

# CAMEL COURIER

VOLUME 28 ◉ ISSUE 12 ◉ DECEMBER 2014

## ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS

### District 11 – Area 34

coverage area includes:

Antrim, Benzie,  
Grand Traverse,  
Kalkaska, & Leelanau  
counties.

### Central Office

124 N. Division Street  
Traverse City, MI 49684

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### Hot Line

(231) 946-8823

24/7 Service

### Business Line

(231) 946-6716

### Business Office Hours

Mon – Fri 10AM - 5PM

Saturday 10AM - 2PM

### Email

district11centraloffice@yahoo.com

### Website

www.district11-aa.org

### Board

Rick C., Chair

Kip M., Secretary

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### Volunteer Coordinator

Susan N.

## Survive the Holidays in Style!

*With all the weird family dynamics and abundant alcohol, it's not easy to stay sob during the holidays. Let us help you get through it.*



Jason, a handsome, 42-year-old designer, still laughs darkly when he recalls his first sober Christmas. Eleven years later he recalls all too clearly a time when December was a terrifying prospect. "It seemed like people were celebrating the holidays everywhere—the decorations, the parties, the time with family," he says. "It would just remind me of the disconnect that I had with my own family and all of the pain there."

Jason made it through those early days without alcohol. "I knew I couldn't handle drinking, but I didn't know how I was supposed to handle my emotions," he says. "The 25th happens and then five days later, you have New Years. People are still drinking around you, and it can look like they're having fun. But I just reminded myself to play the tape through and see where it was going to take me. I knew it would only lead to depression, sadness, and loneliness—nothing good."

Not everyone has the ability to fast-forward to the end of the tape, which is why, perhaps, that studies show that drinking increases almost 27% between Thanksgiving and the 2nd of January and the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) reports that two to three times more people are killed by drunk drivers during this period of time than at any other point in the year.

AA members often see the results of all this holiday overindulgence. "Meetings are always packed for the month of January and then thin out over the next few months," notes Abigail, a voice-over actress who's been sober for nearly 15 years. "I don't know if they're people coming in because it was their New Year's Resolution or if they're coming back from a holiday slip but it's impossible not to notice it."

According to Dr. Dale Archer, the medical director for psychiatric services at Lake Charles Memorial Hospital, there are solid reasons why this time is such a trigger. "The holidays are the most stressful time of year," he says. "There is so much marketing and PR going into them, this 'time of giving and time to be thankful,' and there is a lot of stress—financial obligations, family

gatherings, relatives you don't get along with. You're with people you most likely only see once a year. You have to acknowledge the difficult aspects of that and understand what the stressors will be."

For those new to sobriety, all of this can be a lot to take. Gina, a 34-year old software engineer from San Diego, admits that her first holiday home was the hardest part of staying sober during her first year. "It was really tough to go back to Florida to see my family and not be able to escape," she says. "Prior to getting sober, the way I got through the holiday visits was by always leaving the house to go meet an old friend at a local bar, where I could start the party. Even today, there is still some old shit that will come up when I'm with my family and the urge to self-medicate becomes really real. Thankfully, I have a sponsor who will tell me just to take a time out—go for a drive or to a meeting—and get away before I react."

According to Tennie McCarty, an addiction counselor and the founder and CEO of Texas-based recovery center *Shades of Hope*, people in recovery would be wise to see the holidays as the time to reach out to other alcoholics and not a time to isolate or pretend that they can go about their lives in the same old ways. "A lot of times we want to say we're too busy and then we slack off on our normal meeting schedule [during the holidays]," she says. "But the truth is we— particularly those new in sobriety—need that safety net more than ever."

McCarty knows that families can often be the toughest crowd to be around. "They're hard," she says. "We love them the most, but they can also push our buttons the most because they know where they are—after all, they installed them." She adds, "If you feel like it's too difficult to be with your family, call them and be honest. Set a date in January when you can go won't have as much emotion around it. And if you do go, remember it's all about boundaries. When in doubt, keep your mouth shut and call your sponsor or a friend."

But if you don't go home, remember that being alone and somewhat aimless during the holidays isn't a good idea. "Get a plan," McCarty advises. "Do not go home or to any party without an entrance and exit plan. You don't need to tell the whole world that you're in recovery, but if there is one person you can confide in, then at least you'll have an ally at the family dinner or holiday party."

McCarty adds, "Start your own traditions in sobriety—whether it's a matter of having a sober potluck, or going and doing something with other people after the meetings, the most important thing is that you do not isolate." For the newly sober, attending marathon meetings (meetings that happen around the clock over the holidays—ask around at your home group to see if there are any around you), going to the movies, or doing anything that gets you out of the house and around other people is far better than sitting around feeling sorry for yourself.

And if you're going to attend the round of Christmas and New Year's parties, just make sure to keep your sobriety at the forefront of your mind. "People in recovery need to walk into the setting and know that priority number one is that they stay sober—that need has to be put above everything else," says Dr. Archer. Gina discovered in the early days of her sobriety that extra vigilance was required come holiday time. "My birthday is at the beginning of December so from Thanksgiving on, it used to just be bender time," she says. "I realized that sometimes you have to leave the party early. You may not be ready to be around a bunch of people getting drunk and having a good time. But the longer I'm sober, the easier it becomes."

Dr. Archer adds that recovering addicts should keep in mind the fact that though drinking can look really good, it's probably not the type of drinking they used to do. "They need to understand that they wouldn't have needed to get sober if they could control their drinking," he says. "It's important to remember that there really is no difference between not drinking and being able to drink two glasses of wine—the fact is, they're not going to get what they want from two glasses. So why even entertain the thought?"

Yoon, a 43-year old part-time publicist and mother of two who's now five years sober, knew from the get-go that she had to stay away from risky environments during the holiday season. "Whether it was family or old friends, I knew that there was going to be this assumption at these gatherings that I still drank," she says. "There were so many people who didn't know I was sober, and so I knew if I went, I was going to want a drink and feel like I had to say no at every turn."

Back then, she used to have her husband play interference for her. "Though he really didn't understand what alcoholism was, he knew that I couldn't drink and so he would help me out," she recalls. "He would tell people I was the designated driver and work to take the attention off of me. After a while, I could take care of it on my own. But at first I needed his help."

For those who struggle with drinking friends, angry relatives, and the general malaise that can come with Christmas cheer, McCarty reminds us all that ultimately, the holidays are about being grateful and summoning up whatever gratitude is possible is almost always a mood-improver. "December 25th is just another day on the calendar," she says. "And if you want to celebrate it just by writing thank you notes to God, to your family, or to the people who helped you get sober, you can. When we're really grateful, even for the small things, we want to give it away. We want to find ways of being of service so we can start staying busy, instead of staying busy thinking."

Helping out other people is actually what gets Jason out of his holiday funk. "When I'm doing service, I'm not in my head—I'm just thinking about cleaning some glasses," he says. "Then it's not about the gifts I can't afford or what my mom just said, but about helping someone else. And that, to me, is really celebrating holidays."

**ABOUT THE AUTHOR:** *Kristen M. is a freelance writer and regular contributor The Fix who wrote previously about 'old timers in AA' and 'sober travel', among many other topics.*

## Central Office Announcements

### **SEEKING NEW OFFICE SPACE**

Central Office is looking for office space. We need a minimum of 700 square feet that is ADA accessible, located in/near downtown, has two or more rooms, as well as parking available. If you have a lead, please call Central Office and leave a message at (231) 946-6716, or email [district11centraloffice@yahoo.com](mailto:district11centraloffice@yahoo.com).

### **CENTRAL OFFICE ALWAYS IS IN NEED OF VOLUNTEERS**

Whether you can help in the OFFICE, handle AFTER HOURS CALLS, be on the 12 STEP CALL or RIDES LIST ... We Need You! For more information and/or to volunteer, call **Susan N.**, Central Office's Volunteer Coordinator, at (231) 645-1267.

### **CENTRAL OFFICE ANNUAL MEETING ANNOUNCEMENT**

The Annual Meeting of Traverse City's AA Central Office takes place on **Wednesday, January 14, 2015**, immediately following the regular Board of Directors Meeting (which begins at 5:30pm). The meeting will be held at AA Central Office located at 124 N. Division Street in Traverse City. All are welcome to attend both the regular Board Meeting and the Annual Meeting. Election of Officers and Directors will take place during the Annual Meeting. Interested parties who want to run for an Officer or Director position may do so as long as the individual has at least one year of sobriety. Please express your interest in attending by emailing Central Office at [district11centraloffice@yahoo.com](mailto:district11centraloffice@yahoo.com). Any inquiries about the Annual Meeting may also be sent via email.

## Calendar of Events - DECEMBER, 2014

**December 6, 13, 20, 27** Open Talk at Munson Hospital basement, 1105 Sixth Street, Traverse City, 8:00pm. Please contact Andrew B. at (231) 409-0966, or email: [bakera15@yahoo.com](mailto:bakera15@yahoo.com), if you would like to be a Speaker.

**December 10** Central AA Office Board Meeting, 124 N. Division Street, Traverse City at 5:30pm. All AA and Al-Anon/Alateen members are welcome. For More Information: Call (231) 946-6716.

**December 13** District 11 Meeting, Munson Hospital at the Cafeteria Dining Room #2, 1105 Sixth Street, Traverse City at 9:30am. For More Information: Email [area34.district11@gmail.com](mailto:area34.district11@gmail.com).

**December 17** Northern Michigan Corrections Committee meeting, West End Group location, 720 Elmwood in Traverse City, at 6:45pm.. For More Information: email: [nmcc2011nmia@gmail.com](mailto:nmcc2011nmia@gmail.com).

**December 21** Western Michigan Area 34 Assembly. Hosted by District 11 – Kalkaska Senior Center, 303 S. Coral Sreet in Kalkaska, at 10:30am. For More Information go to: <http://wmaa34.com/>

# 21<sup>st</sup> Annual Blizzard Weekend

January 16 – 18, 2015

**Kalkaska Senior Center, 303 S. Coral Sreet in Kalkaska.**

**Doors open at 5:30pm on Friday.**

**Speakers ♦ Panels ♦ Meetings ♦ Fellowship**

**For More Information –**

**Call Don at (517) 351-0917, or email at [Donwalter2@att.net](mailto:Donwalter2@att.net)**

## Northern Michigan Corrections Committee (NMCC)

*Carrying the AA Message into Jails and Corrections Facilities*



For information on volunteering to help with meetings or for donations towards purchasing literature, please contact: Dan S. @ 231-633-0860, Rick E. @ 231-330-1091, or email [nmcc2011nmia@gmail.com](mailto:nmcc2011nmia@gmail.com),

or mail donations to: Northern Michigan Corrections Committee,

PO Box 5712, Traverse City, MI 49696



NMCC's next meeting will take place on Wednesday, December 17 at 6:45pm, at West End Group, 720 Elmwood in Traverse City.

♦ All interested parties are welcome to attend ♦

### Open Speaker Meetings at Munson Hospital Basement Saturdays (8:00pm)

#### Upcoming Speakers

- December 6 **Larry H.** from Marion  
December 13 **Lisa M.** from Traverse City  
December 20 **Heather G.** from Traverse City  
December 27 OPEN  
January 3 **Ted S.** from Houghton Lake  
January 10 **Tom G.** from TC Group  
January 17 **George A.** from Traverse City  
January 24 **Doug B.** from Traverse City  
January 31 **Jodie S.** from TC Group

**\*\* Speakers Subject to Change \*\***

If you're interested in talking at this  
Open Speaker Meeting, please contact

**Andrew B.** at (231) 409-0966, or email:  
[bakera15@yahoo.com](mailto:bakera15@yahoo.com).



### AL-ANON/ALATEEN

#### District 39

coverage area includes:

Antrim, Benzie,  
Grand Traverse,  
Kalkaska, Leelanau  
& Manistee counties.

#### Al-Anon/Alateen

#### Family Groups - D39

PO Box 5132  
Traverse City, MI 49696



#### Information Line

(231) 938-7399

Response within 24 Hours

#### Website

[www.alanon-d39.org](http://www.alanon-d39.org)



## **Atheists and agnostics in A.A. will never give up on our fellowship**

**By Eric C. from Lake Leelanau, Mich.**

In October of this year, a federal court ordered the State of California and a treatment center working under contract for the state to award nearly \$3 million to a man who declined to participate in a 12-step recovery program because of its religious nature.

The man had been imprisoned for his refusal to engage in activities such as prayer that were required by the 12-step treatment center. The federal court determined that the man's religious freedom rights under the First Amendment had been violated. Similar cases have been springing up all over the U.S. in recent years.

The court rulings may eventually affect the ability of courts throughout the U.S. to sentence people to attend A.A. meetings and may inhibit the flow of newcomers into the fellowship. This is not yet a matter of settled law; and Michigan is not located within the federal district where the most definitive court ruling was recently made.

A.A.'s General Service Office in New York is acutely aware of the recent court rulings, according to its manager, Phyllis H. At the first-ever We Agnostics and Freethinkers International A.A. Convention held last month in Santa Monica, Calif., Phyllis acknowledged that several recent court decisions around the U.S. have found that A.A. is in fact "religious" and not simply "spiritual" as A.A. has long asserted.

Those determinations were based primarily on language contained in the Big Book and other A.A. literature as well as the practices of many A.A. groups around the U.S. and treatment centers offering 12-step recovery programs.

"We don't want to do anything that makes people think that A.A. is a religion," Phyllis said. She added that the GSO and its attorneys were paying close attention to the court cases, but no official A.A. action is contemplated because the court cases are an "outside issue" and "the A.A. name ought never be drawn into public controversy," according to our 10th Tradition.

You may have seen last month's We Agnostics and Freethinkers International A.A. Convention listed in the *A.A. Grapevine's* official calendar of A.A. events or even seen announcements about it right here in the *Camel Courier*.

I had the honor and privilege of joining about 300 fellow A.A. members from all over the world at the convention, Nov. 6-8. A.A. members from as far away as Australia, Turkey, France and Spain attended along with contingents of recovering drunks from Canada and roughly half of the 50 United States, including this alcoholic from Michigan.

With 31 years of continuous sobriety in A.A., I felt like a newcomer among some of the convention attendees who had years and even decades longer in sobriety than I do. Most significant, however, was the fact that almost none of the A.A. members who attended the convention believe in God. That includes me, of course.

Atheists, agnostics, freethinkers, secular humanists – no matter how they label themselves – these men and women are living proof that A.A. can and does work for any alcoholic who meets the only requirement for membership in A.A., a desire to stop drinking.

Like all other A.A. conventions, this one featured a variety of speakers, panels, workshops and discussion meetings. Panel topics ranged from spirituality to relapse, to varying interpretations of the 12 suggested steps. One panel consisted of a report from four atheist/agnostic members of A.A. who had served as official delegates to A.A.'s General Service Conference. Workshops focused on issues ranging from A.A. literature to meditation, to suggestions about how to start "secular" A.A. meetings and groups at the local level.

In addition, A.A. meetings throughout the convention were non-stop. The meetings were hosted by various We Agnostics A.A. groups from around the world and were conducted just as they would be at home to demonstrate the meetings' various formats. Discussions often focused on issues the We Agnostics groups faced in dealing with other A.A. groups and their local A.A. service structure.

With 33 years of sobriety, Phyllis H. was the convention's honorary speaker. The presence and participation of the manager of A.A.'s General Service Office at the convention underscored the legitimacy and support the We Agnostics movement has within A.A. as a whole. Quoting A.A. co-founder Bill W., Phyllis credited atheists and agnostics for "widening the gateway of recovery for all regardless of their beliefs or lack of belief."

A keynote speaker at the convention was considered a controversial choice by many of the atheists and agnostics present. An ordained Episcopal minister, the Very Reverend Ward Ewing for nine years served as a Class A (non-alcoholic) Trustee with A.A.'s General Service Office and is a Chairman Emeritus of A.A.'s General Service Board.

The Rev. Ewing did not disappoint.

"I am strongly opposed to religion creeping into A.A.," Ewing said. "There is only one criterion for membership in A.A. and we have to keep these doors open wide."

Ewing acknowledged that certain parts of A.A. literature are at best condescending towards atheists and agnostics if not downright disparaging of them. These include Dr. Bob's story in the Big Book in which Bob says he feels "sorry" for atheists and agnostics whose "intellectual pride" prevents them from accepting God. Of course, Dr. Bob was sober only a few years when he wrote those words compared to today's atheists and agnostics in A.A., many of whom have been happily sober more than 10 times longer than Dr. Bob was.

In addition, Chapter Four of the Big Book, "We Agnostics" is, ironically, quite offensive to many atheists and agnostics. For example, in the so-called "chapter to the agnostic" Bill W. flatly asserts that God "has come to all who have honestly sought Him."

However, the experiences of many thousands of honest, open-minded and willing-to-believe atheists and agnostics in A.A. since 1939 have proven that Bill's assertion is simply false.

"I have never liked Chapter Four," the Rev. Ewing declared.

Ewing's declaration was met with relieved laughter and thunderous applause from some 300 atheist and agnostic alcoholics listening intently to his address.

"This is the first gathering of A.A. I have ever attended where I felt I could openly admit that; and it feels great!" Ewing added.

During a business meeting at the convention, a board of directors and officers were elected to form a permanent, non-profit organization which will fund and administer biennial conventions of atheists and agnostics in A.A. It was decided that the title of the organization should include the word "atheist," so the new name of the organization is the "We Agnostics, Atheists and Freethinkers International A.A. Convention."

A second biennial convention is already being planned for 2016 in Austin, Texas.

## **Questions with answers from an atheist in A.A.**

**By Eric C. from Lake Leelanau, Mich.**

Question: How could anyone possibly work the 12 steps of A.A. without believing in a God of their own understanding?

Answer: Atheists and agnostics in A.A. work the 12 suggested steps in exactly the same manner as everybody else: imperfectly and to the best of their ability and understanding. As useful as the steps may be, the steps are only a part of what makes A.A. so great. Alcoholics Anonymous is more than what's contained in a 75 year-old book. And A.A. is not really a "program" even though we do have a program of 12 suggested steps. In fact, Alcoholics Anonymous is a fellowship of men and women who share their experience, strength and hope with each other. The human spirit evident in the fellowship of A.A. is far more powerful than any individual, and there's nothing supernatural about that kind of higher power. There is compelling and verifiable evidence that human power does indeed relieve our alcoholism. Every one of the people we see around us at the tables of A.A. is human. We human beings help each other stay sober whether or not we believe in God. The "we" part of A.A. is likely the most powerful asset we have.

Question: As it states in Chapter 4 of our Big Book: “Who are you to say there is no God?”

Answer: The question itself is misleading. Agnostics don’t claim to know that God does not exist; they simply don’t have the knowledge or faith that God does exist. Atheists or “non-theists” are not much different. With a few exceptions, even the most militant atheists these days do not assert “there is no God.” That’s because no one can prove that God does not exist just as no one can prove definitively that pink unicorns don’t exist. Based on the available evidence, the idea that there is no God seems far more plausible to an atheist than the idea that there’s an invisible supernatural being who intervenes in individual human lives. The descriptions of what atheists and agnostics supposedly think in most A.A. literature is just plain erroneous.

Question: If you don’t believe in God, then why don’t you just go out and do some more “research” in the form of more drinking until you’re hopeless enough to finally get down on your knees and ask God for help?

Answer: In fact, “out-of-the-closet” agnostics and atheists in A.A. get this question a lot. One is hard pressed to conceive of a more cruel, mean-spirited and destructive proposition that is more antithetical to our 3<sup>rd</sup> tradition. The “get God or die!” approach to recovery among some A.A. groups and individuals has doubtless resulted in more than a few deaths and has likely driven away far more newcomers than it has helped. No, we’re not going to go out and drink so we can get that “Gift Of Desperation” (G.O.D.), thank you. We’ll just keep coming back and hope you will too. It’s also worth pointing out that many atheists and agnostics in A.A. were pretty hopeless when they got here and have already spent plenty of time on their knees asking for things like knowledge of God’s will for them and the power to carry it out – only to realize they were just talking to themselves.

Question: Why do you feel you need special, separate “We Agnostics” meetings of A.A.?

Answer: We Agnostics meetings are held for the same reason A.A. holds women’s meetings, men’s meetings, Native American meetings, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual & Transgender (LGBT) meetings, and many other kinds of “special purpose” meetings. Anyone with a desire to stop drinking is welcome to attend a closed We Agnostics meeting of A.A. The specific purpose of a We Agnostics meeting is outlined in a statement frequently read aloud at such meetings: “to maintain a tradition of free expression” when it comes to matters of spiritual belief. Many of us have found that when we share our experience, strength and hope as atheists and agnostics with rigorous honesty at certain A.A. meetings, we are sometimes subjected to rebuttal and open hostility before, during and after the meetings. We Agnostics meetings are intended to be a safe place where anyone can be assured they can “find sobriety in A.A. without having to accept anyone else’s beliefs or having to deny their own.”

Question: If you don’t like what some A.A. literature says about atheists and agnostics and if you don’t believe in some important parts of our program of recovery, why don’t you just go out and start your own separate Godless recovery program?

Answer: Every one of us has a desire to stop drinking which allows us full and unqualified membership in Alcoholics Anonymous and every right to establish new A.A. meetings and form our own autonomous A.A. groups. The founders of A.A. were humble enough to write “we realize we know only a little,” and “our book is meant to be suggestive only,” and that more would be revealed as time went on. Besides, you can find an A.A. meeting practically anywhere you go – something that other recovery programs just don’t have. Despite its flaws, A.A. works for us. We will never leave A.A. or give up on it.

Question: Why do you want to change A.A.?

Answer: We recognize that customs and habits change slowly in A.A. and we may only be able to change ourselves. A.A. is changing far more slowly than the broader society of which it is a part. In the U.S., for example, our increasingly diverse population has been growing steadily, while membership in A.A. plateaued at about 2 million members in the early 1990’s, according to A.A.’s own survey data. Other recent studies have shown that when it comes to religious affiliation, the fastest growing category in the U.S. is “none.” Today, fully one third of Americans under the age of 30 say they have no religion. If they ever walk through the doors of A.A., they are probably happy to hear that “A.A. is not allied with any sect or denomination.” Shortly thereafter, however, they’ll likely hear a ritual recitation of “How it Works” that refers to a very specific kind of God no fewer than six times. At the end of the meeting, they may then be asked to join in reciting verses from the Holy Scripture of the Christian religion, the Lord’s Prayer. Many of them note the obvious contradiction, walk out and never come back.

# **There is only one We Agnostics A.A. meeting in the Traverse City area...so far**

**By Eric C. from Lake Leelanau, Mich.**

The one We Agnostics meeting of A.A. currently held within A.A. District 11 in Michigan is conducted every Friday at 7 p.m. at 720 S. Elmwood Street in Traverse City on the northwest corner of Eleventh Street in the former "All Faiths" chapel adjoining the Women's Resource Center. Entering the main door, bear right into the north end of the building and into the small room on the left. The We Agnostics meeting is part of the West End Group which offers a variety of A.A. meetings throughout the week in the same building.

Anyone with a desire to stop drinking is welcome to attend the meeting.

The format of the local We Agnostics meeting is almost identical to those of many other We Agnostics A.A. meetings around the world. The meeting begins with a moment of silence followed by the reading of A.A.'s official "Closed Meeting" statement. That is followed by the reading of the A.A. Preamble.

An additional statement read by the chair of the meeting is identical to a statement that was adopted by several We Agnostics groups in New York City more than 30 years ago and now read at many other We Agnostics meetings around the world. Here is the statement: "This meeting of Alcoholics Anonymous attempts to maintain a tradition of free expression and conduct a meeting where alcoholics may feel free to express any doubts or disbeliefs they may have and to share their own personal form of spiritual experience, their search for it, or their rejection of it. We do not endorse or oppose any form of religion, agnosticism or atheism. Our only wish is to assure suffering alcoholics that they can find sobriety in A.A. without having to accept anyone else's beliefs or having to deny their own."

The chair then asks if anyone is present for their first-ever A.A. meeting which, if so, usually results in the selection of Step One as a discussion topic. The chair then asks for any visitors, anniversaries, or A.A. related announcements.

Then, a volunteer reads a portion of Chapter 3 from the Big Book of Alcoholics Anonymous, "More About Alcoholism." After that, the 7<sup>th</sup> tradition basket is passed.

The chair then asks for topic suggestions. If none are forthcoming, topics may come from any A.A. General Service Conference-approved literature or a list of topics contained in the conference-approved pamphlet "The A.A. Group." Cross-talk is explicitly discouraged at the meeting, and speaking more than once is allowed only if everyone else has had an opportunity to share.

The meeting ends after one hour, around 8 p.m. The meeting then closes with the only recitation specifically named in the conference-approved pamphlet "The A.A. Group" as an acceptable way to close an A.A. meeting: the A.A. Responsibility Declaration. The chair sometimes starts by saying: "Who is responsible?" Then, with hands joined, those in attendance say: "I am responsible. When anyone, anywhere reaches out for help, I want the hand of A.A. always to be there. And for that: I am responsible."

## **Atheists and agnostics in A.A. can be found in abundance online**

**By Eric C. from Lake Leelanau, Mich.**

At the We Agnostics and Freethinkers International A.A. Convention in Santa Monica, California last month, one of the panel discussions was titled "Web Servants" during which attendees heard from the administrators of several popular web sites devoted to atheists and agnostics in A.A.

Perhaps the best known and most popular website, [AAAgnostica.org](http://AAAgnostica.org), is based in Toronto, Ontario, Canada, administered by Roger C. and Joe C. of Toronto's "Beyond Belief" A.A. group. A wealth of information about atheists and agnostics in A.A. can be found on the site, and you can sign up for a weekly email.

Following the convention in Santa Monica, the organizing group, We Agnostics, Atheists and Freethinkers, has set up a new website. It's at [www.waافت.org](http://www.waافت.org).

Another useful site set up for the purpose of listing the growing number of atheist and agnostic A.A. meetings around the world is based in New York. Deirdre S., who also attended the convention, administers the site. It's [agnosticaanyc.org](http://agnosticaanyc.org).

John S. of Kansas City, Missouri has also set up a website that contains a lot of useful information and links. Visit [weagnosticsaa.com](http://weagnosticsaa.com).

Some of the longest-running A.A. meetings for atheists and agnostics are in the Chicago area where “QuadA” (A.A. for Atheists and Agnostics) groups have been meeting since 1975. Visit [quadachicago.org](http://quadachicago.org).

There are also a number of online A.A. discussion groups that cater to atheists and agnostics. These groups are registered with the A.A. General Service Office in New York. They are facilitated through Google Groups. One of the most popular is called A.A. Atheists and Agnostics (AAAA).

Facebook also hosts a number of sites dedicated to atheists and agnostics in A.A. including “Agnostics and Atheists in A.A.” as well as “Sober Atheist.”

**About the Author:** *Eric C., who has 31 years of sobriety in A.A., resides in Lake Leelanau with his wife, Gail C., who has 24 years of sobriety in A.A. They have two teenage children. Eric has worked as a local newspaper reporter since 1998 following a 25 year career in the U.S. Marine Corps as a combat correspondent and a public affairs officer. He is a veteran of Vietnam, the Persian Gulf War and Somalia.*

## Central Office Always Needs Volunteers

Whether you can help — in the OFFICE, handle  
AFTER HOURS CALLS,  
be on the 12 STEP CALL or RIDES LIST ...

**PLEASE WE NEED YOU!!!**

For More Information,  
call **Susan N.**, Central Office's Volunteer Coordinator,  
at (231) 645-1267.

# THANK YOU

To all the **NOVEMBER 2014**  
Central Office Volunteers:

Andrea	Joseph	Rick
Charlie	Josh	Ruthann
Daniel	Ken	Susan N.
Edwina	Kip	Susan V.
Eleanor	Linda	Tamara
Frank	Lisa	Victor
Jim R.		

**RECOVERY ★ UNITY ★ SERVICE**

## Central Office NOVEMBER 2014 CALL LOG

\* **103** Females & **92** Males contacted Central Office  
\* **62** by phone, **113** walk-ins & **7** after hours calls

### INQUIRING ABOUT:

- \* **29** Conference Approved Literature
- \* **12** Non-Conference Literature
- \* **14** Al-Anon Literature
- \* **03** Pamphlets
- \* **36** Gift Items
- \* **02** Special Items
- \* **29** AA Meetings in District 11
- \* **04** AA Meetings in Other Areas
- \* **03** Al-Anon Meetings
- \* **00** Other Alcoholism Resources
- \* **00** Other 12 Step Programs
- \* **03** Ride to Meeting
- \* **01** 12 Step Call
- \* **04** Drinking Problem—Self
- \* **01** Drinking Problem—Family
- \* **01** Drinking Problem—Other
- \* **41** Other



# Central Office Treasurers Report of OCTOBER 2014

<b>Checking Account Balance .....</b>	<b>\$ 2,215.50</b>
<b>Total Deposits .....</b>	<b>\$ 4,680.96</b>
<b>Before October Expenses .....</b>	<b>\$ 6,896.46</b>
<b>Expenditures In October 2014</b>	
Rent	-735.00
Volunteer Coordinator	-460.00
Phone/Internet	-173.88
Office Supplies	-67.61
Postage	-48.76
Literature Purchased	-2,137.48
Sales Tax Paid to State	-241.32
Bank Fees	-25.27
<b>Total Expenses for October</b>	<b>\$ -3,862.32</b>



<b>Checking Account Balance October 2014</b>	
CD Saving	\$514.45
CD Saving	\$545.61
Sales for October (before Sales Tax)	\$3,625.80
Donations to Central Office	\$887.80
Savings Account Balance	\$1,755.49
<b>Remaining Balance</b>	<b>\$7,329.15</b>

**Contributions Received in October**  
 West End Group, Clear Minds AA Group,  
 Leroy AA Group, Carp River Group, Grayling AA Group,  
 Eden Friday Noon Group, Unity Step 12x12 Group,  
 Copemish AA Group, Downtown Group, Long Lake AFG

✦ Report compiled by Ken W. ✦

## DISTRICT 11 MEETING MINUTES November 8 , 2014

The meeting opened at the Munson Hospital Cafeteria Dining Room #2 at 9:37 A.M. with the Serenity Prayer, followed by the opening readings and roll call:

1. District 11 Statement of Purpose – Deanna D.
2. 11th Tradition – Jodie S.
3. 11th Concept – Paul J.
4. Declaration of Unity – Paul J.
5. Roll Call – 9 voting members

### **OFFICER REPORTS**

**Secretary** – Deanna D. October 2014 minutes were read and accepted as corrected.

**Treasurer** – Jodie S. November 2014 treasury report was read and accepted.

October 31, 2014 balance \$2,572.86. Contributions=\$203.95 from: District 11 October Meeting, West End Group, Downtown Group and Carp River Group. Expenditures=\$62.00 for USPS PO Box for 2015, plus an additional \$39.00=Service Workshop held on September 20, 2014. Prudent reserve=\$600.19. Northwestern Bank has transitioned to Chemical Bank as of November 10, 2014. Please send all District 11 contributions to PO Box 1231, Traverse City, MI 49685.

**Chair** – Paul R. He has attended some early A.M. and late P.M. AA meetings to get a feel for attendance levels. He is finding that more people attend late afternoon meetings, but 8:00 A.M. meetings are getting more popular. Folks tend to lean heavier on certain meetings. QUESTION: Is there a way to determine what time is more popular with the AA community? He would to find out the capabilities of how to inject different meeting times to be of more use to the newcomer.

### **COMMITTEE REPORTS**

**PI/CPC Committee**. Phil S. He has contacted two new schools in Leelanau county who are interested in having him come in and give presentations. At present, he is waiting for those schools to provide him with dates and times.

**Corrections Committee**. Jerry H. Not present, nothing to report.

**Grapevine**. Rick T. Not present, nothing to report.

**Treatment Facilities**. Brian J. Not present, nothing to report.

**Special Needs**. Sharon M. Not present, nothing to report.

**Central Office Liaison Report**. Phil S. A new property is being investigated as a possible new office space for the Central Office. A reminder that the Central Office Board Elections are coming up in January 2015. Please consider a run if you are interested in the business doings of our Central Office.

## DCM REPORTS

**Antrim.** Roger B. Antrim county has two (2) new GSR's. Art H. from Elk Rapids, Chain O'Lakes Group, Sunday at 2:00 PM and Wednesday at 8:00 PM. Also, Judi J. from Eastport, Tuesday morning meeting. At present, Roger has received no feedback from other groups. He plans on visiting the Bellaire area this month. The Chain O'Lakes Group had group conscience on October 26th, 2014 and elected their new GSR and Grapevine representative. They also discussed an improved format for meetings and schedules. An additional meeting is planned on December 14th, 2014 to finalize said format and to hold elections for a new chairperson, secretary and treasurer. Roger is seeking input on setting aside one evening a week for a Traditions meeting.

**Benzie.** Open position, no report.

**Grand Traverse.** Paul R.

**Kalkaska.** Mel H. The county is still in need of women to host jail meetings. Our friends from the Greater Lansing Area are planning their 21st Annual "Blizzard Weekend," January 16-18, 2015. See attached flyer.

**Leelanau.** Ted K. He forgot to bring the list of contributions made to the GSO. He will try again next month. One group is looking to relocate so it is a closer drive for folks. A dinner and open talk is planned for December 7, 2014 at the Empire United Methodist Church; dinner from 7:00-8:00 P.M. followed by an open talk from 8:00-9:00 P.M.

**AREA 34.** Mel H. attended the Area 34 Assembly in October. They had the scheduled Area 34 inventory, and also voted unanimously to omit the June and December Area 34 Assembly meetings from the schedule for 2015. The next Area 34 Assembly will be Sunday, November 16, 2014 in Manistee, MI at the AKI Center.

## GROUP INFORMATION/ANNOUNCEMENTS/CONCERNS.

Paul J. - Tammy G. is the new GSR for the Jackpine Savage Group. The Contact List has been updated to reflect Tammy's contact information. Also, there is a small group of people who are in the process of getting a new First Edition Big Book Study meeting at The Rock in Kingsley. The new meeting will begin on January 8, 2015 at 8:00 P.M. The group will further discuss the new meeting at the next group conscience on Tuesday, December 2, 2014 at the Kingsley Gun Club.

Jodie S. - She suggested a weekly meeting to discuss the District 11's purpose as service group, and to get a better understanding of the AA concepts. A brief discussion followed. It is a good idea, but meeting weekly is a bit much. There was not much interest around the table in pursuing a meeting at this time.

Mark S. - The TC Group is hosting a Thanksgiving weekend Alka-thon (all meetings are Open). It will start on Thursday, November 27, 2014 at Noon, ending on Sunday, November 30, 2014 at Noon. Thanksgiving dinner will be available from 1:00 - 3:00 P.M. on Thanksgiving Day. Please sign up to bring a dish to pass. Meetings, games, fun and fellowship!

## OLD BUSINESS.

None

## NEW BUSINESS.

Paul R. - We are reaching end of year 2014. As a district, we still have unused travel funds in our account. Should the group send those funds to the GSO? A discussion followed. It was suggested that the district take its own inventory, similar to what Area 34 does annually, and to possibly use the AA pyramid structure to determine the spread of donations.

QUESTION: What is Northern Intra-Area? A discussion followed. It is a way for the Northern districts to come together in an effort to get Northern Michigan involved in Area 34. It is funded by group donations. Paul J. read the Northern Intra-Area Statement of Purpose. Should District 11 set a date to take its inventory? **MOTION:** Ted K. motions to put together an inventory agenda at the December 2014 District 11 meeting. A brief discussion followed. It was suggested that the agenda planning be postponed until January 2015 due to District 11 hosting the Area 34 Assembly in December. **AMENDED MOTION:** Ted K. amends motion to put together an inventory agenda at the January 2015 District 11 meeting, to be taken at the February 2015 District 11 meeting. Jodie S. seconds the amended motion. Motion passes unanimously.

Paul J. - He volunteered to head up the host committee for the December 21, 2014 Area 34 Assembly Meeting at the Kalkaska Senior Center from 10:30 AM - 3:00 PM. He will inquire as to the Area 34 agenda for December. A discussion followed. What shall we serve for lunch. Chili, cold cuts, sloppy joes? The Area provides the District host a \$300.00 budget to cover expenses. No final determination; tabled until December's meeting.

The meeting closed at 11:05 A.M. with the Lord's Prayer. Next meeting will be held on Saturday, December 13, 2014, at 9:30 AM. at the Munson Hospital Cafeteria Dining Room #2, Traverse City, MI.

Yours in love and service, Deanna D., District 11 Secretary



## Central Office Board Meeting Minutes of November 12, 2014

(Minutes to be approved at the December 10<sup>th</sup> Board Meeting)

**Board Members Present:** Rick C. (Chair) Victor (Literature Purchaser and Assistant Treasurer), Mike (Newsletter Editor), Phil, Dale, Sue V. and Kip M. (Secretary). Others present: Gary V., Susan N. (Volunteer Coordinator).

**Secretary's Report:** Kip read the minutes from the October meeting. Phil moved to accept the minutes as read. Motion carried unanimously

**Treasurer's Report:** Victor read the Treasurer's report. Rick asked for questions. While report was being presented an error was found. Report will be resubmitted at the December meeting.

**Webmaster's Report:** Not present.

**Camel Courier Report:** Mike did not receive much feedback from the October issue. Eric from the West End "We Agnostics Meeting" attended the We Agnostics convention in October and will be presenting an article about the convention.

**Literature Report:** Victor reported that sales were pretty good from the TC Fall Round Up, (\$520.00) considering most of the attendees were local and have Central Office close by when needing literature.

**Volunteer Coordinator's Report:** There are still technical problems with the telephone system. Calls are not being forwarded like they need to. Synergy (our phone carrier has been contacted). Rick C. asked Susan to keep a log as to what she does daily as the Volunteer Coordinator.

Susan reported that Central Office definitely could use more volunteers.

**Old Business:** Progress on finding a new location for Central Office: Rick has found space for lease on 12<sup>th</sup> street that may fit our needs. He will pursue further.

**New Business:** Phil moved that the board place a cap on the amount the purchaser can spend on office supplies without board approval at \$150.00. Motion carried unanimously.

Motion made by Victor to close the meeting. Motion carried.

## Additional Articles of Interest

***Who was the First Woman in Alcoholics Anonymous, and Why Do We Care?*** - Historians are often asked factual questions to which we don't know the answer, questions which, moreover, we are often predisposed against answering in the way the interlocutor expects and desires. (. . . to continue reading, go to: <http://pointsadhsblog.wordpress.com/2011/05/13/who-was-the-first-woman-in-alcoholics-anonymous-and-why-do-we-care/>

***Finding Happiness in Recovery*** - For many years now, I have been presenting a lecture to the Betty Ford Center inpatient community on "Finding Happiness in Recovery." During that time, the lecture has evolved and developed into a message of hope. Like all of us here at the Hazelden Betty Ford Foundation, I am fortunate to have the opportunity to touch other peoples' lives and show them that there is a better way to live through being clean and sober. (. . . to continue reading, go to: <http://www.hazelden.org/web/public/finding-happiness-in-recovery.page>

### About the *Camel Courier*

Published monthly, the **Camel Courier** is free to anyone. If you would like to be added to the email list, simply send a request to Mike H: [mthotis@aol.com](mailto:mthotis@aol.com)

and enter "**Camel Courier**" in the Subject Line.

Back issues can be found online at

**[www.district11-aa.org](http://www.district11-aa.org)**.

Hard copies can be picked up at Central Office.

Articles printed in the **Camel Courier** are the opinions expressed by individuals and not necessarily those of Central Office, its Board of Directors, or AA as a whole.

If you have an AA announcement, a meeting change, an upcoming AA event, or a story to tell ...  
please submit via snail mail to:

**Camel Courier**, c/o Central Office

124 N. Division Street,

Traverse City, MI 49684

or email to Mike H.: [mthotis@aol.com](mailto:mthotis@aol.com)