

The View

Newsletter of the Ridgeview Alumni Association
Spring 2004

Volume XV

Smyrna, GA



Picture is courtesy of the Akron AA Intergroup – Stained Glass replica of "Man on the Bed"

Working with Others

The Ridgeview Alumni Association
3995 South Cobb Drive – Smyrna, GA 30080

Spring Focus: Working with Others

Upcoming Events

Spring Fling Weekend 2004 May 14, 15, 16

Friday, May 14, 2004 – Speaker Meeting

6:30 pm – Barbara P. (Ala-Non)

8:00 pm – Lyle P. (AA)

Saturday May 15, 2004 – Workshop

“An Experience in the Recovery Zone”

Patrick J. Carnes, Ph.D.

Concurrent Workshops

“Coming To Your Own Assistance”

Patrick J. Carnes, Ph.D.

“Mind-Body Integration in Recovery”

Paul Earley, M.D.

“Introduction to Equine Psychotherapy”

Annie Prescott, Ph.D.

Sunday, May 16, 2004

Recovering Professionals Group

9:00am – Noon

SPRING FLING

Noon to 6:00 pm

Hot dogs, hamburgers, music, activities for kids, swimming, crafts, etc.

Poolside 12 Step meeting immediately following the activities.

Other events for the year include:

Lake Outing and Picnic – June 4-6, 2004

Fall Retreat – September 2004 TBA

Contact any Alumni Steering Committee Member for more information.

The Ridgeview Alumni Association is moving into the 21st Century. After this current issue the Ridgeview Alumni Newsletter will be posted on our website www.ridgeviewalumni.com. The website will carry the full newsletter and archival copies. Furthermore, we will be able to incorporate more color graphics and content. The Newsletter will be in an Adobe PDF format; our website will link to download the FREE Adobe reader; allowing you to read and print the Newsletter at your leisure.

If you would like to continue to receive your copy of the Newsletter please take time to fill out the enclosed reply card and confirm your mailing address. If we do not receive a reply card back from you, you will not receive future Newsletters via the postal service.

If you would like to be added to our E-mail notification list when a new Newsletter is placed on the site, E-mail us at steering@bellsouth.net or contact us thru the Web site, please put "newsletter" in the subject line.

Thank you to all those who submitted articles for this edition of the Newsletter; if we have learned anything in recovery it is that *We can not keep what we have, if we do not give it away!*

Spring Focus: Working with Others

Working with Others

Sean Cleary

In the Big Book of Alcoholics Anonymous it states in the first sentence of Chapter 7, "Working With Others", that "Practical experience shows that nothing will so much insure immunity from drinking as intensive work with other alcoholics." That has been my experience as well.

Bill Wilson, the founder of A.A., also mentions the importance of working with others in every chapter in the first 164 pages. Several times in fact. The last sentence of the Preamble of Alcoholics Anonymous states "Our primary purpose is to stay sober and help other alcoholics to achieve sobriety."

Now I've never been accused of being the brightest bulb on the tree but it seems to me that the concept of working with others is probably important.

Immediately upon finishing the steps with my sponsor, I was told to raise my hand when the chairperson asked if anyone would be willing to be a temporary sponsor. "At some of these we balked." This was one of them. I protested that I had nothing to offer. He told me to be willing, pray about it and just do it!

My sponsor, in his unique southern way "splained" to me that if I didn't get into action, then I was just fixin' ta. He said anyone who is just fixin' ta is going backwards and in my case that meant I would drink again.

I have a history of coming into Alcoholics Anonymous, getting better and when the coast was clear, go back out for more "lab work". I never got into the middle of the program. As a result, I always relapsed. After a while, meetings started to get boring and the thought of a drink would lure me away. What happened was, I stopped growing.

The real work for me began when I started sponsoring newcomers. It was easy at first. I would tell them to call me everyday and presto! I'd never see them again. However, despite the setbacks, I was starting to feel that the program of Alcoholics Anonymous was working in my life. For the first time in a very long time I was beginning to feel useful. There was finally a purpose to my life.

If my program of recovery is to be based on spiritual principles, then it is my responsibility to show others how I found a Higher Power. When

I do this, peace and contentment seem to find me. Because of my newfound happiness, I don't have to drink anymore.

Looking back on my fourth and fifth steps, I can see how my life was based on self-centeredness. Sometimes you'll hear at a meeting "I may not be much but I'm all I think about." By working with other alcoholics, I start to chip away at my ego. The same ego that blocks me from my Higher Power. Instead of thinking about what I can do to make me happy, I try to think about how I can enrich the life of someone else.

When I started writing this article, I intended to make it light with a lot of funny stories. However, as I formulated my thoughts, the importance of working with others was overwhelming. It has saved my life. I have seen where my experience has benefited others and continues to do so. Today, I am rewarded with fulfillment in my life and the freedom of not having to drink. I have never been this happy!

What an Order

Respectfully submitted by Daisey & Mary Jean M.

Wow!!!!!!!!!! What an order I will never go through with it. Some of my thoughts early on. I could not imagine being willing to give back what had been so freely given to me or that anyone would ever want what I had. My first sponsor ran my life for quite some time because she was the only higher power I had so that involved a great deal of time and energy on her part. I couldn't imagine ever having the time or energy to devote to anyone else.

I still can't tell you when that changed for me, but I can say that it did and that working with other alcoholics is one of the most gratifying things that I do. The women that I sponsor add so much joy to my life that I am often at a loss to describe the wonder of watching broken spiritually bankrupt people develop into thriving connected people. The women I sponsor also have a way of getting me to look at whatever is going on in my life.

The past year has been filled with struggles for me both physically and spiritually. From a recurring knee injury to a deeper level of searching for the GOD connection. My sponsor had to tell me many times in many different ways

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what I have heard over and over again in meetings is that *work with another alcoholic works when all else fails*. (“When plagued by waves of self pity and resentment I soon found out that when all other measures failed work with another alcoholic would save the day”) page 15, Bills Story from the Big Book of AA. When I was finally able to hear her suggestions I got busy working with others on a level I had not been willing to approach in a few years. I was out of work on sick leave related to my knee problem so I had nothing but time on my hands, so when I picked up the pace everything got better, I didn’t have as much time to sit and think about being in pain (or feel sorry for myself) and it is impossible not to be spiritually connected when spending close quality time with Gods children.

I have also known the heart break that comes with watching people who are not willing to do what it takes, some to the point of insanity and death. From these experiences I come away with a great deal of pain and sadness and the knowledge that this program does work if you are willing to accept a simple kit of spiritual tools and if I am not willing to do that I am choosing to die.

AA is a Selfish Program

JP Cooper

It is often said that AA is a selfish program, well, that may be true in some cases however this alcoholic has found that by working his program, sharing with others and giving back what has been given to him is the only way of life. Service work, sponsorship and AA meetings are the basis for my existence. Talking to and sharing experience strength and hope with other alcoholics not only keeps me sober, it also keeps me sane. The Big Book talks about alcoholics helping each other, due to the fact they are uniquely qualified by their own experiences. Alcoholics have an understanding of the helplessness and misery that accompanies addiction. We realize the absolute cunning and baffling nature of alcohol addiction and how it seduces our mind and ultimately attacks our physical and mental well-being. We know that we must work each and every day to not allow this disease to regain control of our minds and bodies. Alcoholic Anonymous is based on the fact that our experiences are not unique and that one person’s strength and hope can be infectious to

those of similar circumstances. Those circumstances have nothing to do with money, power and prestige; they are in fact depression, powerlessness and defeat. As an alcoholic I can and need to help others in their recovery and by doing so, I regain some of my lost self worth. An alcoholic helps himself by helping others, by working with people who are struggling with sobriety; alcoholics remind themselves of where they came from and where they can easily return.

Recently a friend who had found his way home to the rooms of AA was talking about his relapse after 8 years of sobriety. He had recently had an onslaught of medical maladies, which had left him with some physical and speech impediments. Because of these, he had convinced himself that a drink would help him over come his self consciousness. He felt that if he could go to a bar and have a few beers, smoke a few cigarette’s that he would regain some of his self worth and happiness by interacting with other people at the bar. What he found was that he was paying five dollars for a beer, sitting alone on a bar stool smoking cigarettes by himself. I reminded him that most of us alcoholics had done this a number of times while we were still out there, and had thought that we were enjoying ourselves. We tend to believe the delusion that by surrounding ourselves with people in a bar that all of these people are our best friends and therefore we are not isolated in our own personal Hell. What he actually found was that when he returned to the rooms of AA, was that the people in AA were his friends. And, that they did care about him, and did not criticize him for his mistakes but rather they welcomed him home with love and compassion. There were some who were even grateful that someone else and not they themselves had made the fall from sobriety and had been able to make it back to AA; Alive.

It is in the AA group and especially in my home group that we alcoholics can spread our pain and despair over a wide and diverse area and that the pain will evaporate with the warmth and compassion that is found in our AA groups. When we share our problems and fears with others, it releases the energy and power which that fear holds over us. Once the dread and fear are taken away, we can then take a rational look at what ever is bothering us, and determine a course of action to eliminate the problem. For many

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years my only resolution skills came in a quart or half gallon bottle. I could figure out what to do, when to do it and be the world's greatest person once I had a few drinks. The real problem was that, when I came to, in the cold gray light of dawn, not only did I feel bad; I couldn't remember anything that I had planned. My home group gives me friends and advisors that help me look at the problem and determine my part in it (which usually is a great deal larger than I care to admit). I can then determine an appropriate solution and implement a plan of action that will correct the situation. My time in AA has taught me that; *If I do those things which I ought to do, then I don't have to worry about what I have done.* No one has all of the answers to life questions however AA has given me the tools which I can use to make whatever decision that I have to make, the right decision.

Proud to be an Alcoholic

Mary Beth

In the beginning, service work was done at the meetings. Joining the Ridgeview Alumni has given me ample ways to work with others. How do I work with others? By continuing to lead a sober lifestyle! It took me a long time to get it so I use myself as an example to let others know it is OK to keep trying as long as you keep coming back.

One way I like and choose to work with others is by chairing a cottage "C" meeting when I can. It takes me back to when I was in the cottage and others tried to get the message to me. It may be a word or a phrase; anything will work!!

Another way is being the Happy, Wonderful Lady that greets you at our dances. I have worked the front table for several years and it gets better every year. You get to present a happy face (and mean it) to all whom come to our events.

Service to others maintains my sobriety and I try to give back what was so freely given to me. I am proud to be an alcoholic who can ask for help and give help when needed.

Something Different

Love & Services – Warren Taylor

The thing is I am not able to work in the garden on Saturday mornings. The profession available to me upon leaving Ridgeview in June 2002 requires Saturday work. Feeling unemployable with zero self-confidence and zero self esteem I was back to work in six days. My dilemma was that deep in my heart there was a feeling that something desperately needed to be different after surviving a relapse after 11 years dry. (And I stress the word dry.) The question of what is going to be different was a question that I hated at the time.

The number one thing I knew was that I wanted to be active in some way with the Ridgeview Alumni Association. So, the first thing to do was to take action and show up regularly at Steering Committee meetings; which I did. After showing up for awhile it became very obvious the best way to be of service right away was to work in the serenity garden on Saturday mornings. There was always a need for work parties to maintain this beautiful place. I felt bad that there was no way for me to help.

Early on I needed to pick a sub-committee to be a part of. I picked "Patient Meetings and Relations." Chairing meetings was something that would be easy for me. My first five years of sobriety I was fairly active in AA meetings. The next six years basically the only meetings in my life were the ones going on between my ears while sitting in my easy chair "my neurotic spaceship." Those were the meetings that were subconsciously planning my demise. Yet I was the last to know. Anyway, knowing that leading meetings was something I could do, I raced after the sign up sheet every month to get a meeting to chair. If the sign up sheet went around the group before it got to me there were no openings. Seemed like everyone wanted to chair meetings. Not a huge demand right?

Then suddenly I became aware of an appeal for help from Rick A. for the Access Center; an appeal that he had been making since my arrival in to Alumni. Surely I could never meet the requirements for such an important and sensitive area in such a prestigious facility as Ridgeview Institute. Here was a need and I wanted

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to get involved. Rick made it clear that I did have enough time and that I could indeed qualify. So a short time later we had a very thorough orientation class and I could volunteer my time right away.

What a gift! I had found a need. Active Steering Committee people were not helping. I could not understand. But, after a few weeks on Wednesday evenings from 7 pm to 10pm I was frustrated. It seemed like I was wasting my time and being of very little help to anyone. So I called my sponsor (never had one before, something different?) He informed me that this was not about me helping others necessarily. This was a perfect exercise in getting outside myself. This was a surprise to me, after all "it's all about me." right? Something to consider. He might be right!!!!

So I kept going regularly on Wednesday evenings but with a different attitude. This time began to become valuable in my program. I did a lot of step work there. I did home work there from my therapist. At times I read some fun stuff. As time went by I became friends with staff members such as Adam T., the cheese over the entire area. Jason and now Scott – leaders of the clinical assistants in the evening. Ms. Jean and Keesha the important people that start the assessment process and also handle sensitive phone calls. Plus many of the staff professionals that handle the huge responsibility of assessments and intake of new clients/patients.

I have learned to stay away from questionable situations and especially a family in crisis. There are so many disorders that hit the door there and I've learned to keep a distance until I'm sure it is a disorder that I can relate to and share encouragement. But, ever now and then I see me coming in the door or sitting with head down looking horrible and trembling, usually with giant tears. This is my gift to invade his space and ask if he feels as terrible as he looks. When the person looks up and we both laugh and cry and start talking I know that I am where God wants me to be. Two drunks or addicts together in a miraculous way I know the power of God is with us. I have spent time with guys then seen them later on campus and they don't remember me. But, guess what? I remember them what a gift!!!!

Last year when Rick resigned and Russ and John W. took over the responsibility of Patient Meetings and Relations they honored me by asking me to take more responsibility in this vital area. A

short time later Adam approved that I could start doing the orientations of new volunteers since his schedule had become more and more limited. This was and is (a rare word) a huge honor for me. I am enjoying being more active in the Access Center but become more and more frustrated at the lack of participation. This is such an important area for our Alumni Association to shine even more while at the same time an opportunity for my personal spiritual growth.

As I said at the beginning, everything I do is the something different that has been vital in my recovery. My life is so full, my life is so wonderful since being so active for awhile and daring to enter a building of God my life is rocketing to a fourth dimension.

Come and grow with us and be of service in the Ridgeview Institute Access Center!

Working with One Another

Wanda G.

*It could be your mother,
or it might be your brother,
if I had my druthers,*

It would be just working with one another.

*When you can't go any further,
and your head feels like rubber,
who can you call?*

where can you go?

to your dealer for just one mo?

No!!!

*You look around for someone to grab,
because the crash feels like a stab.*

*You know it's time for treatment,
if you don't want your friends and family
in bereavement!*

*Then suddenly, an angel appears
and starts to calm your fears
and begins to guide you to the
rooms of AA.*

*Where you relearn how to pray,
and they say... Take it day by day.*

*And if you should stumble along the way
you know that you can reach them night & day.*

*If the fellowship seems unreal
that's the miracle of their appeal.
Their sincerity, honesty and zeal
because it's just a mother or brother*

Working with one another

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“Growing” with Others”

E.C.

There was always one four letter word that never failed to make me cringe. **W O R K!**

My mother likes to tell the story that as a child I never said “no” when it came to her asking me to do some household chore. Perfect child, right?

Wrong. You see I always said “o.k.” but usually the task never got done. I realized that verbally agreeing to do something bought me some valuable time. Which I’m sure I used to watch cartoons, play with toys, or basically do anything other than that dreaded “work” thing.

My father died suddenly from a heart attack three weeks before my eighth birthday, and mom just didn’t have it in her to be the task master she tried to be.

I had the whole manipulation thing down early enough in life to take full advantage of this situation. {The situation being that I was just a poor fatherless boy that should be catered to.}

I realized sooner or later that money was important; and to get some, there usually had to be a job involved somehow. Paper boy, babysitter, grass cutter, etc. got me through the early teens. However, during that time I discovered two things much better than money or work. Alcohol and women!

Next came my introduction to real service work – bartending. I was already drinking alcoholically by eighteen and I was sure I found my life’s calling. The bar business was the career path for me. After all it met all my needs... access to booze, women, cash, and life in the fast lane.

I worked [and drank] my way from bartender to manager to general manager to owner. My poor childhood friends had real jobs; I had a lifestyle. I believed drinking was my job and my identity was all about me being a professional partier.

So when things got out of control towards the end I became desperate to hang on. Imagining life without drinking and drugging was unbearable.

I finally entered a treatment center as an emotionally, physically, and spiritually bankrupt shell of a human being. I had gradually gotten to the point of desperation where I knew that a huge “change” was about to take place. Death or a completely new lifestyle? Both choices scared the hell out of me.

In the detox unit I was exposed to Alcoholics Anonymous, suddenly I was aware of a strong, very unfamiliar feeling – HOPE!

The man leading the meeting was telling my story. He wasn’t a doctor or therapist; he was a drunk like me.

I learned that AA started many years ago with one alcoholic helping another. Evidently, there was some kind of big book, and in it there was an explanation of the 12 steps of recovery.

Steps? Uh-oh (I was always more of an escalator man myself). Not only were these steps, they had to be WORKED!

“WORKED”... now I knew the party was over.

I had a friend that had done this and he was still sober after more than one year. Maybe there was something to this program of recovery, and besides if this was all a scam, I always had my other choice . . . DEATH!

There were a lot of suggestions, and no orders. I liked that.

Thankfully I didn’t wait to get a sponsor and start my step work. That would have left me in that tortured state of dependency between my old solution (booze and drugs) and the new solution (the program of AA).

I was ready, willing, and surprising able. My journey began. I was definitely powerless and my life had become unmanageable (I was sitting in a mental institution...duh!). My biggest obstacle was the God thing. But, that was no obstacle at all. I found out that I could come up with my own concept of something more powerful than me. WHEW!

Cleaning house with steps 4 & 5 was uncomfortable at times, but not nearly as painful as when I actually went through those things. Going over my personal inventory with my Sponsor was a gigantic release of built up stress. He not only didn’t judge me, he shared some things that were just as selfish and screwed up as my experiences.

I now knew my character defects and was told I wasn’t a bad person; I was a sick person that had done some bad things. I asked God to remove these defects (a very gradual process evidently) and got through the amends steps.

Now I continue to take my inventory in order to keep my side of the street clean. Meditation and prayer have gotten more comfortable over time and my concept of a Higher

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Power has evolved through the years. I love the fact that there is not one final exam or graduation to this miraculous program.

But step 12 urges me to bring the message to the alcoholic who still suffers. In fact a whole chapter is devoted in the Big Book to "Working with Others."

I knew it was too good to be true, in order to keep this new way of living; I have got to spend the rest of my life working! And with drunks no less!

Well, this is where my understanding of work has changed. Believe me, this work is no burden. It can be frustrating, even painful, but it is the most rewarding work I have ever done. Seeing another hurting, seemingly hopeless person respond to the message I pass on gives me a feeling I never could find with a drink or a drug.

I can only share my own experience, strength, and hope. But I also have the tools of the program; The Big Book, The 12 and 12, and all the literature is available to me always. But, it is when I am working with another drunk and we are using these pages of wisdom that I grow a little more.

How can I talk about the principal of a certain step, if I am not living it? Several times I have left a sponsee with a suggestion that he examine his motives, pray about it, be patient, etc. Then, I can't help thinking that I need to follow my own advice about something going on in my life.

This is how this thing works. We all "grow" together. My old instinct would have been to take this miracle of recovery and keep it to myself. I'd be afraid that sharing it would weaken it somehow.

Now I know that not sharing it...destroys it.

I am certain of these two things;
"Faith without works is dead" and "Sobriety without growth is temporary."

Today, I'm a Sponsor

Peace – Bill D.

For as long as I can remember, before joining AA, I always felt like I was different from my family and friends. I never felt like I completely fit in. So I isolated myself and my feelings from my family and from the people that I

considered to be friends. As my alcoholism progressed and my drinking completely took over my life, I completely cut myself off from other people, including my wife and children. All I wanted was to be left alone so I could drink until I passed out, wake up and start drinking again.

When I finally hit my bottom and ended up at Ridgeview, my life started to change. I remember my second meeting in Cottage C and Sam came in and talked to us, and for the first time I realized that there was someone else who used to drink just like me. I realized I might not be as different as I thought I was.

After getting out of Ridgeview, I joined the Alumni, got a Sponsor, and started attending AA meetings. This was my first experience working with others. Not me working with others because I still didn't trust anybody completely, but I did have my Sponsor who really went out of his way to work with me. He freely gave his time, shared his strength, experience and hope and encouraged me and guided me with the steps. I remember hearing him say that working with me helped keep him sober. At the time I didn't understand that. But I wasn't completely ready to live a sober life and I started to isolate from my Sponsor and I eventually just gave up working with him and going to meetings and ended up going back out.

Today, I'm back in AA. I participate in Alumni activities. I have my same Sponsor and working with him, knowing that he's always there for me, seeing first hand how spirituality can change a person is the best thing that's ever happened to me in sobriety.

The other best thing that's happened to me is that today, I'm a Sponsor. Today, I have the opportunity to work with another alcoholic, to share my strength, experience, and hope and to be there for him just like my Sponsor is for me.

Now I understand what my Sponsor meant when he said working with me helps keep him sober.

Foreign Concept

Casey

When first I came in to Alcoholics Anonymous there was only two things I knew, what you could do for me and what I needed. I

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was and still am, to some extent (working on it), consumed with myself and what I could either get or take out of this world. So the first time that I heard someone say, "We only get to keep what we have by giving it away", I thought that this was just another nice little AA saying to make people feel better about themselves and/or con the newcomer into staying around for a while. Of course, because I was sure that they truly wanted something out of me. However, as I begin to accumulate some time and more importantly work the steps and the program of Alcoholics Anonymous and not "my program", I have begun to more fully understand the cornerstone of Alcoholics Anonymous: "Working with Others."

This is the only step, step 12 that has an entire chapter dedicated to it in the big book. In addition, Bill Wilson says throughout the Big Book, when all else fails working with another alcoholic will save the day. He also says that he was *plagued* by waves of resentment and self pity during his first year of sobriety and that the one sure fire way to get over that feeling was to work with another alcoholic. In the beginning of AA, the founding members did not have the luxury of multiple meetings in multiple locations. More than likely, most towns had no meetings and provided no services. The new AA members worked the steps in a couple of days at what ever institution they were currently a member of and with the guidance of an AA member. Then these patients would get out of the hospital, perform their amends (step 9) and be back at the same hospital working with the new guy that is occupying the bed that they were just discharged from a week or so earlier. Thus, AA was built on the backs of working with others.

For me, the realization of the importance of working with others has come at a much slower pace than for the founding members. As is typical for me, I have to learn things by trying it my way first, inevitably resulting in personal pain. Eventually, I get to a point that I am willing to listen to and follow some suggestions. After time, and trial and error, I have learned that nothing will save me from the craziness in my head like working with another alcoholic. Listening to someone else's struggles really gives me a sense of, "I am not alone", or at least, "I am sure glad that I am not that crazy." Invariably, the person that I spend time with will have a problem or

situation that is very similar to what I have been through or am currently going through at the time. And always, I get more out of the conversation than I am sure that I have given to the other person. Due to the fact, I am the one that gets to escape myself for the time that I am focused on helping the other alcoholic. And this was all I was ever looking for in the first place in all my drinking and using, "An escape from myself." The difference today, is it is a constructive and not destructive escape or temporary relief.

Ridgeview and AA club houses affords us all the chance to work with others from day one, as we can always find someone that is newer than us or just needs someone to listen to them and understand their struggles. To not judge them or criticize them, but to accept them for who they are and to have common ground with them and relate to their problems. I truly believe that God uses people to perfect people, and this is the principle that began an organization that has produced millions of miracles around the world. AA is no respecter of persons, it is available to anyone of any culture and any language, and more importantly, it works. Therefore, it is up to me as an AA member and a recovered alcoholic/addict to give away this gift that was so freely given to me. After all, it keeps me sober.

Working with Others is like Looking in the Mirror

George Mize

Working with others is like looking in the mirror and not liking what I see, but having to face myself and accept all the imperfections that I don't like. That's just my opinion. A while back, I had this here epiphany (and, being Easter-time, it's good to have an epiphany once in a while): God *has placed me in the work he wants me to do.* This is the work He has for me. If faith is believing in what I cannot see, and seeing what I believe, then working with others is putting my faith into action. It's also about there not being chapters in the Big Book on "Into Thinking" or "Working Alone." Who would have thought that in order to experience joy, harmony, and serenity, that it would be necessary to experience the presence of God? Certainly not me.

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In working with others, I am brought face to face with my character defects. I thought that I could not do THAT! You might say working with others is my biggest FEAR. Because then you might see me, you might know me for who I am, and you might not like me. In other words, I am blind and cannot see what you see. It is an appalling thing to see myself in others, to look at myself in the mirror. That's a lot like surrendering to the moment. About accepting the reality, letting the thoughts and feelings wash over me, and releasing them. Letting go of them. It's not forever, it's just the present, the moment, the NOW.

My sponsor told me "Don't drink, pray often, go to meetings, apply the steps to my life and watch it change." That means clean house, work with others and trust God to keep me sober. Simple. How do I know this? Because my sponsor showed me. He also told me that HIS sponsor showed him where every meeting within 50 miles was, and then said "now, you know where the alcoholics are, so you can go there by yourself, if you have to." Simple.

So I go to meetings, because that's where the alcoholics and addicts are. Places like Cottage C. Everyone KNOWS about Cottage C. "Oh, I hated Cottage C, and I can't ever go back there again!" FEAR never kept me from drinking. Why should it keep me from going where I feel "uncomfortable?" Maybe that's where the alcoholics and addicts are, and I am not REALLY an alcoholic and an addict. Then, there's the Halfway House meeting. That's where John W. taught me "I CAN'T, HE CAN, I'LL LET HIM." (That's the first three Steps explained so I can understand them.) Simple.

And, if I was not real careful, one of the inmates would ask me to be a temporary sponsor. And, THEN, I have to LISTEN to another person tell ME about what it is like, what happened, and what it is like now. But the best part about Cottage C is that THEY are locked in, and I can leave. What I really have is a safe attitude to be in, from where I can venture forth, to rescue and support another person. And I need to remember this, on a daily basis I only have a 24-hour reprieve based upon my spiritual condition. If only I had known that God goes direct to my heart. That I am responsible whenever anyone anywhere reaches out, to make sure my hand of recovery is there. I

am responsible for what I do not see. When one door is closed, I open the door for another person to step through to recovery from addiction, to the present from the past. I don't have to be afraid anymore of the past. I can let my memory have its way. And God turns the "might have been" into a wonderful culture for the future.

How does this happen? Recovery begins when one addict, me, shares his experience, strength, and hope with another, by both listening and by telling my story. We both look for similarities rather than differences. Instead of the fear-based approach to the world, which the ego uses, we choose the love-based approach, and our fears vanish, as our minds are joined in God. The ego uses the past to judge, to control the surroundings, to analyze all situations, to attack when threatened, and to dominate the environment. Love says to listen gently, to accept others in the moment, to respect all life, to forgive, to focus on the present, and to do everything a little more gently that I have to, because our hearts are the same.

The chapter in the Big Book, "Working with Others," offers suggestions which have proven to be successful. Outlining the program of action, engaging in general conversation, speaking of alcoholism as an illness, making a self-appraisal, helps to focus on our personal experiences. Knowing how and when to give my time to pass this recovery on to another is vital for my own recovery. Detractions from recovery, such as focusing on a spouse or employer, often make the difference between failure and success. We simply do not stop drinking or using so long as we place dependence upon other people ahead of God. Placing ourselves in God's hands is better than anything we could have planned.

The work that God has given me today is to be at the place in my recovery where I may be of maximum helpfulness to others. I never have to hesitate to go anywhere I can be helpful and to carry this message. God protects me from harm while I am staying on the firing line with these motives. And, it is giving this program to others that allows me to keep my sobriety, one day at a time.

~~~~~

## *Spring Focus: Working with Others*

*(Due to an oversight on our part; we neglected to include the following article in the last issue).*

### **Victory in Recovery**

*Liz F.*

When asked to write an article on Victory in Recovery; my initial reaction was "Where do I start?" So many positive things have occurred since my DUI arrest 16 months ago. Gone is the terrified, mute, young woman who couldn't look anyone in the eye. The protective emotional distance from family and friends disappeared into openness and honesty. Her self-imposed destruction, has given way to serenity and forgiveness. The lifelong isolation and insecurity gave way to connectedness and confidence. Where she was once hopeless, she now has hope. The spiritual void that plagued her life transformed into a loving concept of a power greater than herself.

The 12 steps of AA and Ridgeview Institute did more than keep this twenty something woman sober. It brought her into a fellowship that loved her until she could love herself. It showed her a new life, better than her old one and the one she imagined. That being of services gives her life meaning and purpose. Victory in recovery has meant many things, but most important has given me a life I love and which I am most grateful.

---

### **Addiction**

*Anonymous*

*I have taken over you,  
Growing slowly throughout the years.  
I gave you visions of ecstasy  
While I fed upon your fears:  
I made you feel inadequate,  
I crept into your soul;  
I was growing, ever stronger  
As your heart was growing cold.  
I let you see only hopelessness,  
The hurting pain and strife.  
I pushed until your will collapsed  
So I could own your very life.  
Now, I am feeling some resistance,  
I can feel your spirit grow.  
I sense somewhere in the distance  
You are searching for your soul.  
My life is slowly ebbing,*

*Into darkness I must go;  
But as I lie here sleeping  
I will never cease to grow.  
For I am always in you,  
I will never truly end.  
So you must keep a constant vigil  
Or I will own you once again.  
I will lie here always  
Creating voices in your mind.  
So you must keep a constant vigil  
For I am always keeping mine.*

---

### **Am I Relapsing**

1. Do I feel apprehensive about my well being, do I feel secure?
2. Am I denying that something is wrong, is there a problem?
3. Am I being adamant about my sobriety?
4. Do I have compulsive attempts to preach about sobriety?
5. Am I being defensive, there's something wrong with you, not me?
6. Am I having compulsive behavior; going to lots of meetings; workaholic?
7. Am I having impulsive behavior?
8. Do I tend to be lonely?
9. Am I having tunnel vision; focusing on specific self problems?
10. Am I having minor depression?
11. Have I lost my constructive planning, things becoming unmanageable?
12. Are my plans beginning to fail?
13. Am I daydreaming, having wishful thinking?
14. Do I feel as though nothing can be solved?
15. Do I have immature wishes to be happy, am I failing to be grateful?
16. Am I having periods of confusion, can't seem to get it together?
17. Am I irritable with friends?
18. Am I easily angered?
19. Are my eating habits irregular?
20. Do I feel a sense of listlessness, am I easily fatigued?
21. Have my sleeping habits become irregular?
22. Is my daily structure becoming progressively undone?
23. Do I find myself in deep depression occasionally?
24. Have I quit going to meetings?
25. Do I have an "I don't care" attitude?
26. Am I openly rejecting help?
27. Am I dissatisfied with life?
28. Do I feel powerless and helpless?
29. Do I feel self pity?
30. Am I having thoughts of social drinking?
31. Am I consciously lying?
32. Do I feel no self confidence?
33. Do I have unreasonable resentments for other people?
34. Have I discontinued all my treatment?
35. Do I feel overwhelmingly lonely?
36. Have I tried controlled drinking; either binge or a little every day?
37. Have I lost complete control?

**GOD, GRANT ME THE SERENITY TO ACCEPT THE THINGS I CANNOT CHANGE, THE COURAGE TO CHANGE THE THINGS I CAN AND THE WISDOM TO KNOW THE DIFFERENCE.**

# Spring Focus: Working with Others

## Recovery Crossword Puzzle

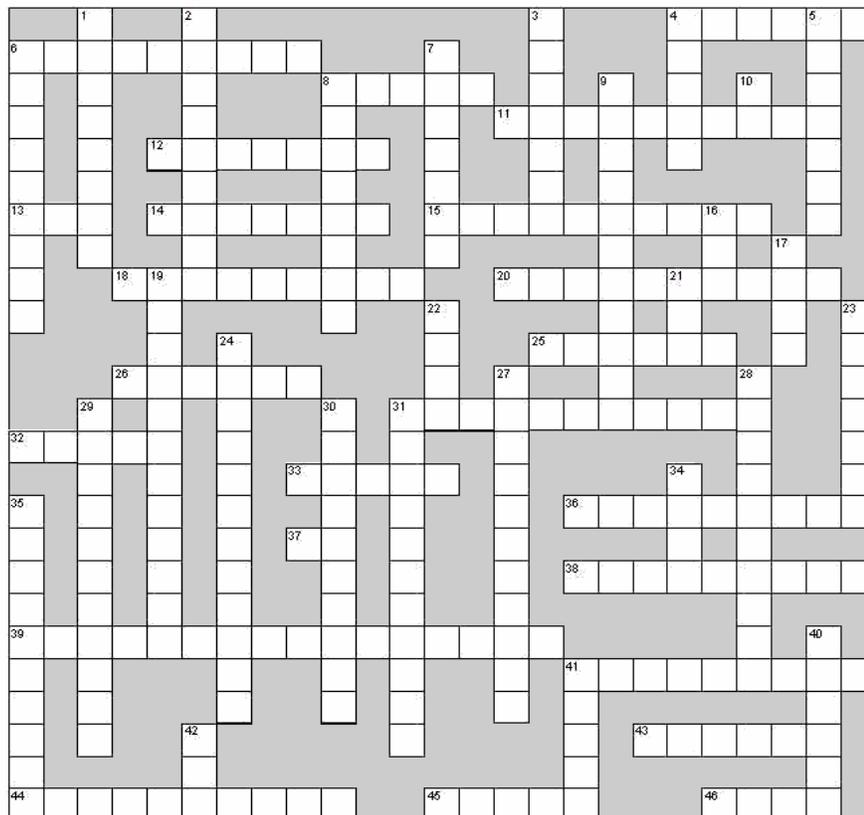
This Puzzle provided courtesy of AA in San Antonio.  
<http://www.aainsa.org>

### ACROSS

4. \_\_\_ emotional appeal seldom suffices
6. Dr. who wrote the Doctor's Opinion
8. Bill met Bob in \_\_\_\_\_.
11. the grouch and the \_\_\_ are the dubious luxury of normal men.
12. once alcoholics drink alcohol this phenomenon develops
13. the friend who called on Bill at the end of his drink career had been sober \_\_\_ months
14. without spirituality, we have no effective mental \_\_\_ against the first drink
15. recovery begins when one alcoholic shares his or her \_\_\_\_, strength and hope with another alcoholic
18. the allergy would be no problem if it were not for the \_\_\_ of the mind
20. crushed by the \_\_\_ of self-will
25. made direct \_\_\_ whenever possible
26. a \_\_\_ for you
31. I want the hand of AA to always be there. For that I am \_\_\_\_\_.
32. pink \_\_\_
33. an undeserved favor from God
36. one of Bill's last drunks occurred on \_\_\_ Day, 1939
37. First word, first step
38. searching and fearless moral \_\_\_
39. those who do not recover are those who are \_\_\_ incapable of being honest
41. an alcoholic is an \_\_\_ with an inferiority complex
43. \_\_\_ power
44. we are self \_\_\_ through our own contributions
45. more than being dry
46. faith without works is \_\_\_

### DOWN

1. the \_\_\_ is broken, you'll have to take the steps
2. \_\_\_ over alcohol
3. the \_\_\_ to change the things I can
4. it's the \_\_\_ drink that gets you drunk
5. that where there is discord, I may bring \_\_\_
6. a sponser is sometimes called a \_\_\_ adviser
7. locked up, \_\_\_ up or sobered up
8. the chapter to the \_\_\_\_\_



9. honesty, open-mindedness and \_\_\_\_\_
10. Let \_\_\_ and let God
16. I can't, God \_\_\_\_\_
17. not using the steps
19. the four horsemen – terror, frustration, \_\_\_ and despair
21. restless, irritable and discontented
22. they will, not \_\_\_ be done
23. we carry the \_\_\_ not the alcoholic
24. restless, irritable and \_\_\_
27. we realized that the people who wronged us were perhaps \_\_\_ sick
28. sought through prayer and \_\_\_\_\_
29. that where there is wrong, I may bring the spirit of \_\_\_\_\_
30. progress not \_\_\_\_\_
31. the twelve \_\_\_ steps of AA
34. if we want to keep it we must \_\_\_ it away
35. \_\_\_ before personalities
40. that where there is \_\_\_\_, I may bring love
41. that where there is \_\_\_\_, I may bring truth
42. whose father

# Spring Focus: Working with Others

## Ridgeview Alumni Association Endowment Fund Campaign

- Yes**, I want to contribute to the Alumni Endowment Fund. I've been in Recovery \_\_\_\_\_ years and would like to give back \$\_\_\_\_\_.
- Yes**, I am not an Alumni, however, I wish to contribute to the Endowment Fund. As a family member, friend, business owner or corporate representative/sponsor. Here is my donation of \$\_\_\_\_\_.

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Phone (\_\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

The Ridgeview Alumni Association is a non-profit organization and all contributions are tax deductible.

**Make checks payable to:** Ridgeview Alumni Association Endowment Fund

**Mail to:** Ridgeview Alumni Steering Committee, 3995 South Cobb Drive, Smyrna, Ga. 30080-6397.

## Serenity Garden Memorial Brick Order Form

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Phone (\_\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_

Message to be engraved on brick: (2 lines / 14 characters per line)

(Line 1) \_\_\_\_\_

(Line 2) \_\_\_\_\_

\$25.00 per brick

\* Please fill out name and contact number, even if you wish this to be an anonymous contribution, so we may contact you in case any questions arise about the inscription.

The Ridgeview Alumni Association is a non-profit organization and all contributions are tax deductible.

**Make checks payable to:** Ridgeview Alumni Association, Bricks

**Mail to:** Ridgeview Alumni Steering Committee, 3995 South Cobb Drive, Smyrna, Ga. 30080-6397

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# Spring Focus: Working with Others

## Keep it coming!

In an effort to update the Ridgeview Alumni mailing list we ask that you complete this card with your current mailing address information, cut it out and return it to us to be included in future distributions of The View newsletter and other correspondence from the Alumni.

If you have any questions please contact the Ridgeview Alumni Association at Ridgeview Alumni Steering Committee, 3995 South Cobb Drive, Smyrna, Georgia 30080-6397.

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