash outflows of various expenses related to our district.

- Included below is a chart of our monthly contributions through August 2020 for this year! A big THANK YOU to the groups in the district for your contributions!!
- Contributions are collected by mail and by Venmo. The mailing address for our PO Box and Venmo instructions are included in the newsletter – please be sure to include your group number when sending contributions in any form.
- The Treasurer is also responsible for preparing the budget for the following year which is ultimately voted at one of the year-end district meetings. For me, this was one of the most exciting parts as I was able to review trends from prior years and draft up what I thought was suitable for the following year. The format of the budget has changed during my tenure so that we are more consistent with how the Virginia Area presents their budgets. When attending the Fall assembly, members are able to follow the Area's budget and vote on the budget, if they are a voting member.
- Another fun responsibility for the treasurer is booking the infamous annual picnic at Algonkian Park, which is reserved a year in advance!



Venmo Instructions for Donations:

- Download the Venmo app on your cellular phone
- Sign up for the app if you haven't done so already
- Click on "Pay or Request"
- Search for the Dulles District 4 Handle: @Dulles-District
- Include the amount of contribution
- Include your Group Number and name under "What's it for?"

Reflection:

- We have had a lot of exciting events happening in our district and it has been such a blessing to be able to witness and be a part of it! I am excited to see our continued growth and what more we will accomplish in the future!

- A big thank you to Mary Anne F. for your support during my time at the district!
- Thank you again to the members of our District for trusting me and allowing me to be of service during this time!!

SECRETARY

Andrew E. dcmdullesdistrict4@gmail.com

[from Dulles District 4 of Area 71 Guidelines]:

- The Secretary assists the DCM in preparing and distributing a monthly District meeting agenda, ensuring that business carried over from the previous District meeting is placed on the agenda.
- The Secretary takes roll call (attendance sheet) at each district meeting and is responsible for recording minutes of all District meetings.
- The Secretary prepares Draft Minutes of all District meetings and – when possible - distributes them to another District officer for review before the next District meeting. Printed copies (about 15) of monthly District meeting minutes will be made available to attendees at the following month's District meeting. At each monthly District meeting, all present will review the previous month's minutes, suggest revisions if necessary, and vote to approve or disapprove. After the draft minutes are reviewed, revised if necessary, and approved by the members present at the monthly district meeting, the Secretary will ensure a copy is placed in the Archives for safe-keeping and archival purposes.
- The Secretary notifies the DCM when a GSR, Officer or Committee Chair fails to attend either two VAC assemblies or the monthly District Meeting for the third consecutive time.
- When District business requires a vote, the Secretary will announce that only voting members of the District may vote and will explain "voting members."
- The Secretary is responsible for distributing copies of the District Guidelines to new officers and GSRs, and for updating and distributing the Guidelines when they are amended by the District. Budgeted funds are available in the Contingency Line Item for making these copies when necessary.
- The Secretary should be familiar with the VAC and A.A. Service Manuals and District Guidelines as well as the AA pamphlet "Self-Support: Where Money and Spirituality Mix" and encourage groups to support the Area, District, and local Intergroup.

COMMITTEE CHAIR REPORTS

ARCHIVES

Billy D. ArchivesDullesDistrict4@gmail.com

COVID-19 Group Questionnaire

The COVID-19 pandemic has impacted our fellowship perhaps more than any other historic event. Gathering individual and group experiences during this time is an important part of documenting an accurate and useful account of this era. To submit a summary of your group's experiences in dealing with the pandemic, please fill out our [COVID-19 questionnaire](#). This information will be utilized to update group histories within the database. Any journaling, notes, or other materials that you are willing to share with us can also be of great use. All of these can be sent to ArchivesDullesDistrict4@gmail.com

Oral Histories

Our committee is gearing up to begin collecting oral histories from members of our district. Reports, budgets, statistics, and meeting records can help tell the story of A.A.'s evolution, they lack a certain human element. Just as speaker tapes can evoke the emotions that accompany closeness and relatability, oral histories offer those same experiences in the format of an interview. We are looking for volunteers in the District 4 community with 25+ years of sobriety who would like to share their experiences with A.A., and how it has evolved, since they got sober. If you are interested or know someone who might be, let us know by filling out [this form](#).

Dulles District Digital Database

In the continued effort to improve ease of access to our historical items, the Archives Committee has digitized 927 documents from the VAC Archives office, going back to 1991. Though a lot of progress has been made in digitizing our records, there are still several large boxes that need to be scanned. The date of the next inventory/digitizing trip to the VAC Archives office is pending as we continue to observe the evolution of COVID-19 in the area. We are seeking volunteers to assist with this process as soon as we are able to safely return to the archive's office.

If you have any questions regarding our archives, would like to request information from our records, contribute documents/memorabilia significant to recovery in our district, or volunteer with the Archives committee, please contact us at ArchivesDullesDistrict4@gmail.com.

VAC Archives Office Closure

The VAC Archives office is closed until further notice due to COVID-19 concerns. The office will remain closed until the VAC Officers and Virginia Area Delegate are in consensus that it is safe to reopen.

New Virginia A.A. History book, *Sharing Our Commonwealth*

The VAC Archives Committee is continuing the process of compiling all of the information that was provided by Virginia Area groups earlier this year into story-form for our new upcoming book. Though it's too late to be included in the book, we still value any information you might share about your home group, personal stories, or locally significant memorabilia. If you'd like to submit a group history or group story, you can submit it by following the link provided on the District 4 website (a printable copy of the form is also available on the site). Copies of all group histories will be forwarded to both the Virginia Area Archives and the Northern Virginia Intergroup Archives. The VAC Archives Committee is hoping to continue planning virtually for *Sharing Our Commonwealth*, and is still looking for volunteers to assist in editing and proofreading draft copies of the new book. If you are interested in helping in one of these areas, please contact Mary Ann (VAC Archivist) at Archivist@aavirginia.org for more information.

CPC/PI (Cooperation with Professional Community/ Public Information

Jessica S. Jessica_smedley@yahoo.com

- We are meeting monthly on the second Tuesday of the month at Floris Church in Herndon at 7pm however we are meeting on Zoom until the church reopens. Please contact the district for Zoom meeting info.
- We are reaching out to professionals in our district to offer virtual presentation of how A.A. can help their clients and patients. We are currently in need of volunteers to represent the committee and speak at public forums, especially if their background is in Aviation or Emergency Services such as Firemen and Police. If you know of an A.A. member that fits that description, please reach out to me.
- Please help us to carry the message by reaching out to the professionals in your life and assist A.A. with helping someone get sober.

GRAPEVINE

Patti C. peppatti22@hotmail.com

Current GV issue spotlight: This month's Special Section is "Young & Sober!"

Current GV Discussion topic: This month's feature: Welcome to 2020: Through the wonder of technology, members are helping each other stay sober in very tough times."

Current LV issue spotlight for September 2020: The current issue's special section is "The Actor, the disease of the alcoholic's mind separates him from God and others until he does not recognize himself"

Grapevine News for September: (<https://www.aagrapevine.org/> for more info).

- Audio Topics available via this link:
https://www.A.A.grapevine.org/archive?keys=august+2020&sort_bef_combine=field_publication_date_DESC
- 2020 Carry the Message project continues; learn how to help another alcoholic by giving a subscription to a sponsee or newcomer, detox centers, prisons, doctors' offices etc.
- Visit and Subscribe to the grapevine YouTube channel:
https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCI9uFLJ_aXT3-Af0PIPWUQ
 - Make your plans and add your events to our online calendar at
<https://www.aagrapevine.org/get-involved/calendar>
 - Grapevine is always looking for stories, photographs, and illustrations. Please <https://www.aagrapevine.org/share> to learn more about how you can participate with Grapevine.
 - To listen to a free La Viña audio story (in Spanish), visit:
<https://www.aalavina.org/>

Buy Grapevine and Literature: for yourself, as a gift, purchased by the group, for a prison! A.A.'s budget = groups' contributions + LITERATURE SALES!

A.A.grapevine.org

GV Rep for each group: great service position for someone new to A.A.! Go to A.A.grapevine.org and click on link to register as a GVR.

Contribute to GV: consider submitting stories, photos, art. Editorial Calendar and due dates for submissions at A.A.grapevine.org. Upcoming deadlines:

Grapevine Editorial Calendar 2020

Submit Your Story for Upcoming Issues in 2021:

- APRIL-Fun in Sobriety (*Stories due Oct. 15, 2020*)
We're not a glum lot. Been on any fun sober trips? How about camping, skiing, skydiving, dancing, collecting, reading, cooking, volunteering? What about service events, new hobbies, game nights, sober vacations? Share your sober adventures! Let's hear from you!
- 25 Aniversario Del La Viña (*Stories due October 17, 2020*) (25th Anniversary of La Niña)
- MAY-How the Steps Changed My Life (*Stories due Nov. 15, 2020*)
Pick a Step and share your experiences with it. Four? Five? Eight? Eleven? Tell us how that Step changed you and enriched your life. Give examples. Share your stories.
- JUNE-Dating & Relationships (*stories due Dec. 15, 2020*)

Share your experiences learning to date in sobriety. How did it go? What were your challenges? Any tips? Share what you've learned about having sober relationships. How have you changed.

We are always looking for stories on individual Steps and Traditions!

The A.A. Grapevine Corporate board will have a vacancy for the position of Non-trustee Director following the General Service Conference in April 2021.

Grapevine On The Road: Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, all staff and board travel have been suspended until further notice.

GROWTH (currently listed as “Group Visitation” in Guidelines)

Brian P. brianlpugh@gmail.com

[from Dulles District 4 of Area 71 Guidelines]:

- The Group Visitation Committee will strive to attend each of the 60+ meetings held in Dulles District 4 to encourage participation of GSRs at the District level. Primary attention will be paid to groups without GSRs.
- The Group Visitation Committee will take various pamphlets, monthly newsletters, District Meeting agendas and these District Guidelines to the meetings to be able to answer individual questions.
- The Group Visitation Committee chair should be familiar with the yearly budget line item for visitation costs and the District 4 Guidelines provide a verbal and written report at monthly District meetings regarding committee activities.

INTERGROUP

Matt J. Fargolikethemovie@gmail.com

The Northern Virginia Intergroup (NVI) during COVID 19

The Northern Virginia Intergroup, NVI, serves more than 400 A.A. groups in the area. NVI's primary purpose: to help the alcoholic who still suffers. For details on NVI's services and more go to: <https://www.nvintergroup.org> Intergroup's monthly meetings switched to an online (Zoom) format in March. The meetings are held the first Tuesday of each month at 7:00pm. Any AA member is welcome; to get access to the meeting, send email to: info@nvintergroup.org and ask for access to the next Board meeting. The NVI newsletter, Unity Lifeline, is still be published digitally each month. To get on the list to receive it email: info@nvintergroup.org.

The NVI office was closed in March, (and is still closed to the public.) Most A.A. phone volunteers no longer go to the office in person for their phone shifts--the phone is transferred from member-to-member to their personal phones, 24 hours a

day, 7 days a week. On the A.A. hotline, at first, many calls came in asking for meeting information, or to talk, and as the months went by, calls came in asking for information to help a relative or loved one, for information on treatment centers, as well as calls for NA meeting information, or information on how to get credit for attendance at meetings for the court system. Some phone volunteers are taking their shifts at the office. Only one person at a time is allowed in the office other than the office manager, and volunteers are required to clean their workspace before and after their shift. Phone training is still happening and those interested in becoming PhoneWatch volunteers can email:

phones@nvintergroup.org

NVI has the following committees:: CPC, PI, Correctional Facilities, Treatment Facilities, Website, PhoneWatch, and Newsletter. Where NVI and the committees would normally organize visits to institutions and facilities, the pandemic has curtailed this effort. Also, PhoneWatch volunteers are not arranging rides to meetings or 12th Step calls until it is safe for our 12th Step volunteers to do so.

The Website Committee has now added information for over 200 online meetings to the NVI website. Additionally, there is a list of about 100 In-Person meetings which is updated frequently. As some meetings change to a "hybrid" format (simultaneous online and in-person), the meeting listings are updated.

7th Tradition donations from groups and income from literature and chip sales fell at first, in March-April, and NVI was facing a revenue shortfall. But as the groups heard of NVI's need, donations increased and NVI didn't need to tap into its "prudent reserve," which is money set aside in case of emergencies. Nowadays, the office manager goes to the office, and literature and chips can be purchased by groups and individuals by ordering online using the order form that is found on the website. You can then arrange curbside pickup at the NVI office.

MAILING LIST

Scott H. scott@hyulp.net

[from Dulles District 4 of Area 71 Guidelines]:

- The Mailing List Coordinator shall be responsible for updating and maintaining the District mailing list information on District Officers, Groups, GSRs, Group Contacts, and District Committee members.
- The Mailing List Coordinator shall make available address information, mailing labels, and other group information when requested by the District Officers and Committee chairs for purposes of A.A. functions only.
- The Mailing List Coordinator will assist the DCM in checking the distributed GSO Group Sheets for accuracy – which are distributed at VAC meeting and assemblies.
- The Mailing List Coordinator will assist the DCM in checking the distributed GSO Group Sheets for accuracy – which are distributed at VAC meeting and assemblies.

- The Mailing List Coordinator will provide updated group information to the Group Committee Chair as needed to continue with group visits and obtaining updated group information.

NEWSLETTER/WEBSITE

Mary P. maryprez71@yahoo.com

Thanks for all the great news and contributions to this edition of the Dulles news. I want all your feedback, so please let me know if you have suggestions for changes. Rob T. is helping me with the website but I will soon be up to speed!

WORKSHOP

Scott Z. slm728@yahoo.com

The committee was planning to hold this workshop in the Spring and in person, but it was delayed by the pandemic. We are looking forward to a great turnout so spread the news to all A.A.s you know. As it says on the website, "Anyone in any stage of sobriety with a desire to stop drinking is welcome."

Sober During the Age of COVID [Saturday November 7, 9:30am-Noon], this workshop is sponsored by the Dulles District and hosted by the No Winners women's group of Reston. The District's first virtual workshop, it will feature speakers, a panel discussion, and a meditation session to close. Go to <https://soberduringcovid.com/> for more details and to share with a friend.

- Moderator: Donna W.
- Planned Speakers: Mercedes G. , Brian B.
- Planned Panel Members: Tae E., Rebecca S., Diana D., Duncan J., Krager S., Gabe K.
- Guided meditation: Suzanne

CALENDAR OF UPCOMING EVENTS

- | | |
|--------------|---|
| Oct 9-Oct 11 | VAC Fall Assembly – virtual, including voting for officers using **Third Legacy Procedure**
*** For Fall Assembly Registration *** Go to:
https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSelzO9NFcLs6eXdll9M24Wv7iS4rDgAOTMp6NWZESWxg_kGQ/viewform?vc=0&c=0&w=1&flr=0 |
| Oct 21 | Dulles 4 District meeting – virtual, including elections of DCM, ADCM, Secretary, Treasure using **Third Legacy Procedure** , and other agenda items |
| Nov 7 | District 4 Fall Workshop – "Sober During the Age of Covid"
9:30am-Noon (See Workshop details above) |

Nov 18 Dulles District 4 meeting, Discussion of District Guidelines changes, other agenda items

Dec 16 Dulles District 4 meeting, finalize District Guidelines, other agenda items

Dec 21 Deadline for newsletter submissions for Q4 District newsletter

Jan 8-9 VAC Winter meeting, Richmond

March 19-21 VAC Spring Assembly, Falls Church

Events calendar around Northern Virginia: <https://nvintergroup.org/nvi-area-events/>

**** Third Legacy Procedure****: The A.A. Service Manual pages 21-23
https://www.A.A..org/assets/en_US/en_bm-31.pdf

CONTACTS

Dulles District Newsletter	maryprez71@yahoo.com
District 4 Officers	dcmdullesdistrict4@gmail.com P.O. Box 2022 Reston VA 20195
Northern Virginia Intergroup	http://www.nvintergroup.org 10400 Eaton Place Suite 140 Fairfax, Virginia 22030 (703) 293-9753
Virginia Area	https://A.A.virginia.org/ P.O. Box 8624 Virginia Beach, VA 23450
General Service Office	https://www.aa.org/ General Service Office Box 459 Grand Central Station New York, NY 10163
Grapevine	https://www.aagrapevine.org/ AA Grapevine 475 Riverside Drive New York, NY 10115

Thank you for respecting the anonymity of the contributors and confidentiality of this work by not posting it publicly or on the Internet.

FIND A MEETING

Looking for meetings in DC or Maryland? <https://aa-dc.org/>

Looking for meetings anywhere in Virginia? <https://aavirginia.org/>

Looking for **In-Person** meetings in Northern Virginia?

<https://nvintergroup.org/meetings/>

Looking for **Virtual** meetings in Northern Virginia? <https://nvintergroup.org/virtual-meetings/>

Find a meeting AP for IOS and Android

https://www.aa.org/pages/en_US/meeting-guide

CONTRIBUTIONS TO SERVICE ENTITIES

Dulles District:	P.O. Box 2022 Reston VA 20195
Dulles District Venmo:	See Treasurer report for instructions @Dulles-District
Virginia Area:	VAC P.O. Box 8624 Virginia Beach, VA 23450 Or online at: https://A.A.virginia.org/member-services/contributions/
General Service Office:	General Service Office Box 459 Grand Central Station New York, NY 10163 Or online at: https://contribution.A.A..org

Northern Virginia Intergroup

There are a number of ways to contribute to Northern Virginia Intergroup (NVI). Go to: <https://nvintergroup.org/donations/> and follow instructions for the method you want to use.

Note: Include Group Number and Name on all correspondence.

Thank you for respecting the anonymity of the contributors and confidentiality of this work by not posting it publicly or on the Internet.

ITEMS OF INTEREST FOR THE GROUPS

ZOOM – In case you've had problems with bombing

<https://support.zoom.us/hc/en-us/articles/360045009111-FAQ-Meetings-Waiting-Room-and-Passcode-Requirements-September-27-2020>

FAQ Meetings Waiting Room and Passcode Requirements, September 27, 2020

Starting September 27, Zoom will require that all meetings have a Passcode or a Waiting Room enabled for all paid accounts. You're in control of your meeting security selections, and we have designed the options with security and ease of use in mind.

Note: Meeting passwords (passcodes) are already enforced for all free accounts. For Zoom for Government accounts, Passcodes or Waiting Rooms will be required on October 18, 2020.

Looking for a pen-pal?

G.S.O. offers the opportunity for A.A. members to write to fellow members that are incarcerated through the Corrections Correspondence Service (CCS). *I have written to women in Wisconsin and found it very rewarding. Mary P.*

Link for Corrections Correspondence Service (CCS) application form:
https://www.aa.org/assets/en_US/f-26correctcorrespondence_form.pdf

Pamphlet explains how to start meetings "inside the walls" and page 11 explains how CCS works.
https://www.aa.org/assets/en_US/p-26_AAinCF.pdf

Read the VAC Fall Newsletter before you attend the virtual VAC Fall Assembly, October 9-11. Even if you're not able to attend the virtual Fall Assembly, the VAC Fall Newsletter is a great service read.

What I'm reading right now, from Mary P:

Wing, Nell. (1992). Grateful to have been there: My 42 years with Bill and Lois, and the evolution of Alcoholics Anonymous. Park Ridge, IL: Parkside Publishing Corporation.

Thank you for respecting the anonymity of the contributors and confidentiality of this work by not posting it publicly or on the Internet.

IMPRESSIONS & EXPRESSIONS FROM A.A. MEMBERS

Quick fix for anger

“When I'm in traffic and some crazy in front of me is going way too slow for me, I feel like passing them and giving them the one-finger salute as I pass. These days I try to think that the driver of that car is my sponsor. It works almost every time.”

Heard in a virtual room, April 2020

A Limerick

There once was a lady named Suzie,
Who spent most of her time being boozy,
Her life was still full,
Eyes covered with wool,
But time came when she couldn't be choosy.
-Anonymous-

Why?

Why did I drink at age 13?

Because my parents acted like I didn't exist.

Why did I drink at age 15?

Because my puppy from the time I was 3 died in my arms.

Why did I drink at age 18?

Because my college roommates said it was cool.

Why did I drink at age 22?

Because four years of doing it was all I knew.

Why did I drink at age 35?

Because being fired, RIF'd, or walking away made sense.

Why did I drink at age 45?

Because losing my family, DUIs, and jailtime didn't scare me.

Why did I drink at age 55?

Because the disease had me tightly, but I couldn't see it.

Why did I stop drinking at age 60?

Because I had had enough.

Because I couldn't stand the pain any more.

Because the basement where I drank became too lonely.

Because I had reached my “bottom.”

Because someone I didn't know could see all the above,

And reached out the hand of A.A. and I saw hope.

Why do I continue to not drink at age 70?

Because what I've learned in ten years is too precious to let go of.

Because I've found the cure for all that ails me and haunted me before age 60.

And for that I say, “Thank you, A.A.”

- Anonymous -

Relating 'in' to On-Line

I've heard from many A.A.s over the last few months about difficulty relating-in with the on-line meeting format. I know this is true because I feel it myself, which makes it hard to provide a new sponsee anything other than commiseration. When people in recovery are isolated and don't have the connection to other people in recovery - denial kicks in. This results in the alcoholic side of my brain telling me I can live without a meeting today. I can 'dial it in' while pre-occupied and multi-tasking. I can blame Covid-19 for on-line meetings and blame the on-line meetings for my lack of interest in serving others. Denial and blame – twisted bothers covering up fear. And what do I fear? If I get disconnected from the meeting, what will happen to me? It's been ingrained in all of us from day 1:

- Don't drink
- Go to meetings

I fear if I relate-out of meetings, I will eventually drink. A Step 4 inventory reveals a direct impact on my self-confidence and emotional security. My role is being Frightened.

Its obvious on-line meetings are not the same as in person. First off, conferencing makes it simple to hide, just like when I used to isolate in the basement to drink. I can turn off my video or set my laptop on the other side of the room. There is no body language and limited eye contact. And multi-tasking is a breeze! On-line meetings are excellent for catching up on email, checking the market, and playing a few games. With in-person meetings, when I showed up feeling low or out of sorts, people could tell. They would ask, "are you OK?" there was a handshake, a hug, a slow walk back to the car to talk things out one on one. And there was always a joke. Even during a tough meeting when someone was hurting, a bit of humor would find its way into the group. And as much as I complained about it, I miss cleaning up the coffee area after a meeting. For 5 minutes I was thinking about something other than me.

I have hope and confidence that a vaccine will arrive. And in the meantime, some face to face meetings are occurring which are mindfully social distancing. My guess however is that on-line conferencing is here to stay. Some members may still have health concerns preventing group contact. On the plus side, for many who struggle with health issues or accessibility, on-line conferencing has added a new dimension to their sobriety, providing 'no-distance' meetings to reconnect with old friends across town or the globe.

So, what are we to do?

One of my favorite lines heard in the rooms:

"Two things that Alcoholics hate; The way things are ... and change."

When I first entered A.A., I took Step 1 and surrendered – and change happened. In the Covid-19 environment, I need to be willing to take Step 1 again. Admit I'm Powerless over alcohol, and my life is, yet again, unmanageable. From page 24 of the 12&12:

- "For practicing A.A.s, the remaining 11 steps means the adoption of attitudes and actions that almost no alcoholic who is still drinking can dream of taking."
- "Unless he has to do these things in order to stay alive himself"

For this alcoholic, meetings are critical to sobriety, so once again I need to change. I need to find a way to 'relate in' – because I have to. But unlike day 1, I am gratefully aware of a strength I didn't know I had back then. The strength of all of you – the A.A. group. Back in March, A.A.s made the shift from in-person to on-line in a matter of days. If A.A. was a top down organization, it would have been months before a communication directive was spell checked. Instead, thanks to tradition 4, each autonomous group found their own way online and connected to each other across the districts. In a month from the first death due to COVID-19 in the U.S., Northern Virginia Intergroup was able to provide a directory of on-line locations for meetings 24 hours a day. I've spent most of my life working for large corporations which move at a glacier pace. What A.A. accomplished so quickly was a miracle.

My goal is to find ways to stay connected and be willing to 'relate in,' regardless of the meeting format. With the help of a higher power, this requires a renewed effort and a willing desire to actively participate.

Best practices:

- Meditate 5 to 10 minutes before a meeting. Get centered and consider; what is my intention for this meeting and this day?
- Let the meeting organizer ask, "Who's next?". Sometimes we need a little nudge to get rolling on-line. I don't know why, but a little encouragement to share seems to help.
- Attend more meetings. Show up in a new state, country, time zone and see how others are making it work.
- Create your own Zoom account - It's free. Set up your own 1:1 meetings with friends and sponsees. When I talk to others 1:1 on-line, it's different from a large group and offers a little more intimacy.
- Use the chat window to reach out to the newcomer. Provide a way to contact sponsors, A.A. resources, and other members of the group. If we are shy and reserved in an on-line conference, think how it must feel to a new person dialing in for the first time.

And finally – I'll call this the "Marty Principal." There are newcomers who have entered A.A. in March of this year. All they know is A.A. On-line, are grateful for the on-line access - and are sober. They have shown me what it really means to, 'accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference.

- Anonymous -