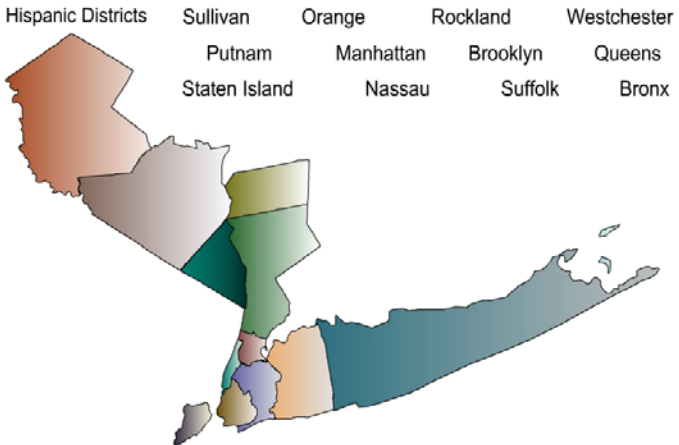

South Eastern New York Area 49 History



SENY Archives Committee, 2010

South Eastern New York Area Committee and
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Archives Committee

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South Eastern New York Area 49 History
Third Revision, 2010

ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS is a fellowship of men and women who share their experience, strength and hope with each other that they may solve their common problem and help others to recover from alcoholism.

The only requirement for membership is a desire to stop drinking. There are no dues or fees for AA membership; we are self-supporting through our own contributions.

AA is not allied with any sect, denomination, politics, organization, or institution; does not wish to engage in any controversy; neither endorses nor opposes any causes.

Our primary purpose is to stay sober and help other alcoholics to achieve sobriety.

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—Editor's Note: Respecting our Traditions on anonymity, AA members are referred to by first name, last initial only. Also, while every effort has been made to bring consistency to the style, format and layout of the book, it has been a work in progress for some time with many AA members from throughout SENY making significant and varied contributions

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION.....	4
FROM THE SENY ARCHIVES COMMITTEE..	6
THE HEADQUARTERS BUILDINGS	7
WHERE ALCOHOLICS WENT FOR HELP	9
BILL AND LOIS'S HOMES.....	11
BRONX AND UPPER MANHATTAN	13
BROOKLYN.....	16
HISPANIC DISTRICTS	17
MANHATTAN	19
NASSAU COUNTY	23
ORANGE COUNTY.....	32
PUTNAM COUNTY	34
QUEENS	36
ROCKLAND COUNTY	39
STATEN ISLAND.....	41
SUFFOLK COUNTY	46
SULLIVAN COUNTY	51
WESTCHESTER COUNTY.....	54
YOUNG PEOPLE IN ALCOHOLICS	
ANONYMOUS	57
AA AT GROUND ZERO	61
BRIEF HISTORY OF SENY SERVICE	
COMMITTEES	65
BRIEF HISTORY OF PIONEERING GROUPS	
IN SENY	67
RESEARCHING GROUP HISTORY	68

INTRODUCTION

In October 1950, Dr. Bob and Bill W.'s dream for the future survival of Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) was realized with the Trustees approval of the General Service Conference Structure.

The United States and Canada were divided into seventy-five areas, and from this mapping came the development of the AA service areas. To give the Conference continuity, delegates were divided into panels. An odd numbered panel (Panel #1), elected for two years, was seated in 1951. An even numbered panel (Panel #2), elected for two years, was seated in 1952. Thereafter, one panel would be elected, and one would be retired yearly.

This booklet is dedicated to all those trusted servants who gave so much of their time and effort to serve South Eastern New York (SENY) as delegates.

The Twelve Traditions make clear that AA as such need never be organized, yet at the same time, some kind of organization is needed to carry the message in ways that the local groups cannot.

The General Service Office has this responsibility, and in SENY, which is one of the many delegate areas in the country, we deal with issues and activities for our area. This includes representing SENY at the Annual General Service Conference and carrying out many of the service commitments that need to be filled within the area.

[Intergroups/Central Offices](#), on the other hand, are on the frontline. Active Intergroup members answer questions and give information to those new, old, and potential members who call AA for assistance.

Although they are two separate entities, General Service and Intergroup work hand in hand and frequently share certain duties. This was especially true in the beginning in certain parts of the SENY area.

FROM THE SENY ARCHIVES COMMITTEE

The story of the fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous¹ in South Eastern New York (SENY), Area 49, is deeply associated with the very roots of our program of recovery. Do you know where the first institutionally based AA meeting was held? Where was the hospital Dr. William D. Silkworth treated his alcoholic patients, including a fellow named Bill W.? The answer to these questions and other pieces of AA history that belong to SENY are found in the following pages.

As you read these pages, you will walk through more than sixty years of AA history. Perhaps you will find a name you have heard, or even someone you know. Perhaps your group will be mentioned. It is all part of our collective history.

What we do in AA today lays the foundation for the history we will write tomorrow. [The SENY Archives Committee](#) offers this booklet as a work in progress, and welcomes any comments, corrections, or additions. We also thank the many members of the fellowship, county archivists and historians, friends, and others who have helped make this current printing possible. They have helped us once again to “pass it on.”

SENY Archives Committee, 2010

¹ Quotes from AAWS literature in this book are used with permission.

THE HEADQUARTERS BUILDINGS

- 17 William Street (William Street near Broad Street), Newark, New Jersey

Hank P. and Bill W. set up the first AA Headquarters office here at the office of Honor Dealers, an auto dealership owned by Hank. Bill wrote much of the Big Book from this office. Ruth H. worked for Hank as a secretary and now worked with Bill on the book; she was AA's first non-alcoholic employee. The office remained at this location from about 1938 to 1940.

- 30 Vesey Street (Vesey and Church Streets), Manhattan

The second headquarters office of Alcoholics Anonymous and Works Publishing Inc., after Bill split with Hank; the group operated here in Room 703 from 1940 to 1944.

- 415 Lexington (Lexington and 43rd Streets), Manhattan

AA headquarters moves to the Grand Central Area after Bill and Lois find their new home at Stepping Stones in Bedford Hills. Bill could easily take a train from Stepping Stones to Grand Central Station and walk from there to the new office, making for an easy commute. The offices remained here from about 1944 to 1950. The new mailing address was PO Box 459, Grand Central Annex.

- 141 East 44th Street (44th between 3rd Avenue and Lexington), Manhattan

Still close to Grand Central, the headquarters moved to this larger office in 1950 to accommodate the growing organization. The office remained here until 1960.

- 305 East 45th Street (2nd Avenue and 45th Street), Manhattan

Again, the growing group moved to larger quarters, still in the Grand Central Area, and stayed in this building from 1960 to 1970.

- 468 - 470 Park Avenue South (31st Street and Park Avenue South), Manhattan

This served as AA's General Service Office for over twenty years (from 1970 to 1992), eventually occupying five floors in two buildings.

- 475 Riverside Drive (between 119th and 120th Streets), Manhattan

The General Service Office moved to this building, adjacent to the Riverside Church, in 1992. Offices occupy the 11th floor, with Grapevine offices on the 10th floor. John D. Rockefeller made the entire block of land available for the structure, which houses many church groups, interdenominational agencies, and non-profit organizations.

WHERE ALCOHOLICS WENT FOR HELP

- Towns Hospital, 293 Central Park West (between 89th and 90th Streets), Manhattan

Bill landed in Towns Hospital four times, between 1933 and 1934 for treatment of alcoholism, and ultimately had a spiritual experience there in 1934 that led to his sobriety. Dr. William Silkworth, Medical Superintendent at Towns, treated 40,000 alcoholics there, including Bill W., and wrote the "Doctor's Opinion" in *Alcoholics Anonymous*.

- Calvary Episcopal Church, 237 Park Ave. South (4th Avenue and 21st Street), Manhattan Calvary Mission, 246 East 23rd St (2nd Avenue and 23rd Street), Manhattan

Bill attended Oxford Group meetings here from 1934 to 1936, and got sober along with Ebby T., Rowland H., Cebra G., Hank P., and many others. Rev. Samuel Shoemaker, source of AA's spiritual principles via the Oxford Group, was the pastor of Calvary and originally brought Oxford Group meetings to New York City.

- 30 Rockefeller Plaza (off 49th Street), Manhattan

Here Bill met Willard Richardson, a friend of his brother-in-law and the conduit to John D. Rockefeller Jr. Bill met Rockefeller in October 1937 in his 66th floor office, and told him about the AA program. The meeting went well, and in many ways, Rockefeller helped the fledgling organization get started.

- 334½ West 24th Street (between 8th and 9th Avenues),
Manhattan

This first clubhouse was rented in 1940 for 100 dollars a month (about 1,300 dollars today). This was the first establishment acquired specifically to house Fellowship meetings. Bill and Lois, virtually homeless during this time, lived in a small upstairs room for about a year. Bill first met Father Ed Dowling at this building, who was instrumental in bringing AA to his hometown of St Louis.

BILL AND LOIS'S HOMES

- 38 Livingston Street (between Clinton and Court Streets), Brooklyn

This was where Bill and Lois's called home during the flush, highflying years on Wall Street from 1926 to 1929. Bill was a successful stockbroker during these years and the couple was wealthy. Lois and Bill knocked down a wall and converted two apartments into one to give them more space. However, these were also the years of worsening drinking by Bill.

- 182 Clinton Street (Clinton and State Streets), Brooklyn

Lois's family owned this home for many years. Lois Burnham was born in this house in 1891. Bill and Lois lived there briefly in 1919, with her parents, when they were just getting on their feet. They moved there again in 1930, when the couple's financial situation had deteriorated severely after the stock market crash. Lois's mother was



dying of cancer and Bill's drinking was quite bad. Lois's father gave the home to Lois and Bill after he remarried a few years after his wife's death. It was in this house that Bill finally got sober; Ebby T. brought Bill his message of spiritual healing and recovery in 1934, sitting with him in the kitchen at 182 Clinton Street. In 1935, Bill began hosting meetings at the house on Tuesdays, meeting with drunks constantly, some of whom lived there with Bill and Lois if they had nowhere else to go. After Lois's father died in 1936, the mortgage company took ownership of the home, but the couple continued living there, renting the property, until 1939, when they were too penniless to afford the rent. They were virtually homeless for two years, living with friends and above offices.

- [Stepping Stones](#): 62 Oak Road, Katonah, New York (Bedford Hills).

About an hour north of Manhattan, Bill and Lois moved to this home in 1941, and lived here for the rest of their lives. A wealthy woman named Helen G. heard that the couple needed a home and offered them the home for a small price, with no down payment and installments of 40 dollars per month. Fortunately, AA was then on the cusp of success and Bill and Lois were able to pay for the home quickly. ²

² Information on pages 7 through 12 is drawn from AAWS/GSO Archives material, and is reprinted with permission.

BRONX AND UPPER MANHATTAN

At the 1995 Alcoholics Anonymous Convention Old-Timers meeting in San Diego, California, of fifteen speakers chosen at random from among 129 old-timers with forty plus years of sobriety, three of the speakers got sober in the Bronx! This is indicative of the great impact that early Bronx AA had on our fellowship.

The Bronx had its sober roots in the 24th Street Clubhouse where most of the outer borough members went after being twelfth stepped by our AA early timers in the late 1930s and very early 1940s. One of these members, an ex-cop, seemingly doomed to insane asylums, was twelfth stepped by an AA while in his sixteenth Bellevue hospitalization for drinking. He got sober in 1942. Before his second AA birthday, he started the first Alcoholics Anonymous group in the Bronx in 1944. We know this from early postings in the brand new AA magazine, *The Grapevine*, which printed the story of his tireless efforts.

Early issues of *The Grapevine* recall that the first Bronx group held its initial meeting on August 6, 1944, at 518 Willis Avenue. Shortly thereafter, in October of that same year, the group found “a permanent and very spacious” place at 2500 Marion Avenue. As of 2006, the group still thrives in the same location. The Bronx County Group came into being with Wednesday night open meetings. Through ardent twelfth step work and great enthusiasm and self-sacrifice for “the cause,” membership exploded. With its primarily Irish working-class population, there were more than a few bars in the Bronx. Not surprisingly, AA groups seemed to flourish most in the neighborhoods rife with bars. Within a few years, the Bronx saw the beginnings of the South Bronx, Parkchester, Mott Haven, Gun Hill, Woodlawn, University Heights, City Island, and Riverdale groups.

These groups usually had open speaker meetings and often had hundreds of members and potential alcoholics in attendance. Making coffee and setting up chairs was a big job. The founder of the group liked to call his twelfth step groups “combat teams.” Outgoing speaking commitments were often a journey taken by carloads of members to Brooklyn, Connecticut, New Jersey, upstate New York, or wherever else they were needed in order to “carry the AA message.” A very close relationship existed with the Intergroup Office because there were almost daily twelfth step calls coming in to the groups.

Because of geographic proximity and similar working-class roots, Upper Manhattan had many similarities to the Bronx, and the two regions have always shared a special kinship. When the Washington Heights and the original Inwood Group began in 1947, their eventual AA association in the General Service structure of South Eastern New York (SENY) was with the Bronx. As a result, the late 1970s saw the development of the Bronx and Upper Manhattan General Service Committee of Alcoholics Anonymous, which began serving the needs of this community of our Fellowship. This pairing of the Bronx and Upper Manhattan has also allowed some of its members to wear, on occasion, name cards at service gatherings that proclaim themselves official “BUMs”!

For General Service’s purpose of organizing to help the alcoholic who still suffers, the Bronx and Upper Manhattan Committee has been broken into ten districts. Most define AA communities such as Woodlawn, Riverdale, South Bronx, Fordham/Bedford Park, Bainbridge/Gun Hill, Upper Manhattan, Morris Park/Parkchester/Tremont, and Northeast Bronx. These districts help to carry the AA message through committees on Public Information, Cooperation with the Professional Community, Treatment Facilities, Corrections, and Special Needs. They all focus on how best to carry the AA message to those who might need our program of recovery. In addition, the Bronx and Upper

Manhattan Committee has sponsored Share-A-Day events that have scores of workshops on topics of Recovery, Unity, and Service. District workshops and annual Spiritual Breakfasts are held in order to invite members to share the fellowship of the spirit.

In 2005, the county went through an overall review of the area, looking at its bylaws, groups, and districts. As a result, the bylaws were updated and brought into alignment with SENY's area conscience to better serve its community. Of the 135 groups reported in 1995, through addition and subtraction, it was determined that only 100 groups were currently in existence. As a result, re-districting has taken place and there are now nine districts in existence with an average, more manageable size of eleven groups, and area revitalization has begun. At the turn of the twenty-first century, committee-meeting attendance was at an all time low average of around twelve members per committee. A renewed effort changed this trend with limited success at first, but with much hard work, average attendance has risen to approximately fifty at county meetings and there is increased participation once again. Over half the districts now have District Committee Members, where for a long time the district did not have one. The Bronx and Upper Manhattan has bounced back, reclaiming its stature as the best county in Area 49!

BROOKLYN

In November 1934, Ebby T., an alcoholic who found a solution to his problem in the Oxford Group, visited Bill W. at his home at 182 Clinton Street in Brooklyn. That meeting, recounted in Chapter 1 of the book, *Alcoholics Anonymous*, laid the foundation for Bill's recovery, and in turn, for AA as a whole. After traveling to Akron in the spring of 1935, which led to his meeting with Dr. Bob and the first stirrings of what would soon become the Fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous, Bill returned home to Brooklyn. There, he started weekly meetings, which, after several moves, relocated to the St. George Hotel downtown. In February of 1942, these gatherings became known collectively as the Brooklyn Group. Considered the second oldest group in the nation and the oldest group in New York City, the Brooklyn Group achieved this status by virtue of its origins on Clinton Street.

By the end of 1946, there were six more groups meeting in Brooklyn, including Brooklyn's first foreign language meeting, the Norwegian Group. Sixty years later, in 2006, Brooklyn Intergroup listed 158 groups throughout the borough, including meetings conducted in Spanish, Russian, and Polish.

In 1980, the first Brooklyn Get-Together was held at Bishop Kearney High School in Bensonhurst, an annual tradition that lives on today as Brooklyn County Share-A-Day. In November 1988, Brooklyn held its first annual Spiritual Breakfast. This event, along with the Share-A-Day, provides Brooklyn AA's with annual opportunities to come together and celebrate their borough's place in AA history and the Fellowship's Three Legacies of Recovery, Unity and Service.

HISPANIC DISTRICTS

In 1976, with the assistance of the New York Intergroup, the Service Committee of the Hispanic Groups (now called the Hispanic Central Office) was invited to participate in a SENY area committee meeting. The members of the area committee expressed the necessity of electing a member of the Hispanic committee who would attend the area assemblies and form a Hispanic district, so that the Hispanic groups would be included in the General Service structure with their respective General Service Representatives (GSRs). This would bring life to the fourth concept of world service.

Not long after, a few members of the Board of the Service Committee of the Hispanic Groups began to attend their first SENY committee meetings, in order to observe and to document the needs and functions of the District Committee Member (DCM). The DCM would represent the 30 Hispanic groups of New York, most of which actively participated in the activities and services of the service committee of the Hispanic groups with a representative.

After attending several SENY committee meetings, the General Service Committee of the Hispanic groups made an announcement to all the groups regarding the new alliance, whereby, the SENY area assembly agreed to designate the Hispanic district as number 612 exclusively as a geographic district rather than a county such as Manhattan, the Bronx, Brooklyn, Queens, Nassau, and Suffolk.

The Hispanic DCM began to serve in 1977, as the only Hispanic representative in the area committee. He gave his report once a month at the meetings of the Hispanic General Service Committee, and was an officer of the Board of the Service Committee of the Hispanic Groups until 1983. At that time, District 612 established its own service meetings, held on the last Saturday of every month. The

Hispanic Central Office lent their premises to District 612, giving up one of their meetings each month, so that District 612 could meet and be fully functional.

By 1981, there was a broader understanding of where we were located within our area. At the request of the DCM, the Hispanic General Service Committee held its first Hispanic Convention. In order to pave the way, the DCM arranged for there to be Hispanic representation and participation at the 21st SENY Convention. On April 24th - 26th of 1981, the Hispanic General Service Committee, the Bronx Committee, and representatives from groups of Brooklyn, Nassau, Suffolk, and New Jersey Intergroup participated. This convention took place at the Sheraton Inn at La Guardia Airport, in Queens. At this convention, a program in Spanish was created.

District 612 continued its efforts to locate and to lead GSRs within the context of their functions. An idea formed in 1985, to hold the first Share-A-Day jointly with the Hispanic General Central Office. The event was first held on Sunday, June 16, 1985. By then, there was great anticipation, joy, and enthusiasm for the celebration of the 50th anniversary of AA. What better way was there to celebrate this anniversary than to celebrate it at the first Hispanic Share-A-Day! Other Share-A-Day events followed for the next six years. District 612 later hosted this event themselves from 1987 to 1991.



MANHATTAN

On June 10, 1935, AA officially began with the meeting between Bill W. and Dr. Bob in Akron, Ohio. When Bill returned to New York in 1935, he started working on the idea of drunks meeting other drunks. Initially these efforts were very difficult. There were approximately 100 active members between 1935 and 1939 spread among Akron, Cleveland, and New York.

In the early days, meetings were just meetings, attended by members from all over the metropolitan area. The first New York group formed in April 1938 and held meetings at Burt T.'s tailor shop on West 46th Street. Burt T. was the man who hocked his then-failing business to keep the book *Alcoholics Anonymous* in print. Published for the first time in March 1939, this book is the primary text of Alcoholics Anonymous. With little understanding about alcoholism around this time, it was referred to as “Mom’s disease,” curiously enough.

In the spring of 1940, the first AA clubhouse opened at 334½ West 24th Street. The “Corporation,” which was the body that governed the clubhouse, organized the meeting times. John D., President of the Corporation, ran the meetings there and began to function as a central committee for the interrelation of the handful of groups in the metropolitan area. Additionally, there were meetings held at Webster Hall, located at 113 West 57th Street, and at Steinway Hall on 14th Street and Union Square. Meetings were held on Sunday and Thursday at the clubhouse and on Tuesday at Webster Hall.

April 13, 1944, marked the creation of a formal New York Group, called the Manhattan Group, purported to be AA group number one in New York (number two nationally). The group has a letter from Bill W., sent to them in 1966, that substantiates this information. With the formation of the Manhattan Group, the “Corporation” dissolved, although a new one formed to run the new clubhouse on 41st Street, with

the Manhattan Group as the paying tenant. There was a big fight over who should run AA area affairs. Out of this battle, with many drunken casualties, came our present Intergroup Association and the acceptance by the Manhattan Group that it was merely another group and not a special interest body.

In June 1946, seventeen groups, holding twenty-nine weekly meetings, across Brooklyn (2), the Bronx (1), Manhattan (11), Nassau County (5), Queens (4), Staten Island (1), and Westchester County (5) formed New York Intergroup. By May 1947, when the [New York Intergroup](#) published its second meeting list, there were eighty-six meetings throughout the city, adjoining counties, and Connecticut. In addition, there were daily luncheons at three restaurants in Manhattan and one in Bayshore, Long Island. The fourth meeting list, published in October of 1947, listed ninety-six weekly meetings and included the four luncheons. The earliest listing of a New York City Spanish language meeting appeared in the April 1948 list.

Many of the early groups, named after their telephone exchanges or their neighborhoods became known as Duffy Hill, Tudor, Murray Hill, Gramercy, and Lenox Hill. A point of special interest is that Bill W. sobered up in Manhattan, at Towns Hospital on Central Park West, under the care of Dr. Silkworth in 1934.

In February 1947, the St. Nicholas Group, located in Harlem, was founded. A year later the Riverton Group started. Out of these two pioneering groups grew the Mid-Harlem and Salem Groups, among others.

New York Intergroup is located in Manhattan at 307 Seventh Avenue at 28th Street. It is often the first AA contact for many New Yorkers who believe they have a problem with alcohol. It is an information exchange center for AA groups, as well as a product of the partnership of AA groups. Member volunteers answer approximately 400 phone calls daily from members and non-members seeking detox treatment. New

York Intergroup has a Public Information Committee providing AA member speakers to non-AA facilities requesting their service. The center provides members with AA General Service Conference approved literature, as well as meeting books. It has an exchange meeting where AA groups meet to exchange speakers for their meetings. The Corrections and Treatment Facilities Committee brings over 600 AA meetings (as well as literature and meeting books) into detoxes, treatment centers, prisons, and shelters. It publishes a bi-monthly newsletter entitled *Sober News* and partakes in a program called “Bridging the Gap” in conjunction with the General Service Office. This program gives a person in a detox, rehab, or hospital the opportunity to meet with a recovering alcoholic who can help them make the transition from an institution to the AA community. Increased contributions helped the New York Intergroup to renovate its offices in 2007. However, New York Intergroup participants note that there has been a dramatic decrease in members doing service during the last decade.

It has become increasingly difficult for AA groups to find meeting spaces in Manhattan in recent years. Areas hard hit have been Gramercy Park, Kips Bay, Murray Hill, and the Upper East Side. There have been several church closings, mergers of congregations, and increased aid in housing and feeding the homeless. All of these have contributed to the decreased availability of meeting spaces. The Manhattan Group, whose home had been Christ Lutheran Church since 1969, had to find a new home in April 2006. The Gramercy Group had to leave Cabrini Hospital after many years due to the hospital’s closing. The Sutton Group and the Youth Enjoying Sobriety Group have also recently been forced to relocate.

Alcoholics Anonymous’ world headquarters, the General Service Office (GSO), is also located in Manhattan at 475 Riverside Drive and 120th Street, along with the offices that facilitate the production of *The Grapevine* and *La Viña*. The GSO does AA’s daily business, which includes providing

a multitude of information and services for members and outside organizations, both public and private. Everything from archival information to media relations is handled by the GSO, enabling AA to continue carrying the message.

In May of 1996, there were over 380 groups listed in Manhattan. As of July 2008, there were 355 groups listed with 1180 weekly meetings. There are a growing number of specialty meetings, including foreign language meetings in French, Polish, Russian, and Ukrainian. Additionally, there are meetings for people with HIV, and twenty-seven meetings held online.

NASSAU COUNTY

“What we used to be like, what happened, and what we are like now...”

- The Early Years – 1940’s:

In the August 1981 issue of the *Nassau Intergroup Newsletter*, it states the first home group in Nassau County began in a member’s home in Garden City during the war years. Many early groups met in group members’ homes, which is why they were called “home groups.” Within a few short years, as AA membership grew in Nassau, the need for larger meeting spaces was imminent and necessary. Thus, AA groups began forming and meeting in larger places such as church basements. Early sources suggest the first group to meet outside the traditional home group atmosphere held its meetings in either Baldwin, Freeport, Manhasset, Merrick/Bellmore, Mineola, Garden City, Roslyn, or Valley Stream. However, at the June 14th 2008 Nassau County Big Meeting, ten old-timer panelists, each with thirty-seven to fifty-one years of sobriety, believed the Mineola Group was the oldest group in Nassau County, with their meetings being held at the Mineola Fire House. This uncertainty explains the need and importance for documenting our history through archives, as well as making our history available for future generations of AA members to enjoy.

- 1948 to 1969

The Manhasset-Roslyn Telephone Service fulfilled a need at a time when there were relatively few groups on Long Island and membership was small. The Manhasset-Roslyn Group undertook this service and effort, unassisted financially by any other group or by New York Intergroup. The vast growth in population on Long Island brought with it a greater demand for AA information and a constant increase in activity for the



telephone answering service. The burden of handling the service became excessive, more trying, and more than any one group could sustain, no matter how highly dedicated its members were.

Founding members of the Nassau Answering Service were involved in setting up Nassau General Service and [Nassau Intergroup](#). Many of these same people continued to participate in Nassau Intergroup and General Service. From these dedicated people the purpose and agenda of the Nassau General Service Representative Meeting became clear: (1) to learn how to cooperate with each other and our friends in carrying the message to the still suffering alcoholic; (2) to offer an accurate recap of news and history for Area 49's newsletter, *The Link*, and to pass along AA General Service Guidelines and the Twelve Concepts for World Service; and (3) to encourage districts to organize and carry the message of our primary purpose while practicing principles before personalities through the Twelve Traditions and Twelve Concepts.

- Early 1970s

Chaired by the Panel 17 SENY Delegate, the first Nassau General Service Representatives meeting was established in Nassau County was attended by a small number of members representing their groups. The Mineola Group held these meetings at their location.

- June 24, 1970

Members from AA groups voted overwhelmingly at the Church of the Advent, Westbury, to assume the burden of providing a telephone answering service to help the suffering alcoholic in Nassau County. AA volunteers staffed this service, called the Nassau Answering Service of Alcoholics Anonymous. Around this time, there are fifty-three groups in Nassau. With help from clergy friends, almost all of whom were non-alcoholics, at the Church of the Advent, the telephone answering service was set up in the basement of Winthrop Hall, Advent Street, in Westbury. This important

institution helped establish better communication for twelfth step calls between groups throughout Nassau and the suffering alcoholic. Rumor has it that this is the first live AA hotline service provided in the United States.

- 1976

The Nassau General Service Representative Meeting moved from the Mineola Group location to the Church of the Advent, Winthrop Hall, and they elected the first Local Committee Member.

- 1977

The Nassau Answering Service moved into its own office in Hempstead and changed its name to The Central Office of Nassau.

- June 17, 1978

Nassau County's first Share-A-Day, held at Adelphi University, Garden City, was hosted by The Central Office of Nassau. In subsequent years, various locations throughout the county held this event.

- 1980

The Nassau General Service Representative Meeting became the Nassau General Service Committee and was chaired by a District Committee Member at Large, or DCM at Large. South Eastern New York (SENY), Area 49, requested that Nassau form General Service districts. Ten groups per geographical district were established and districts were given the freedom to merge. Nassau General Service Committee decided to cap the number of districts at twenty.

The Central Office of Nassau relocated to a new office in West Hempstead. The groups at that time, having the "courage to change," followed their Higher Power's guidance and underwent another name change to Nassau Intergroup of Alcoholics Anonymous. During this time, Nassau Intergroup began providing service to 153 groups. The AA hotline

received over one thousand phone calls per month. It continues to be an AA service entity.

- July 11, 1982

On this date, the First Annual Nassau Intergroup Picnic, held at Eisenhower Park, East Meadow, for AA members, their families, and friends enjoyed a day of fellowship and fun.

- 1983

Nassau Intergroup became incorporated in the State of New York.

- 1984

A small number of General Service members, having attended a Spiritual Breakfast in the Bronx, decide to organize a similar event in Nassau. The purpose of the event was to offer fellowship as well as to inform groups about General Service and the services provided.

- 1985

Nassau County's first Spiritual Breakfast, an open AA event, was hosted by the Nassau General Service Committee. Held at a catering hall in Massapequa, some two hundred attendees enjoyed the event.

- Mid 1980s

Nassau Intergroup of AA Inc. organized a dinner dance for the evening of Nassau County's Share-A-Day for AA members and their guests to attend.

- 1989

Nassau Intergroup of AA Inc. outgrew its office in West Hempstead, so the organization relocated to a larger office in the same building.

- 1990s

Nassau General Service Committee underwent another name change to Nassau General Service Group, and is chaired by a District Committee Member Chair (DCMC).

- August 12, 1990

Nassau's Spiritual Breakfast formally changed the name to Nassau AA's Unity Breakfast.

- June 15, 1991

Nassau General Service Group and Nassau Intergroup of AA Inc. co-hosted the first Big Meeting, celebrating the 50th Anniversary of Alcoholics Anonymous in Nassau County. It was held at the Tilles Center, CW Post Campus of Long Island University, Brookville, NY.

- October, 1994

Nassau Intergroup of AA Inc. formed its own Institutions Committee, a service function that used to be provided by New York Intergroup's Institutions Committee. Nassau Intergroup's Institutions Committee, the largest standing committee in the county, brought AA meetings into hospitals, detox and rehab facilities, as well as to the Nassau County jail on a weekly basis.

- December 5, 1996

The Ad Hoc Special Needs Committee became a permanent Nassau Intergroup of AA Inc. standing committee.

- February, 1998

Nassau Intergroup of AA Inc. became fully self-supporting through group's contributions, providing service to over three hundred groups. The twenty-four hour hotline continued to be staffed by volunteer AA members since 1977. Nassau Intergroup of AA Inc. began publishing a monthly newsletter called the *Nassau Intergroup News*. At no charge to members, 90,000 meeting lists were distributed. The intergroup also had an active Cooperation with the Professional Community Committee, Public Information Committee, and Speaker's Bureau.

- 1998

Since the late 1970s, the Nassau General Service Group began holding its meetings at the Westbury Group's meeting place in the Church of the Advent, Westbury. In the late 1990s, the new clergy advised Nassau General Service Group members that they must find an alternative meeting location. The following year, their meetings were held at the Nassau Intergroup of AA Inc. office in West Hempstead.

- 1999-2000

Nassau General Service Group meets at the Nassau Intergroup of AA Inc. Office in West Hempstead. During this period, redistricting of Nassau General Service Group's districts takes place.

- 2001-2002

New By-Laws were written and adopted during this period. The Nassau Intergroup office serves as a location for service workshops hosted by Nassau General Service Group.

- 2003-2004

There were no significant occurrences during this period.

- 2005

As a public information effort, members from District 206 contact libraries and high schools in their district and offer them a copy of the book *Alcoholics Anonymous*.

The dinner dance, hosted by Nassau Intergroup of AA Inc. since the mid 1980s, was held for the last time.

- 2006

Nassau County's Big Meeting underwent a hiatus.

- October 23, 2006

The first issue of Nassau General Service Group's newsletter, *The Gazette*, debuted.

- 2007-2008

Nassau General Service Group's By-Laws underwent the amendment process. Though there are some active districts meeting regularly, inactive districts are a concern. Thus in an effort to help rebuild inactive districts, the DCMC suggests district meetings be held at the bi-monthly General Service meeting until such time when these districts are able to meet regularly on their own. Two GSRs become DCMs of their respective district at the February meeting.

- January 1, 2008

Due to an ever-increasing amount of participation by members, the Nassau Intergroup Representatives Meeting relocated from the Nassau Intergroup of AA Inc. office, West Hempstead to a larger meeting space at the Garden City Community Church, home of the Garden City Group.

- April, 2008

Nassau General Service Group received its New York State tax-exempt number.

- May, 2008

Although the numbers constantly change, Nassau Intergroup's meeting list was updated and released during the month of May. It contained various types of AA meetings available for alcoholics and interested members of the public. AA groups and meetings throughout Nassau County span two cities, three towns, and sixty-four unincorporated areas. The meeting list included 269 distinct AA groups who provide 690 AA meetings each week from which to choose from.

- June 5, 2008

While production costs continually rose, it is decided at the monthly Nassau Intergroup Representatives meeting that Nassau Intergroup of AA Inc. would continue to publish meeting lists, free of charge, to members for as long as

possible. This is also in keeping with the Intergroup's tradition of providing service for AA members.

- June 14, 2008

After a two-year break, Nassau General Service Group resurrected Nassau County's Big Meeting and used the Garden City Group's meeting location to hold the event. Nassau Intergroup of AA Inc. decided not to be involved in this event any longer.

- August 18, 2008

Nassau General Service Group conducted a county inventory.

- September 13, 2008

Nassau General Service Group in Nassau County hosted the SENY Election Assembly. This was the first time Nassau County hosted an election assembly. The Garden City Group offered their location, the Garden City Community Church.

- 2009

In the spirit of cooperation Nassau General Service Group and Nassau Intergroup of AA Inc. work together placing two copies of the book, *Alcoholics Anonymous* into every library throughout the county. Information on how to contact AA is included with each book.

- May 9, 2009

Districts 208/209 host a "Spirituality and Sponsorship" workshop. Later interested members from California enquire about this workshop as they are interested in holding a similar workshop in their area.

- October 10, 2009

Nassau General Service Group hosts the Big Meeting at the Garden City Group's location.

- June 6, 2010

Nassau, Queens and Suffolk General Services host a successful tri-county workshop on “Service and Spirituality” at the St. William the Abbot School, Seaford. This is a first for all three counties and it is hoped more tri-county workshops will be held in the future.

- August 14, 2010

A large turnout of members, family and friends attend the Big Meeting held on the beach in Long Beach, NY.

- September, 2010

Nassau General Service Group conducts a new county inventory.

- October 2010

Members from Districts 208/209, with assistance from SENY, arranged with Cablevision Long Island to air an AA public service announcement (PSA) produced by AAWS titled *Testimonials*. The PSA is scheduled to air from November 29 to December 26 and includes the AA hotline numbers of both the Nassau and Suffolk Intergroup.

- November 13, 2010

District 208/209 hosts a service workshop on “History, Hopes and Heroes” at the Village Church of Bayville, NY.

Members in Nassau County are dedicated and committed to carrying AA’s message of hope to the alcoholic who still suffers. We do this through the many service activities that we organize. Our goals are to continue to cooperate with other AA service entities, to work with professionals in the community, and the public seeking information.

ORANGE COUNTY

The first AA meetings in the county met in Middletown and Newburgh, NY. These meetings started at 9:00 PM to allow time for visitors from neighboring towns to arrive, as distances to travel were long and road conditions were poor. The first meeting in Middletown met in the late 1940s, in a private home, and was a speakers' meeting. Later, this first group, previously housed in Middletown, moved from the private home to St. Joseph's School on Cottage Street. A third grade student who went to that school can still recall seeing the AA posters and the empty reminder bottle that was in the room where the group met.

The Cup and Saucer Group in Goshen started out with China cups and saucers. The Pine Island group began in 1980 and met in the same church for eighteen years. The meeting was one hour and thirty minutes long, and saw an attendance of forty-five to fifty people, including very young alcoholics. Many people also recall the early fellowship, the picnics at Old Mill Beach, and the Christmas and New Year's Eve parties that were held.

In 2006, Orange County AA saw the inception of its Archives Committee. In the following months, the committee found a location to display the archives. The archives are on display at 74 Ridge Road in Newburgh, NY. One of the pictures exhibited is a picture of the Cornwall Press with a description that states the following, "This is where the first and second editions of the Big Book were printed." Also incorporated with the archives are histories of the AA groups in Orange County. Currently, the Archives Committee is seeking old meeting lists to display as well.

Over the last several years, many changes have molded the current state of AA in Orange County. The 2007 Share-A-Day, held at the Washingtonville High School, coincided with the thirtieth anniversary of the founding of

[Central Services of Orange County](#). The anniversary also included the founding of the twenty-four hour hotline phone service, which is still successful because volunteers have maintained the hotline for the last thirty years. Ten years ago, there were over one hundred meetings a week. By 2008, there were over two hundred meetings held weekly.

The Institutions Committee still supports between ten and twelve institutions in Orange County and some in outlying areas. The Institutions meeting used to take place at St. Christopher's Inn in Garrison, NY until sometime in the early 1980s. At that time, Harold C., Fred A., and Bill D. thought it would be wiser to move it to Orange County, where it received more support and funding.

PUTNAM COUNTY

Early meetings were held in Brewster, Patterson, Cold Spring, Garrison, Carmel, and Putnam Lake (which later moved north to Purdy's).

Founded in 1948, the Brewster Group was the first formal group in Putnam County and it held its meetings in Brewster on Saturday. Croton Falls had a step meeting and a discussion meeting on Friday's in Carmel.

In the early 1970s, a step meeting began in Croton Falls at St. Joseph's Church. The meeting eventually split from the United Methodist Church on Main Street in Brewster. The Brewster Group moved several times: first to Old Route 6 in Carmel, then to St. John's in Mahopac, and finally found its way back to the First Methodist Church in Brewster.

The first discussion group in the area was controversial. Members from the area felt that the open speakers meetings were the meetings in which to feed spirituality, and discussion meetings were meant for members to talk, rather than listen.



The Gong Show produced the first known coffee pot with the groups names engraved in brass.

The Cold Spring Group began in 1957. The Garrison Group, founded in 1962, meets at St. Phillips Church and currently has five meetings per week. Putnam Lake group was founded in 1972. Patterson Group formed in August 1973. The Footsteps to Serenity Group formed on February 5, 1983. Its founders were from the Plug in the Jug Group.

The Carmel Recovery Group changed names in 1987, to Brewster Recovery, and moved to St. Andrew's Episcopal Church in 1990.

In the past several years, Putnam's changes in AA have come through the General Service Office suggestion of district committees. Commitments include the Putnam County Hospital Detox and the County Jail, both of which have co-ed meetings, and the Arms Acres Rehab.

Every October, the Unity Breakfast is held at Graymoor. The county's own By-Laws were adopted June 15, 2007, and in the spring 2008, the first edition of *The County Crier* newsletter was printed. The Cold Spring Group has recently celebrated fifty-one years of continuous sobriety, and in October 2008, the Garrison Group at St. Phillips celebrated forty-six years.

QUEENS

In the decade since 1998, AA's and AA General Service in the county of Queens have continued to carry the AA message in a variety of different ways. Here are just a few highlights from the last ten years:

[Queens Intergroup](#) has continued to serve the district by providing 24/7 phone service and an annual printed meeting list, as well as continually updating online meeting lists and its website. On April 15, 2002, the Queens Intergroup office moved to a storefront on 72nd Road off Metropolitan Avenue in Forest Hills. The office space is nicer, but Intergroup no longer has access to its own large meeting group space. The annual holiday Share-A-Thon continues to be strong every year. Round the clock meetings are held throughout the Thanksgiving weekend, as well as during the entire holiday week at the end of December. The Share-A-Thon used to be held in the Queen's Intergroup meeting space, but after the office move, it was moved to the Lighthouse Group's meeting place.

The Queens County Share-A-Day, hosted by the Queens County General Service Assembly, has also continued every year, and the 25th Annual Share-A-Day is in its planning stages as of this writing. After residing for a number of years at Franklin K. Lane High School (which is technically in Brooklyn!) in the late nineties, the Share-A-Day moved to IS 5 in Elmhurst off Queens Boulevard. The 2008 event will mark the third year that the Share-A-Day takes place at this location. It will also mark a first, historic occasion: the quarterly Queens Intergroup Exchange and Representatives meetings will be held at the same location as the Share-A-Day, providing a visible application of the 2008 Share-A-Day theme as well as a manifestation of the 2008 General Service Conference: "Communication and Participation: The Key to Unity and Self-Support."

On a sad note: county wide, many open meetings – especially those that meet later in the evening – have experienced a decrease in attendance, and several have closed as a result. However, a number of new Big Book study groups have been started. The overall number of meeting locations in Queens remains just under two hundred. Obviously, Queens is a blessed county.

In 2007, Queens County General Service completed two much-anticipated projects. The first – over six years in the making (the Queens County District Committee Member Chair initiated this project in 2001 with the hope of resurrecting a newsletter that had been in circulation in the county some years before, but no volunteers came forward) – was the publication of a bimonthly newsletter, called *Queens Sober Connection*. The goal of the newsletter is to reach more AA's and AA groups with information about what happens in General Service. In keeping with the times, it is available via email to those who request it at QCgsnewsletter@gmail.com. The second mission was a redistricting project. Some groups changed locations but were still connected to their original districts. Other districts were created several decades ago based on service relationships which have since changed. Hand-in-glove with the redistricting project, several districts which had been “dark” (unconnected to General Service through a GSR or the DCM) have brightened, and service energy abounds!

District cluster 305/313, home to Howard Beach, Ozone Park, Richmond Hill, South Ozone Park, and Woodhaven, has been very active for decades and continued to be so in the last decade, hosting Tradition Plays, Service Workshops, and Step Workshops. A newly active district cluster is 306/307/309, College Point, Whitestone, Bayside, and Flushing. Astoria remains another area in Queens that is active in General Service. In June 2008, the Rockaway AA groups threw an awesome all day party in celebration of AA's 73rd anniversary!

The Queens County General Service Assembly continues to see anywhere from 25 to 50 GSRs at the bimonthly meeting. Those meetings moved in 2005 from the meeting place of the Van Wyck Group to the meeting place of the Stick with the Winners Group. In 2008, a public address system was purchased. Other ways to generate both new and continued interest in service outside the group are being discussed and tried. Those of us involved in General Service try to remember that all our efforts are about carrying the message to the still sick and suffering alcoholic.

ROCKLAND COUNTY

Alcoholics Anonymous in Rockland County traces back to the bitter winter of 1939 when Bill and Lois W. moved in with Bob and Mag V. in the “Siberian Wing” of a drafty farmhouse in Monsey, NY. This was the beginning of a two-year routine of “living around,” since Bill and Lois had all but used up any financial resources.

In December 1939, Bob V. started meetings for alcoholic inmates confined to the grounds of Rockland State Hospital. This was the first AA group in a mental Institution. Dr. Russell E. Blaisdell, then head of the hospital, was key to this beginning and in developing processes for encouraging patients to continue with AA after “graduating” from what became known as the Blaisdell Rehabilitation Center.

A few months later, he actually let bus loads of committed alcoholics go to AA meetings in South Orange, NJ and New York City. (For more details see, *AA Comes of Age*, p.12, and *Pass It On*, p. 218.) Since then, the rehab moved to a new building, on the same grounds. The New York State Education Department placed a sign in front of the building, marking this historical 1939 AA event. As of 2008, our Intergroup Institutions Committee currently hosts six weekly meetings on the grounds of that same institution.

The oldest continually active home group is the Suffern Group, founded by about twelve members in 1946, which now has over 100 active members. Other groups with more than 25 years of longevity are: New City (1963), Pearl River (1963), Pomona (1970), Spring Hill (1973), 3 in 1(1983), Nanuet 12n12 (1974), West Nyack (1974), Ramapo Valley (1975), Key to Sobriety (1976), Alumni (1977), and Congers Legacy (1977).

The Keys to Sobriety Group started in 1976 because, as one old-timer noticed, there was a need for a step meeting

in Rockland County. The 1980s and 1990s have seen significant growth of AA in Rockland County.

An example of this growth is The Grapevine Group, founded in 1985, which has grown from the original dozen to over 140 members and 6 weekly meetings. They have preserved their unique-for-Rockland tradition of holding a discussion around tapes/CDs, which are available from the AA Grapevine, on Sunday night in Valley Cottage.

While membership continued to grow in Rockland County, our General Service Committee decided to host its first Annual Spiritual Breakfast at the Comfort Inn in Nanuet, NY on March 6, 2005. One hundred-seventy attendees came to the breakfast. On March 9, 2008, they held their fourth Annual Spiritual Breakfast, boasting 413 attendees. As of 2008, our General Service Committee is composed of 16 group GSRs.

In 2005, the [Rockland County Intergroup](#) Public Information Committee started the production of Rockland County's AA website. The website went online in April 2006. Since then, it gets approximately 4,200 visitors a month, including visitors from foreign countries. As of 2008, Rockland County Intergroup has 19 group representatives. Rockland County is New York's smallest county, yet as of 2008, its meeting list boasts over 150 weekly meetings. Come visit us on the web at www.rocklandnyaa.org This document was produced by the Rockland County General Service Committee.

STATEN ISLAND

Staten Island's (SI) place in AA history is intimately linked to the first of the Three Legacies of Alcoholics Anonymous Recovery.

Strange as it may seem, the black clouds of a slip gathered over SI seven months prior to the actual founding of AA. How did it happen? The year was 1934, and the month was November. Bill W., co-founder of AA, had been sober since September, following his latest drying out session at Towns Hospital on Central Park West. Bill's Wall Street office was closed for Armistice Day, but his wife, Lois, was at her job at Loeser's Department store in Brooklyn. Alone, Bill decided to spend the day golfing at one of Staten Island's many golf courses. Once on the island, he began to chat with a stranger on the bus. At lunch, in a good mood and reminiscing over his experiences in France during World War I, Bill relaxed just enough to pick up a drink. Thus began his last alcoholic binge, which lasted until mid-December.

You may think that this incident is a dubious distinction for Staten Island but looking at it another way, Bill's golf outing may be viewed as the final turning point from which he finally got the message of recovery and could pass it on to us as our First Legacy. Bill's final drinking days are described in the book, *Alcoholics Anonymous Comes of Age*, Chapter II, The Three Legacies; where he went on to write these now famous words, "Suddenly the room lit up with a great white light." Having had a spiritual experience, his true sobriety began.

AA marks its founding date June 10, 1935, the sobriety date of AA number two, Dr. Bob. Yet it was not until January or February 1945, that Staten Island's first regular AA group began to meet. The March 7, 1945 edition of *The Staten Island Advance* headlined an article, "Alcoholics Anonymous . . . has come to Staten Island and has already

begun its work quietly, and effectively, just as it has in hundreds of other communities . . . the Island group held its first meeting only a few months ago. Within a short time after it began . . . eight Islanders—six men and two women—have been helped.” That first group, called the St. George Group, initially met at midday in Borough Hall to accommodate office workers in the area.

We owe a debt of gratitude to many alcoholics who were very instrumental in helping us. They added a measure of credibility to AA's program of recovery during an era when public opinion concerning alcoholism was low. For Staten Island, one such friend was Father James Griffin, Pastor of Our Lady of Good Counsel Parish, Tompkinsville. The priest helped found the first group, lent an encouraging hand, and spread the favorable reputation of AA among community leaders. Griffin had been a chaplain at Queen General Hospital. It was there he began to help suffering alcoholics when an Island drinker went to him for help. This effort was the seed for our first regular AA group.

Prior to that, Islanders introduced to AA in Manhattan or Brooklyn held meetings in private homes. We even had an active Public Information (PI) Committee in the early forties. A few newspaper articles carried comments about Box 301, a Twelfth Step PO Box at the St. George Post Office. This apparently was a way for Island AAs to reach out to active drinkers and their families before the Intergroup 12th Step phone lines were established.

By 1946, New York Intergroup's first meeting list carried a Wednesday, 8:30 PM meeting at the Staten Island Institute of the Arts & Science in St. George. In 1947 and 1948, the meeting list added two new groups. Of all the groups in existence today, only one can trace its beginnings to the 1940s. The Sunnyside Group started in February 1949, at St. Theresa's Church in the Sunnyside section of Staten Island. In those days, the group met Tuesday and Friday

nights; today, it meets at Moore Catholic High School in Graniteville on Wednesday and Sunday evenings.

Our next still existing group, the Great Kills Group, began September 6, 1952. At the time, *The Staten Island Advance* reported that it was the sixth Island “Unit,” the 161st in the New York Metropolitan area and the 4511th in the world. The group held its meeting on Monday and Saturday nights. By 1952, there was at least one AA meeting each night of the week. Amazingly, this group still meets on the same days. The congregation built a new church in 1952 and AA was invited to meet in their new parish hall beneath the church. We continue to meet there—that is 46 years at this writing—a truly awesome relationship.

During the ensuing years, Staten Island AA chugged steadily uphill like “the little locomotive that could.” Pursuing the legacy of service, the early eighties, formed the Staten Island General Service Meeting. Since then, it has grown dramatically, expanding its service to remain sober and help other alcoholics to achieve sobriety through some of the following committees: Public Information, Cooperation with the Professional Community, Treatment Facilities, Corrections, Archives and Literature, and the Grapevine. Our General Service also hosts SENY Service Workshops and Traditions Workshops. In 1995, General Services began to sponsor a Holiday Marathon for December 25th, providing meetings, cake and coffee throughout the day.

General Services also sponsors the annual SI Share-A-Day, our biggest 12th step event. First presented in 1983, the workshops and speaker meetings draw crowds of seven or eight hundred people. Al-Anon participates in the event also. For the price of a \$3.00 ticket, an attendee is provided a hot lunch, and lots of coffee and cake. The public and the professional community are invited to attend.

Christmas is an important season for Staten Island AAs. A Christmas Eve Marathon began in 1984, and it has

evolved into an all-day sober celebration with fellowship and open meetings from 10:00 AM to midnight. Members contribute their favorite holiday foods and they come to share fears and joys associated with the holiday. Members' children and other loved ones are invited to attend.

November of 1996 saw Staten Island's first Spanish AA meeting called Grupo Papa Todos, Group for Everybody, which began meeting at the Immaculate Conception Church on Wednesday and Friday nights.

Staten Island also welcomed its first sober clubhouse, Traditions House, in 1997. Members say it is no coincidence its opening day was June 10th, which is Dr. Bob's anniversary. Traditions House hosted eighteen AA meetings weekly, over the course of its nine-year existence, and supported countless members of AA on their road to recovery. One year following the closing of Traditions House, Staten Island welcomed its second sober club- house, The HOW Club, located in Port Richmond, which opened its doors on December 1, 2006.

Meanwhile, on December 1, 2002, at The Snug Harbor Cultural Center, members of Staten Island AA created the 1st Annual Spiritual Breakfast. In 2007, over 350 people attended the Spiritual Breakfast. Other notable 2007 occurrences included the first SENY Archives Workshop held in October, the creation of a new General Services Website at www.statenislandaa.org and the expansion of Staten Island's DCM areas from 6 to 12 districts.

Staten Island now humbly boasts 80 groups providing 105 meetings a week. Our Institutions Committee, working in conjunction with New York Intergroup, is also very active organizing members to bring 65 meetings a week into institutions such as the Arthur Kill Correctional Facility, halfway houses and four local hospitals which house ATCs, detoxes and a sobering-up station. The committee also provides meeting lists, Big Books and pamphlets for prisoners and patients as its budget allows.

Today, society has a deeper understanding of alcoholism and the recovery process. The world created by recovering alcoholics designed to help themselves and others has contributed to this understanding. Staten Island AA is proud to have done its part to foster The Three Legacies of Alcoholics Anonymous: Recovery, Unity, and Service.

SUFFOLK COUNTY

The earliest mention of AA meetings in Suffolk County traces back to the early 1940s. By the end of the 1940s, Suffolk had active and established groups in Huntington, Sayville, Riverhead, Bay Shore, Southampton, Amityville and a few other communities.

The 1950s and 1960s saw an explosive growth in AA, and Suffolk County became one of the fastest growing counties in New York.

In 1966, five towns near Riverhead sponsored a Telephone Hotline to aid suffering alcoholics. This allowed them to call locally and receive help from the nearby groups. Newcomers had reported the reluctance to spend money to call New York City. Those that did either received no response or received a call back several days later, from members of distant groups.

By 1970, AA had grown considerably in Suffolk and the need for local, centralized service was apparent. The answering service extended countywide, with a majority of the groups contributing to the support of the service. The Hauppauge Group arranged exchange meetings to distribute the meeting lists, complete with the names, times and locations of groups, so that alcoholics could find any and all the meetings available in Suffolk.

Suffolk County is one of the largest counties in South Eastern New York (Area 49) and has a very diverse population of residents who live here year round and residents who live here in the summer and on weekends only. Consequently, our meetings are also very diverse and strive to meet the needs of the recovering alcoholics here.

There are over 300 groups in Suffolk County and it is possible to attend more than one meeting a day, every day of the week. Long time groups such as Sunrise Sobriety in

Center Moriches and East Northport Eye Opener Group both meet before 7:00 AM, seven days a week, while the Bay Shore Midnight Serenity Group (1979), commonly referred to as “The Pit” meets at midnight every night except Fridays. The Deer Park Home For Dinner Group meets at nearly every day at 5:30 PM and the Smithtown Afternoon Group meets every day except Sunday at 1:00 PM. If an alcoholic in Suffolk County needs to find a meeting, it is not difficult!

Suffolk County also has several unique meetings that started to meet the diverse needs of our ever-changing summer population. Many of the Fire Island groups only meet between May and October. Many of these meetings gather directly on the beach and several hold meetings every day. Similarly, locals know that the Babylon Bridge to Sobriety Group meets at Captree State Park, in the parking lot, at sunrise on Sunday mornings. There are several meetings on the east end of Suffolk County, which meet specifically during the summer. These include the Montauk Sunday Night Meditation Group and the Amagansett Group. Suffolk also has its own “Island” groups, that is, those groups on Shelter Island. The group members often meet people at the ferry and transport them to the meeting place. Additionally, one of the Sieberling children resides on Shelter Island and shares her experience of having known Bill W. and Dr. Bob with interested alcoholics. Finally, there are groups known to the boaters and sailors. Both the Sag Harbor Group and the "Mattituck World Famous Group are quite used to having people arrive at their meetings by way of boat rather than by car!

Suffolk County also has many long-time “specialized” groups. The Bohemia Together Gay Group first began holding meetings in 1996 and the Bellport Rainbow Group (Gay & Lesbian) opened their doors in 1998. Both groups continue to remain strong today. The Jane Doe's Group in Bay Shore began in 1982, while the Brookhaven Women's' Group has been in existence for over 20 years. Similarly, the Men Tell it Like It Is Group in Quogue and the

Men's Room Group in Bay Shore help to meet the needs of our male population. The Islip Doin' It Young Group and the Bridgehampton East End Young People's Group are both very active in carrying the message to our young alcoholics in Suffolk County. It is very exciting to see the "young" recovering alcoholics in Suffolk County actively participate in service. In 1991 and again in 2009, the Young People's Eastern Conference was held in Suffolk County. The Veterans Over the Horizon Group carried the message to veterans at the VA Hospital in Kings Park and there has been a meeting at Charlie Murphy's Nursing Home in Northport for several years. There are also have over 50 handicap accessible meetings and several ASL meetings available for our members.



In 1994, a new Polish-speaking group, the Bay Shore Latarnik Group, was started to meet the needs of the Polish-speaking alcoholics in Suffolk. Sadly, this group closed their doors after remaining very active for several years.

Suffolk County is blessed to have two very active service organizations that work closely together to carry AA's message to the still sick and suffering alcoholics in Suffolk. [Suffolk General Service](#) (SGS) and [Suffolk Intergroup Association](#) (SIA) work both independently of each other and together to provide services to the groups in Suffolk County. While both entities have similar committees, each service body focuses on specific aspects of service, so that the two bodies do not overlap or duplicate services. It is this spirit of cooperation that makes Suffolk County the strong, active county that it is.

Unfortunately, in the late 1980s, all of Suffolk General Service's archival material was destroyed in a car fire. Over the years, our Archive Committee has worked diligently to acquire information about the early years of AA in Suffolk County from a wide variety of sources, as well as keeping all our current information archived both digitally

and in our fireproof file cabinets. Despite the initial loss of our archival material, what survived then, and remains strong today, is the spirit of service and responsibility to carry the message in Suffolk County. On average, over 80 GSRs attend a monthly General Service meeting and serve as the vital link between AA and their home group. Additionally, due to a strong understanding of the service structure and our commitment to being an active, participating county in SENY, SGS is one of the few service bodies in our area to have made it part of our county's conscience to provide a bus to nearly all the area assemblies and the Delegate's Day of Sharing every year. SGS continues to carry the message through the various committees and programs that most AA's are familiar with including the Cooperation with the Professional Community, Public Information, Corrections Special Needs, and Treatment Facilities, which is conducting the Bridging the Gap Program. SGS also provides workshops, Group Inventory moderators and a Traditions Speakers list to the groups and districts through their GSRs and DCMs.

For the last fourteen years, SGS has hosted an annual Unity Breakfast at the Polish Hall in Riverhead, NY for over three hundred people. Despite the occasional call for a larger venue, the groups in Suffolk have repeatedly voted to keep the Unity Breakfast at the Polish Hall, perhaps because of the kielbasa!

In 2008, SGS launched its own website with links to AA World Service, *The Grapevine*, SENY, and SIA. Our website address is www.aasuffolkgs-ny.org. Following the bi-annual county inventory, SGS also adopted a budget for the first time in its history, this as a result of a suggestion made at the inventory.

At the time that the Unity Breakfast idea came about, it was also decided to co-host an Annual Big Meeting with SIA. Fourteen years later, the Big Meeting continues to serve as a Public Information workshop for both alcoholics and non-alcoholics in Suffolk County. The program changes each

year, depending on which service body is planning the event, SGS or SIA, but the message of service and recovery is the same and the celebration of AA's anniversary is a constant theme. The ongoing partnership between the two service bodies ultimately makes Suffolk County an active, vibrant sober community!

SIA has been actively providing service to alcoholics since 1973. SIA maintains one of the few remaining 24-hour Telephone Hotline's still manned exclusively by alcoholics. Additionally, the organization publishes an updated meeting list four times a year which lists the over 300 active groups in Suffolk County. SIA has many committees, including the Public Information Schools Committee, which brings AA speakers into high schools and colleges. The organization also holds many workshops throughout the year that focuses on topics important to recovering alcoholics. The SIA archives contain a vast supply of history about the groups in Suffolk County. SIA also hosts an annual, well-attended Share-A-Thon in October and an Open House at the SIA Office every June to celebrate AA's birthday.

Clearly, Suffolk County is a unique and interesting area. For alcoholics in Suffolk, whether they live here year round, are summer residents or visitors from out of town, it is possible to find an AA meeting day or night, seven days a week. The spirit of recovery and service has been and continues to be strong in Suffolk County.

SULLIVAN COUNTY

The first meetings in the area in the late forties were held in Middletown and Newburg in Orange County, Kingston in Ulster County and Poughkeepsie in Putnam County, NY. Many of these meetings started at 9:00 PM to allow time for visitors from neighboring towns to arrive because the distances to travel were often long and road conditions were poor.

On or about 1946, meetings in Sullivan County were held in the Grange Hall in Liberty on Wednesdays. The first anniversary of the Liberty Group was a gala affair held at the Columbia Farms Hotel in Hurleyville. Unfortunately, though this event no longer exists. This group currently meets at St. Paul's Lutheran Church on Chestnut Street in Liberty on Thursday and Saturday.

Around 1949 or shortly thereafter, Orange County's Port Jervis Group started its meetings. In Ulster County, the Kingston Group started a Sunday meeting that met in the Governor Clinton Hotel. The first official meeting was held in Dr. Crowley's office in Kingston. The first regular meetings in Ulster County (not in a home or office) were held at the Benedictine Hospital in 1941.

Monticello meetings started in either 1948 or 1949 on Mondays and met, ironically, in the back room of Slim W.'s liquor store. Reportedly, around 1946, a woman up on Walnut Mountain stayed sober by calling Slim every day at the liquor store. The group later moved its meetings to a private home on High Street and then to various churches. This meeting, until recently, was at the St. John's Church on Saint John Street in the village on Monticello, but recently moved to the Neighborhood Facility. Also in the late 1940s, a doctor who practiced on Broadway in Monticello was very interested in helping drunks. He gave vitamin shots to them and if a dire case showed up at his office, he would take them in through the back door ahead of the crowded waiting room. The first Step meetings in the area began, approximately, in

1970 at the Parksville School. These meetings ended in the winter since there was no heat. Some early AA's were heard to say, "No souls saved after 10:00 PM." One would think that meetings could go on for hours.

Our Sullivan County Intergroup Association (SCIA) started in 1979. There are currently forty-two active meetings in Sullivan County. These meetings range from Beginner to Big Book and include Open and Closed Discussion, Speaker, Step and Tradition meetings. Currently, an alcoholic can find a meeting any day or every day of the week in the county in contrast to the 1960s when it would take 1,500 miles to get to 90 meetings in 90 days.

Intergroup publishes meeting lists, which undergo quarterly revisions. These include twenty meetings in the neighboring counties and forty-two local Sullivan County meetings. Our Hospital and Institutions Committee distributes Public Information packets and provides information at health fairs, which help carry the message to the still suffering alcoholic. Additionally, this committee holds six meetings in prisons and rehabs. SCIA also maintains a professional answering service, which is available 24 hours a day.

In cooperation with SENY, District 1295 sponsors various workshops and informational Share-A-Days to further our knowledge of the disease of alcoholism. This enables us to educate and inform our members, and to pass along knowledge to the public at large, so that we may be better able to help those who still suffer.

In the last ten years, Sullivan County has not changed very much. The county has held a Share-A-Day from 1998 to 2003 and continues to hold a Spiritual Breakfast originally known as the Mothers Day Breakfast (for the Mothers in recovery who could not be with their children) every May for the last 14 years and is still going strong.

Five years ago the Bethel meeting moved to Hurleyville and continued until May 2008, when it had to close its doors, as did the longtime meeting in Eldred. Both these meetings will be greatly missed.

On the upside, the Sunday night meeting in the Rockhill Ambulance building celebrated six years this year and a new step meeting at the same location began in April of this year. Currently, you can find 51 meetings held in Sullivan County every week.

WESTCHESTER COUNTY

Steps! 90 in 90! Big Book! AA Round-Ups! Unity Breakfasts! Group Inventory Meetings! Anniversaries! BIG Anniversaries!

That is what Westchester AA is all about today. Just like Alcoholics Anonymous in New York and Ohio, and then throughout the nation, we grew to this joyful work by the sometimes hard road of experience.

In a warm and witty account of AA in Westchester, one member wrote of our birthing from New York City and Greenwich, CT. Soon after Bill W. finished writing the “12 Steps” with the approval from the several score of sober members, five thousand copies of the Big Book were printed. Sr. Ignatia and Dr. Bob were treating thousands of alcoholics in St. Thomas Hospital in Akron, Ohio. It was then that John D. Rockefeller and 75 wealthy dinner guests cemented into place for us our tradition of self-support, and Vesey Street in New York City became the first AA Headquarters.

Bill W. wasted no time in “carrying the message” and two solid groups appeared, one in Greenwich, CT, and one in Manhattan. The White Plains Group, still going strong at Memorial United Methodist Church, came into being on May 17, 1941 from the folks in Connecticut where fellowship and caring was strong. From here sprouted the Peekskill Group and New Rochelle Group in 1944, and the first of the Yonkers groups in 1945.

The Mount Vernon Group came out of people from Bill W.'s old home town of Brooklyn in 1943, while he and Lois were making their first cross-country tour to visit the recovered miracles of our century. The “city people” brought with them the structure and the sharing of experience, strength and hope with one another. All the groups supported one another discussing ways and means of living the sober

life, and coming together on a daily basis. Bronxville, with twelve groups today, absorbed Fleetwood, and sent out many to the East and West. One member wrote, “It is often observed, with the partial accuracy of most ‘old wives’ tales, that there is a ‘terrific turnover’ in Alcoholics Anonymous. And yet, of the many who discovered sobriety that vintage year of 1948, there are some known to most of us who have never flown far or fatally from the White Plains nest.”

Meanwhile, White Plains and Mount Vernon continued to produce offshoots. All and all nineteen groups were formed: Bronxville, Chappaqua, Larchmont, Mamaroneck, three groups in Mt. Vernon, New Rochelle, Pelham, Pleasantville, Port Chester, Rye, Scarsdale, Tarrytown, White Plains, Yonkers, and Yonkers North. By 1959, eight more came together, including the Bedford Hills Group where Bill eventually landed after first “protecting his anonymity” in Chappaqua.

By 1970, there were 30 groups in Westchester. The Old Purdys Group, formed in 1969 out of the Cops and Robbers Group in Mount Vernon, began to carry the message North and West. One member of that group visited the Big Book Group in London and invited the members to visit any time they were in America. Soon after, a young man came, three years sober, and led a step meeting using the Big Book as a reference. His joy and peace were so awesome to behold that after that night the elders said, “We’ll have to have ‘Book Meetings’ if that’s what happens in a person’s life from studying it!” As a result, many groups such as It’s Guaranteed, Maryknoll, Katonah, Crow Hill, Patterson, Putnam Lake, Plug in the Jug, and several “Step” named groups in Putnam County forming during the 1970s and 1980s took with them a Big Book meeting as well as the Step and Open meetings.

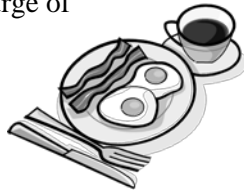
Besides the parent group, White Plains now boasts sixteen AA groups, Yonkers has fourteen, Bronxville has twelve, New Rochelle and Rye have eight each, while Mt.

Kisco, Ossining, and Yorktown Heights each have seven groups. All together, there are well over 175 groups today.

Bravely touted as the First Annual Round-Up, the Westchester County-Wide Service Get Together was held in 1979 at the Westchester Community College. A couple of years along saw us move to the County Center. Today, the Round-Ups are held, fittingly perhaps, at the Memorial Church on Bryant Avenue, home of the original Westchester Group.

Putnam County has “come of age” and has left the service cluster after learning the ropes to sponsor its own Share-A-Day. Topics, workshops, red-ball meetings, special speakers, not to mention free lunch, are all part of the day of recovery and fellowship.

While Round-Ups stayed an important part of Westchester AA life, the 1980s saw a surge of interest in Unity Breakfasts, originally arranged so that all the groups of the county could come together in love, fellowship, and recovery while enjoying a great speaker and those scrambled eggs. Today these events are set for both spring and fall and are often a newcomer's early recognition that life can be fun, even while sober.



In 1998 or there about, a decision was made in the Westchester GSO to change the name of The Westchester Round-Up to The Westchester Share-A-Day. Early in 2005, after many recent years of falling attendance at the Share-A-Day, a decision was made to try a Share-An-Evening, starting at 3:00 PM instead of 8:00 AM. This change brought a drastic increase in overall attendance. In addition, there was a great improvement in participation and enthusiasm. We are now in the formative stage of our Fourth Annual Share-An-Evening.

YOUNG PEOPLE IN ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS

South Eastern New York's (SENY's) history of younger AA members extends back to the pioneering days of Alcoholics Anonymous. The first AA groups specifically intended for young sober alcoholics were named "thirty-five and under groups," and first appeared in the AA directory in 1947. Currently these groups are referred to as "young people's groups." The term "young" has taken on a broader meaning so as not to exclude those aged above thirty-five from attending the meetings. Today, "young" is defined as "young at heart" or "room to grow." At present, there are Young People's groups meeting every day of the week in Manhattan alone. Young People's groups are also in the other four boroughs of New York City and scattered throughout SENY. These meetings can be easily found in local AA directories.

As specific young people's groups grew in numbers and popularity, some chose to organize outside the group level and form committees directly responsible to the young people in their local area. Several committees' purpose was to plan and host conferences, conventions, while others structured themselves to be recognized as service committees instead.

The Bridge Over Troubled Water Young People's Conference (BOTWYPC) formed in the Bronx in 1984. This committee hosted conferences for seventeen consecutive years, with the exception of 1993 because of conflict with the International Conference of Young People in Alcoholics Anonymous ([ICYPAA](#)), which New York City hosted that year. Generally held in February, BOTWYPC's met at Cathedral College in Queens, and in June at SUNY Maritime College in the Bronx or the College of Mount St Vincent in Riverdale. BOTWYPC hosted a Young People's Hospitality suite at the annual SENY Convention for many years,

sometimes under ICYPAA's name and sometimes under their own. BOTWYPC was also highly involved in bringing the 36th ICYPAA to New York City in 1993.

ICYPAA has the most longevity of all Young People's Conferences. The first ICYPAA took place in Niagara Falls, NY in 1958 and did not return to New York until 1982, when it was hosted in New York City. The 25th ICYPAA of 1982, took place at the Statler Hilton Hotel, now renamed the Hotel Pennsylvania, across from Madison Square Garden. ICYPAA returned to New York City in 1993. The 36th and 52nd ICYPAA's took place at the Marriott Marquis Hotel in Times Square with an attendance close to 5,000 each time.

In addition to BOTWYPC and ICYPAA, young people in SENY hosted several mini-conferences over the years. During the 1980s, young sober alcoholics from New York City held a conference in Stony Point, NY. Rockland County Young People in Alcoholics Anonymous also hosted a conference in Stony Point, NY during this same time. The Orange County Fellowship of Love Conference also existed during the 1980s in Warwick, NY.

Another large-scale young people's committee began in the 1980s and spanned across the entire state of New York, the New York State Conference of Young People in Alcoholics Anonymous (NYSCYPAA) hosted approximately ten years of conferences. Two of these conferences unfortunately, have been remembered as rather infamous. A conference held in Long Island lost a great deal of money. SENY contributed to the host committee in order to pay the balance to the college where NYSCYPAA was renting space.

Another conference, this time held at the Crowne Plaza in White Plains, NY, suffered the fate of being shut down by the hotel on Friday night because of their failure to meet room block and banquet commitments. BOTWYPC and a new Young People's service committee, the Tri-state

Conference of Young People in Alcoholics Anonymous (TRICYCAA), raised money to reimburse SENY for the Long Island mishap, and to pay the remaining balance to the Crowne Plaza. The majority of the money owed to the Crowne Plaza was paid, and the hotel relieved NYSCYPAA of the remaining balance due to negotiations with individuals of the ICYPAA Advisory Council. These two failed conferences were quite controversial in AA all the way to the General Service Conference level. All current delegates at the time received a letter regarding the matter. It has taken many years to repair these relationships, particularly in SENY.

TRICYCAA began the process of mending these relationships for the sake of current and future Young People's committees. TRICYCAA was a Young People's service and ICYPAA bid committee formed in 2001. The committee rotated its central meeting location within the tri-state area. Tension between members who wanted to focus the committee's work on service, and those who wanted to focus on the ICYPAA bid eventually dissolved the committee.

In early 2005, the New York City Young People in Alcoholics Anonymous ([NYCYPAA](#)) committee formed. NYCYPAA's foundation is similar to TRICYCAA's in that it is a Young People's service committee and ICYPAA bid committee. NYCYPAA hosts multiple fellowship events throughout the year, participates in Share-A-Days in the New York City area, answers late-night phones for New York Intergroup every month, participates in the annual SEAT Convention, and facilitates weekly meetings in the juvenile wing at Riker's Island. It also provides a contact list for Bridging the Gap to local treatment centers, participates in Public Information and Cooperation with the Professional Community commitments, bids for ICYPAA annually, and makes regular outreach trips to young people's groups in all five boroughs. The committee attended the first panel for young people at the New York State Informational Workshop in 2006, and the first roundtable for young people at the

Northeast Regional AA Service Assembly in 2007. They held *The Grapevine/La Viña* writing workshops, and reviewed *In Our Own Words*, hosting a feedback session with the Executive Editor of *The Grapevine*. NYCYPAA also facilitated a screening of AA's videos for young people to provide feedback to the Area Delegate, and later shot video footage for submission to AA World Service's after a call for new videos for young people in AA. Later, they presented their video submission at District workshops, a SEAT Area Assembly, and at the Eastern Area Convention of Young People in Alcoholics Anonymous to encourage participation. NYCYPAA also hosted the 52nd ICYPAA in 2010.

NYCYPAA continues in service in the area enjoying a wonderful relationship with SENY. It is our hope that SENY will continue to experience an abundant and enthusiastic young people's community who wish to be a current part of, not just the future of Alcoholics Anonymous.

AA AT GROUND ZERO

A little more than two weeks after the tragic events of September 11, 2001, a new chapter in AA's long history of working with friends outside of the Fellowship began. The Red Cross, in order to serve the thousands of firefighters, police, steelworkers, medical personnel, and other volunteers who worked in the disaster zone, established its Respite Center #1 at 101 Murray Street at the corner of West Street just north of the World Trade Center in a building that houses St. John's University. The arduous, emotionally draining work of recovering the remains of those who perished and then clearing away the enormous pile of debris's went on nonstop for days and weeks, with most volunteer's working day-long shifts that gave them little time to do much else but eat and sleep. The Respite Center was intended as a place for the volunteers to do a little of that, plus seek out medical and other services that they might need to continue their work.

Included among the volunteers were a good many members of AA, some of whom were from out of town and for all of whom it was very difficult to get to an AA meeting, even if they knew the location of one. Fortunately, some of the AA's in the uniformed services let those in the Red Cross know of this need for some kind of ready access to AA, and a Red Cross intern made a request for help from the General Service Office. This resulted in a series of events, described below, which led to an AA presence, for several crucial months that year, right in the middle of what was then known as Ground Zero.

Following the Red Cross request, calls were made on September 26, 2001, by staff members at GSO to chairpersons of New York Intergroup's Institutions Committee and to SENY's Cooperation with the Professional Community Committee. These two individuals, who as it turned out, were AA friends who had done service work together over the years, were quickly in touch with one

another and with many others in AA service to begin the process of assembling the volunteers needed to bring AA to Ground Zero.

By Friday, September 28, about 15-20 volunteers gathered and were ready to go to the Red Cross headquarters in downtown Brooklyn. At this point, the extent of the AA work, or even the location for it, was unknown. Many details still needed to be worked out among the overlapping authorities who were responsible for the ongoing search and recovery work. Security clearance and ID cards would be required of all however, so on that first day the volunteers were obliged to wait many hours as the details were completed. Eventually, most of the disappointed volunteers were sent home, but around 6:00 PM that evening, a small group of three volunteers were credentialed and transported through the security lines into Respite Center #1. There they waited several more hours until finally, around 8:00 PM, Room 231 was designated as their room and became the main center for AA activity at Ground Zero for the next two and a half months. Although no formal AA meetings were held that night, the room was set up and identified for the “Friends of Bill W.,” anonymity being a major concern given the mix of uniformed and non-uniformed workers streaming through the building. A few first visitors arrived, some unbelievably, simply to bask in the thought of an AA presence there, before the volunteers were obliged to leave that night.

What followed was more than a day of uncertainty until on Sunday, September 30, another group of volunteers were brought to the Red Cross headquarters and this time nine of them were credentialed and a real presence was established in room 231 by 4:00 PM that afternoon. One of the issues that had to be resolved was under what umbrella the AA volunteers were to be grouped—religion or mental health. The latter won out (to the amusement of the AA volunteers), and for the next two months all the AA work was conducted through the mental health division of the Red Cross. At 6:00 PM, that Sunday night the first official

meeting gathered in room 231. The speaker was a police officer from the Bronx, who said he had opened the Big Book that morning and just happened to read in “Bill’s Story” the description of his going off to World War I. Appropriately, he used that familiar AA text as the focus of his talk, and so began AA at Ground Zero!

Soon a corps of upward of 70 credentialed volunteers were assembled (with a huge list of many more who were willing to serve), and a series of three six-hour shifts were established. It was decided that several volunteers would be present in the room at all times to talk with AA members in need of conversation, to hold impromptu meetings if enough people were on hand, or sometimes simply to give someone a hug. A more-or-less regular meeting met at lunchtime on most days, and literature and other AA information was kept on hand for any AA members to use. In mid-October, a fourth shift from midnight to 6:00 AM began, which continued into November. Also in October, an AA presence was established in Respite Center #3, which was south of the World Trade Center, in a damaged but still functional Marriott Hotel. There, too, a series of shifts were set up to assure that volunteers were present during the hours the room was open, with literature on hand as well. That center remained open until late November.

As mentioned, Respite Center #1 was a Saint John’s University building, and Room 231 was a one-time classroom with a large blackboard that covered one wall. There, the three volunteers who entered the room that first Friday night wrote their names and home groups, and in the weeks that followed pretty much all the volunteers and visitors who entered that room followed suit. When the AA presence ended and Room 231 closed, that blackboard was totally filled with names and home groups. Likewise, there was a logbook for volunteers and visitors to sign at both Respite Centers. Although the blackboard was not able to be preserved, and is probably in use today as another classroom tool, photos of it at the end of AA’s presence have been

preserved, and the logbooks have been turned over to the AA archives at the GSO. Other mementos, such as two large “Ground Zero Group” plaques, forged by the steel workers from metal salvaged from the twin towers site, were given to New York Intergroup and to the GSO for safekeeping.

In April 2005, the volunteers who served at Ground Zero held a reunion. There, all reminisced about what the experience meant to them, and in some cases disagreed on details as to what exactly happened and when. (Most of the material contained herein has been drawn from a transcript on that occasion.) Among the shares that night was one from a New York City firefighter who was not a volunteer for AA, but who made use of that facility as an AA member. “I have no idea,” he said, “how many sobrieties were saved by that meeting, but I’m telling you it was more than a handful, because there were a lot of guys and people right on the verge every night that we were there.” He went on to say, “Anything that we needed there [at Ground Zero], it just seemed to pop up. When your face was dirty, somebody rinsed it off. If you lost a glove, there was somebody there to give you a glove. And this [Room 231] was just a piece of the puzzle. And for me and other guys like me, it was a big piece of the puzzle, probably the biggest piece.”

AA at Ground Zero lasted from September 28 until December 7, 2001, thanks to the efforts of all the volunteers from South Eastern New York General Service and from New York Intergroup. This is another example of AA cooperation within the fellowship and with AA’s friends outside.

BRIEF HISTORY OF SENY SERVICE COMMITTEES

Service in Alcoholics Anonymous began with one struggling drunk reaching out to help another, and in doing so, finding he helped himself.

Members continue to reach out to the struggling alcoholic, one on one as in the beginning, but also in collective efforts through service committees. Beyond the usual service activities centered on local “home groups,” the service structure in AA has evolved from members simply trying to respond to public interest in the Fellowship to include several service committees with special and particular areas of interest and activity.

It is believed the first South Eastern New York (SENY) service committees were formed prior to the 1951 General Service Conference. While it is not clear what these committees were, over the years, as the groups and membership of AA have grown, so has our service committee structure. We currently have 13 standing committees; see *SENY Service Handbook* listing the names of these committees.

SENY’s [service committees](#), as well as ad hoc service committees, have a vital function within our Area’s structure and to AA. Our purpose as a General Service Area through our service committee work, is to continue to be a resource of information, communication, and shared experiences. Valuable service work extends to information and awareness being brought forth to the public, to professionals in the community, as well as the suffering alcoholic in need of help. SENY continues to do this work at national, regional, statewide, and local events such as service assemblies, workshops, conventions and forums, etcetera. We continue to do outreach to professionals in the corrections, education, medical and treatment communities when invited

to participate in health fairs, with medical societies, schools, and so on. Since the early 1990s, some service committees have undergone changes and all updates reflect the current practices at the time.

For information regarding the description of each service committee, please visit our area's website: www.aaseny.org or our [SENY Service Handbook](#).

BRIEF HISTORY OF PIONEERING GROUPS IN SENY

Among the early groups in South Eastern New York there are those like the Brooklyn Group that meets at the Friends Meeting House in Brooklyn (believed to have gotten its start in the Brooklyn Heights home of Bill and Lois W.), the St. Nicholas Group in Harlem (the first African-American group in the area), the Brewster Group which moved from location to location throughout Putnam County, and the Suffern Group in Rockland County still meet to this day.

There are several “special interest” pioneering groups throughout our area like the We Agnostics Group (established in 1986), and the Caduceus Group for medical professionals, both of which meet in New York City. There are also Gay and Lesbian AA groups in SENY who have been around for many years.

Alcoholics Anonymous is a diverse, inclusive, spiritual fellowship that our Three Legacies: Recovery, Unity and Service poignantly describe. The fundamental guiding principles of AA have been carried to the sick and suffering alcoholic since the beginning when Bill W. reached out to Dr. Bob in Akron, Ohio.

What of groups of which SENY is unaware? We hope that members may be able to provide us with historical information that has not yet been recorded or to help correct mistaken information. Please contact our Archives Committee at: archives@aaseny.org if you have any new information.

To be continued.

RESEARCHING GROUP HISTORY

AAWS/GSO offers information on how to research AA group history. Go to <http://www.aa.org>. Follow the link from the home page to “Archives and History,” click on the “+” next to “Items Available from the GSO Archives,” and then on “[Researching AA Group History](#)” for access to a service piece with suggestions and resources for preparing a group history. You may also reach GSO by phone at 212-870-3400.

Notes: _____

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