

Monthly Reprieve

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RACINE AREA CENTRAL OFFICE'S MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

3701 Durand Avenue #225 Racine, WI 53403 (262) 554-6611 Hotline: (262) 554-7788 raconewsletter@gmail.com

Store is open Monday through Friday from 9:00 am—5:00 pm. Saturdays 9:00 am—2:00 pm; Closed Sundays

A Complete Picture by Katie M.

"Before coming to AA, I was so miserable and lost, but now that I have AA, everything is always so wonderful. I have friends, a job, a car and I'm always so happy. You too can have everything your heart desires if you do these steps." I was recently in a first step meeting and it felt like a diet commercial. Everyone seemed to be selling something more than a life that doesn't need a drink anymore. And though I knew the horrors we faced prior to working these steps, there seemed to be a falseness in what life is like trying to practice these principles in all of our affairs when we tell newcomers how good life is when you're sober. It's just not a complete picture.

If you can't already tell, I have a really bad attitude these days. I'm just shy of seven years sober and there are circumstances at work that I just don't know how to face day after day. What's even harder is it bleeds into every part of my life, dragging my energy and perspective down with it. I have done a few inventories on

this alone and I see my selfishness and fear. I am beyond self consumed. Though I can see that and acknowledge my part, I still can't talk myself into feeling differently.

It hasn't always been like this. Before all of these circumstances, life felt good. Not everything was going the way I'd planned it, but it was still all okay. I was content and confident I had things to contribute. And then



suddenly it wasn't okay.

To have faith in a higher power seems too abstract in times like these, but taking suggestions grounds me and gives me direction on what to

do. As I work with my sponsor, I'm reminded that sometimes things just get to suck. This is not what I want to hear.

I drank because it changed the way I feel. That is all I've ever wanted. I want to feel good all of the time. I'm just as they describe in the book; grandiose and immature. But faced with self knowledge, I still can't be a different. I also have to say that after doing these suggestions, it doesn't shield me permanently from selfishness. The suggestions I speak of aren't just the ones I did when I first came in or even last month. It's the current suggestions I've been getting and taking that haven't rid me of my selfishness. It still feels awful.

I'm reminded of Step Eleven in the 12 and 12. "...out of every season of grief or suffering, when the hand of God seemed heavy or even unjust, new lessons for living were learned, *A Complete Picture (continued from page 1)*

Third Tradition

"The only requirement for membership is a desire to stop drinking"



March Focus

Third Step Prayer

"God, I offer myself to thee, to build with me and do with me as though wilt. Relieve me of the bondage of self, that I may better do Thy will. Take away my difficulties, that victory over them may bear witness to those I would help of Thy power, Thy love, and Thy way of life. May I do Thy will always" Amen"

Third Step

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

***Third Step Hope -
Deciding to Turn My Will and Life Over to G.O.D.***
By: *Rachelle V.*

After 2 1/2 years of sobriety, I reached an emotional bottom. I had not found a spiritual experience sufficient to recover from alcoholism.

I was in constant torment in my mind, blaming my husband for not helping me with my newborn and the household chores and feeling generally negative about life. All I did was cry and complain about my problems to anyone who would listen. I held most meetings hostage with my litany of woes.

I was attending 5 to 7 meetings a week, so I figured I was working a good program. I felt so sorry for myself that I decided maybe I should just start drinking again because I was just as miserable in sobriety as I had been drinking. In one last attempt to give this 12 step program a chance, I hit as many meetings as I could, even going back to attending Alanon meetings, in the hope of encountering a ray of hope.

In attending the Wednesday night Alanon meeting, which incidentally was the first meeting I had attended 5 years prior, when I had first come to Alanon looking for help with my co-dependency, I found my ray of hope. Her name was Carol. She talked in a very simple and direct way about the power of the steps and how they had changed her life. She was a teacher and I related to her because I was a teacher and I responded very well to the intellectual approach. I remember asking her very directly in the middle of the meeting, "Are you telling me in no uncertain terms that these steps have given you a spiritual experi-

ence and a completely new way of life?" She looked me right in the eye and confirmed that right now she had complete peace and could be completely in this moment. She could be in this meeting right now and not think about anything else but being present in this meeting. I so envied that! Even though I was in that meeting I was thinking of all of the chaos outside of that meeting that was waiting to swallow me up. I got her number and decided to "interview her" to be my next sponsor.

Over latte's at Wilson's Coffee shop, and notebook in hand, I asked her if she was to sponsor me, precisely how she would do it and what she would require of me. She explained the commitment that she would make to me and that she would expect in return.

She laid down the terms and I agreed as I was desperate to do something, anything to get well. I had a new baby girl and did not want to ever put her in danger from my alcoholism. I had a marriage I desperately wanted to end or save. I really didn't know what to do anymore. All I knew was that I had reached the jumping off place in sobriety. I couldn't go on, yet, I couldn't go back. My life and sobriety were on the line and I was quite literally putting my life into the hands of this woman.

I would say that this experience of making a decision to work with Carol was Step 3 in action for me. I decided to put my life into someone else's care. I committed to work the rest of the steps with her, all the way through Step 12, so help me God! I was going to give

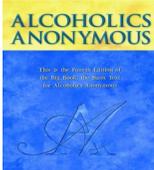
this program my all and find out if it really worked.

I aligned my will with her will for me. I followed directions. I attended the meetings she required of me. I met with her weekly. I completed the assignments. I put more effort into my step work with her and less into attending meetings.

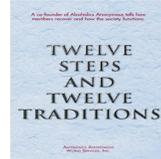
I stopped trying to solve my problems by talking about them. I didn't make any decisions unless I ran them past her. She gave me G.O.D. - Good Orderly Direction. I finally decided that I had a better chance of someone other than me running my life. It felt good to know that I did not have to make the decisions anymore! I put my trust in her and decided that if things didn't work out, I could blame her. But, my life (thoughts and emotions) got better! I let a complete stranger run my life and I was getting better? Wow. Yes, I was that desperate. Desperate enough to make a decision to commit my life into someone else's hands.

This third step experience has enabled me to have many more third step experiences. Allowing another human in and having it turn out wonderfully has allowed me to let God in. Who knows what will happen now if I now align my will more perfectly with my Creator?!





Our Stories



A Life Worth Living by: Lee H.

The warning signs were there. And as the years rolled by, I knew I was getting older and not getting any better.

My alcoholic story begins in the summer of 1966 in the basement bar of a school friend's parents house. It was there that I first drank with the purpose of getting drunk. From that day forward, for the next 37 years, I drank as often as I could, at first letting little get in the way of it, and toward the end letting absolutely nothing get in the way.

My first drunk, I imagine, was like every other alcoholic's. It was almost magical - I loved it! Alcohol for me was the missing piece of the puzzle -- the miraculous elixir. It "evened the playing field", per say - made up for shortcomings. It connected the dots! I had cracked the code! In an instant, I wasn't shy or awkward anymore! I was funny, crazy, outgoing and invincible.

This set of falsehoods would cloud my judgment, hurt me, and all who cared about me for decades. There were plenty of warning signs I blew through during those years that would have stopped a non-alcoholic in his tracks.

In high school, with an A on the line in my favorite class with a teacher I adored, I had prepared well for a forensics competition and should have been ready to compete. But I was too drunk on the Thursday night of the competition to be in any shape to compete. When my teacher asked if I was alright, I lied, said I didn't really care, and accepted my C. The summer

before college I crashed into a parked car and a bike rack full of bikes. I tried to run, but was in no shape to do that.

I was brought home by the police, who knew my dad so didn't cite me for drunk driving. Then off to college, rooming with a friend I'd known since junior high. We'd both planned to play football in college, but it never happened. He got kicked out of school for drugs, and I dropped out because I couldn't reconcile studying with my nonstop party mentality. Before I dropped out, the R.A. on my dorm floor sat me down and gave me this warning, I was becoming a "waste of a life were many. All along my friends and family, doctors, even the police kept asking me why? And my only answer was: I don't know. A life wasted.

June 18th 1998 I was in the sick room of the Grove Club, forced to attend an AA meeting because I was staying at a crisis center and spa after a three-day getaway at "Club Detox"!

I would not remain sober from that point on for 6 years. Still, I heard enough that day to point me in the right direction, and give me some hope. I heard, and finally believed, that I didn't have to live like this anymore, and I could have a meaningful life again.

Eventually, on April 23, 2004, I found my home in AA, with a host of wonderful friends. And with that, I began to repair relationships I had previously destroyed.

My name became re-associated with employment, a

drivers license, and insurance! These changes really came to me in an unexpected way. They came after working the 12 Steps and believing that I needed to carry the message to other alcoholics! It has been quite refreshing to think about people other than myself.

Belief in a Higher Power and a desire to do the next right thing, I've recently been attending AA meetings at the Veterans Hospital in Milwaukee with my good friend Rich N, which has again helped me through a time of need - because I sometimes forget that nothing helps us more than working with another alcoholic!

My college roommate, the friend I'd known since junior-high school, called me yesterday to tell me he's entering treatment at the VA in Milwaukee, starting today. He asked me if I would be his sponsor! I haven't seen him in 40 years, but I told him, "Of course I will, my old friend. I'm excited to work with you".

Is this the reason I've been to thousands of meetings and hundreds of visits to detox? Yes, I believe it is! I've figured what they told me all along was true" - to keep this gift I was given so freely, I must continue to give it away" - a life not wasted



new resources of courage were uncovered, and that finally , inescapably, the conviction came that God does move in a mysterious way His wonders to perform.”

The fact is, I am different from who I was when I came in this program and yet some things are still the same. I am still extremely self centered, but it shows up in my life sneakier than it

did before. I can still be defiant and closed minded, but I've learned to take actions despite how I feel. I have always struggled with the feeling of being uncomfortable, but now I can go for a week and endure. More than that though, I lose it.

I realize through the examples of women I look to in sobriety, I need to be honest with my struggles. I've thought in the past I was supposed to put on a show that life was always good so others would bear witness to the blessings of this program. However, I've recently learned that when everyone walks around saying they're okay, and you're the one struggling, you think something is wrong with you; you're not doing it right.

There are times I feel God's grace and mercy while other times I feel like He hates me. There are times I'm at peace when the world is uncertain and other points I can't explain why I feel so lonely when my circumstances are all so good. Perhaps it is a reflection of my program or a call to do more. Perhaps this is what it means to be a human being. (I've never wanted to be one of them).

Through it all, I've never stopped participating in AA. I've never been confident of a better life outside of this program. With complete disclosure, my mind will conjure some crazy solutions outside of drinking, but even those sound crazy to me. I've learned to share them and be honest about the way I think and feel. Begrudgingly, I take suggestions.

The hope I can offer, the hope I foresee despite these circumstances, is this too shall pass. By being active in my program (even with a bad attitude), I don't obsess about drinking anymore. I'm placed in a position of neutrality; despite my circumstances.

“The Reprieve” is always looking for articles. If you have something you'd like to write about pertaining to alcoholism, please submit your article to raconewsletter@gmail.com.

**35th Annual
A.A., Al-Anon, Alateen
Tri-County Spring Conference**

“Miracles Can Happen”

U.A.W. Hall, 3615 Washington Road
Kenosha, WI

Saturday, March 25, 2017
Registration opens at 8:00am
Panels begin at 10:30

Kick-off at 9:00 am with AA Speaker, Cathy C. from Racine and Al-Anon Speaker Pat C. from Racine.

Dance 9:00pm\

Banquet –6:00pm, Speaker-7:30pm
Kenny J. from Kenosha



Events and Service Notes

RACO Volunteers Needed!!

The Racine Area Central Office has unfortunately had to close its doors during some daytime hours over the past few weeks due to a shortage of volunteers to staff the desk. If you or someone you sponsor has an interest in getting trained to staff the desk and be of service, please call RACO at (262) 554-6611 and we will get you in touch with John B.—RACO's Staffing Coordinator. No one who needs the services of RACO should ever be turned away due to a shortage of volunteers! Be of service to your central office today! :-)

Kenosha / Racine Oxford Houses

Are you in early recovery or know someone who is? The Oxford House concept, which emphasizes that "together we can democratically run a clean and sober house" is helpful to gaining the strength and support to achieve longterm sobriety.

With separate houses for both men and women, there are Oxford Houses in both Kenosha as well as

Racine—providing the support and accountability to help in early recovery. For more information, or to request an interview, please call

(262) 800-3840 or visit www.oxfordhouse.org for a history, vacancies, locations and applications. Let the Oxford House help you or someone you love get a jumpstart into a happy and healthy life of clean and sober living today!

RACO Steering Committee Meetings

The Racine Area Central Office's 'Steering Committee' meets on the first **WEDNESDAY** of every month at RACO (6:30pm). The steering committee invites anyone who may be interested in Area 75 and District 17 events and happenings.

Please note the NEW day/time of the Steering Committee meetings—as they used to be

held on Saturday mornings! If you or someone you know might be interested in sitting-in on a Committee meeting or possibly filling an open position, please join us for a monthly meeting or email raconewsletter@gmail.com for information on available positions and position requirements. We look forward to seeing you at the next Committee meeting!

Upcoming Events & Activities

Saturday, March 25th

35th Annual

A.A., Al-Anon, Alateen
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Kenny J. from Kenosha

April 22, 2017

Recovery Rave
Outcasts Afterbar
1310-63rd Street, Kenosha
7pm-12:00midnight



Help is Everywhere

District/Club Information

District 17		Racine, Wisconsin
Racine Alano Club 1140 Douglas Ave. Racine, WI 53404 (262) 634-9902	The Grove Club 1037 Grove Ave. Racine, WI 53405 (262) 634-9656	Benjamin House 4848 Highway H Franksville, WI 53126 (262) 886-9611
Benjamin House Website: http://www.benjaminhouseracine.org/		
District 7		Kenosha, Wisconsin
Kenosha Alano Club 630 56 th St. Kenosha, WI 53140 (262) 654-8246	Outcasts 1310 63 rd St. Kenosha, WI 53144	Southport Lighthouse Recovery Club 8017 Sheridan Rd. Kenosha, WI 53143 (262) 653-9800
Kenosha Alano Club Website: http://kenoshaalanoclub.org		
District 36		Burlington 12 x 12 Club 724 N. Pine St. Burlington, WI
West Racine/Kenosha County		
District 6		Walworth County Alano Club 611 E. Walworth St. Delavan, WI 53115 (262) 740-1888
Eastern Walworth County		
District 12		Eastern Lake County, Illinois
Alano Club of Waukegan 2419 Washington St. Waukegan, IL 60085 (847) 662-9640	Zion-Benton Alano Club 228 Sheridan Rd. Winthrop Harbor, IL 60096 (847) 746-9842	
Alano Club of Waukegan Website: http://alanoclubwaukegan.com/		
Waukegan Hotline: (847) 623-9660		
District 10		Antioch Recovery Club 311 E Depot St.; Suite C Antioch, IL 60002 (847) 838-1882
Western Lake County		
Antioch Recovery Club: http://www.antiochrecoveryclub.org/		
Antioch Hotline: (847) 395-5988		

Alcoholics Anonymous is not affiliated with any club or other outside enterprise

Racine Area Central Office Officers/Steering Committee

Chairperson	Toni M.
Co-Chairperson	Dyland W.
Secretary	Deb K.
Co-Secretary	Alicia E.
Treasurer	Pam L.
Co-Treasurer	Tom M.
Staffing Coordinator	Cynthia P.
Co-Staffing Coordinator	Larissa H.
Newsletter	Stacy K.
Co-Newsletter	VACANT
Hotline Chairperson	VACANT
Co-Hotline Chairperson	Jason A.
Literature Chairperson	Rachel M.
Co-Literature Chair	John B.
Procurement	Wes D.
Webmaster	Brian K.
Co-Webmaster	VACANT
Advisor	Darrel S.
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