

INTO ACTION

CONFIDENTIAL
Dec. 09/Jan. 10

**Just when the caterpillar
Thought the world was over,
It became a butterfly.**



***Don't Quit Before
The Miracle !***

***Don't Drink Even If
Your Butt Falls Off !***

***District 11 members Share on:
Staying Sober
During the
Holidays. !***

HOLIDAY-SOBRIETY

1. "...an alcoholic by himself is in bad company!" (Anonymous)

My first 10 years in A.A. were spent running my own program without a sponsor, drinking after meetings, and lying to myself and everyone around me. Needless to say I did not remain "sober". In September of 2005 I decided, as my circumstances were declining faster than I could lower my standards, to actually work the Program. Though I didn't have a sponsor I stopped drinking and began a course of 90 in 90. My life was improving and this time the program seemed to be working; until...

(Continued on Page 2)

(Continued from the front page)

The 88th day of my 90 in 90 was Thanksgiving Day. I found myself with family in a very familiar setting in a very uncomfortable position. Every one of my family members was drinking and having a great time and I was not! The disease immediately began to rationalize my taking the first sip; “cunning, baffling, powerful”.

The disease, and my ego, determined I could handle having “just one”, I had been a successful drinker for three decades and had never had a D.U.I., gotten in an accident or, that I knew of, harmed anyone. “What would be the harm in having just one drink?”

Thirty-two days later I hit bottom and was facing felony charges.

How do I spend my holidays now? Well, if you had told me four years ago that I would be sitting in an Alano Club on Thanksgiving, Christmas Eve, Christmas Day, New Years Eve and New Years Day I would have told you to bugger off!

I don’t spend the entire day, or evening, of those holidays in service of others, I am not a saint. The point is that **I remain connected** with those of my kind on those days of the year that have traditionally been “drinking event days”.

When I sign up or **volunteer for a time of service prior to** attending the family holiday function it **provides the strength** to, later in the day, be around those that are drinking. When I **volunteer** for the late night hours I am provided a valid reason for leaving the “festivities” so that I may go be of help to those still suffering. And, I never turn down the opportunity to go on a Twelfth Step Call of which one occurred on a major holiday last year.

While I am granted my “**daily reprieve from my compulsion**” I know all too well how fragile my sobriety is and the patience of this disease. I must be forever vigilant in my honesty to myself, and others. My character defects, my ego, can quickly reverse all that I have gained in this program. **It is “me alone” that will cause my next relapse.**

So, I have to protect myself from “me”. And, the best way I know to guard against “me” is to get the hell **out of myself!** And, getting out of myself is best accomplished when working with another alcoholic.

....an alcoholic by himself is in bad company!”

(Anonymous)

HOLIDAY-SOBRIETY

2.

As each year passes life becomes a lot easier in sobriety but that doesn't mean you stop doing what it takes to make your life easier. I have been sober for 16 years and **continue to be as diligent and willing** as I was when I first came into Alcoholics Anonymous. **Especially around the holidays when you need that extra shot of spirituality to make it through.**

What I do is go to a **gratitude meeting** on Thanksgiving morning to start off the holiday. I then **spend time with the family** for a couple of hours, which usually goes pretty well considering the meeting is always fantastic. I then go to the **jail** that evening to hang out with the guys in the county jail.

At this point I am the most grateful alcoholic on the face of the earth. The same goes for Christmas. I must continually think of someone else and their needs or I'll be sunk. It's also important to **drive separately** and bring a lot of **phone numbers** if something should come up or you become uncomfortable in the holiday surroundings. This **disease is deadly, we must be prepared at all times.**

Lets not forget about the **Big Guy** either. He has known to **perform miracles** and is a **wonderful tool around the holidays.** Just three little things to remember;

1) Trust God, 2) Clean house, and 3) help others.

Anonymous

HOLIDAY-SOBRIETY

3.

When I was approached by a good local AA member and asked to contribute this article on “**Staying Sober During The Holidays**”, a flood of memories (good and bad) came to mind. *(Continued on page 10)*

INTO ACTION Editorial Policy

INTO ACTION News is a bimonthly newsletter of District 11; NIA 20 of Alcoholics Anonymous. It is about, by and for the Members of the Fellowship of AA. Opinions expressed herein are NOT to be attributed to AA as a whole, nor does publication of information imply any endorsement by AA. Quotations and artwork from AA literature are reprinted with permission from AA World Service, Inc. and/or The AA Grapevine, Inc. Submissions are edited for space and clarity ONLY. Contact information is required and anonymity is respected.

THEME FOR THE FEBRUARY – MARCH INTO ACTION IS STEP 1 & STEP 2 or COMING TO BELIEVE or anything you wish to submit.

INTO Action: District 11's Newsletter
 Editor: David Gilbert 815-344-6523
 **E-mail: Soulsurgery@comcast.net

Below Are the NIA Area 20 Election Results

- Delegate – Ray M.
- Alternate Delegate – Rich H.
- Area Chair – Cheryl V.
- Area Alternate Chair: Jeff G.
- Area Treasurer – Jeff Lee
- Area Alternate Treasurer – Mike Frisbee
- Area Secretary – Tammy
- Area Alternate Secretary – Dawn
- Area Registrar – Judd W.
- Area Alternate Registrar – Marilyn F.
- CPC – Fred B.
- CPC Alt. – OPEN**
- Literature – Pat W.
- Alternate Literature – Cappy S.
- GVR – Steve
- Alt. GVR – Jenni P.
- Corrections – Lenny K.
- Alt. Corrections – John R.
- Answering Service – Jeff L.
- Alt. Answering Service – M.
- Special Needs – Bob
- Alt. Special Needs – Heather
- Public Information – Ken R.
- Alt. PI – Sarina
- Treatment Chair – Kelly L.
- Alt. Treatment Chair – OPEN (I think)**
- Archives – Dan M.
- Alt. Archives – Rich P.

District 11 G.S.R.

Meetings Are Held On 1st Thursday of the Month at the First United Methodist Church, 236 W. Crystal Lake Ave. Northeast
 Corner of Dole & Crystal Lake Avenue in Crystal Lake, Illinois.



District Meeting 7:30 PM

DISTRICT 11's WEB SITE:
<http://www.aa-nia-dist11.org>

****SCHEDULE INFO CHANGES: PLEASE CALL LINDA S., 815-678-4129 OR EMAIL AT: schedulemaker@ymail.com**

From Group (Name) _____
Group #: _____
Dist. #: _____
Meeting City: _____

Northern Illinois District Eleven
P.O. Box 846
McHenry, IL 60051-0846

N.I.A. Treasurer
Northern Illinois Area, Ltd.
P.O. Box 246
Bourbonnais, IL 60914-0246

The General Service Office
AAWS
P.O. Box 459
Grand Central Station
New York, NY 10163-0459

Group Contributions ~ Mail To: ~

DCM REPORT FOR DISTRICT 11 – DECEMBER Rotating-Out...

Dear AA fellowship in District 11,

This is my last report as your DCM to appear in the newsletter. It is 3:18 in the morning on Sunday at Soberfest, and I have just completed my only commitment at this Fest – an Alkathon lead on rigorous honesty. David reminded me yesterday of the deadline for this newsletter, so this is as good a time as any. What else do I have to do? Sleep? The main speaker last night spoke of the AA energy he felt in the room, and if you have ever attended Soberfest, you know why I can't sleep right now. Hey, I would rather be kept up by the "energy of AA" than by worries and a troubled spirit.

I don't know if I would have stayed sober the last 2 years without participating in service to Alcoholics Anonymous. There certainly were challenges to my sobriety, but the commitment represented by my service helped keep me sober. Service work keeps me connected to AA in a way that nothing else can. And I only bring this up for two reasons: I am grateful to the fellowship in District 11 and I want to encourage others to get involved in service to Alcoholics Anonymous.

There were times over the past couple of years when I felt like I wasn't doing it right as DCM. I kept waiting until the last minute to write my reports and set the agenda for meetings. I didn't arrive early enough to set up and have the coffee made before the meeting started. I could go on, but you get the idea. The people involved in service at the district level kept boosting my spirits with encouragement me when I needed it. And they busted my chops as needed too. You people are the best!

For a few months we didn't have a functioning district secretary, and I felt like a total failure trying to fill in. Then Christine showed up out of the woodwork and saved my you know what.

As I made the transition from DCM alternate to DCM, the district schedule sorely needed updating and the database was unavailable to us. Linda offered to help Rich, who was working on it, and ended up becoming the new schedule maker. She made awesome changes in design, created a new database, and established an on-line connection for making changes to the schedule.

Now an established system is in place so that anyone with moderate computer skills can continue making updated schedules. Linda also picked up my slack as an advocate for group representation at the level of district and area by serving as a capable and active LCM. The district website became neglected and outdated. Someone suggested a guy named Chuck might be able to help. He ended up making a totally new website from scratch and continues to update it as the district Webmaster.



Here were three people, only one who I knew, that stepped up to provide services needed to carry the message in District 11. There are many others who continued service or rotated in as needed and I thank you all on behalf of the fellowship. The point I'm trying to make is that it isn't about me, it's about we. And we are doing a pretty good job. If it had been up to me to fill the positions mentioned above, we wouldn't have meeting minutes, schedules, or a web site. Other people work to provide meetings in jails and hospitals, this newsletter, and outreach to professionals and the community at large. So what I learned is that even when I was beating myself up, I was really on an ego trip!

Service work alone will not keep me or anyone else sober. This has been proven time and time again. We have to practice the 12 steps of Alcoholics Anonymous as a design for living to stay sober one day at a time. If you are reading this, you probably already know that. You also know service work is part of Step 12 and the means by which we accomplish the second half of our primary purpose – to help others recover from alcoholism.

Service work can take many forms. If you chair meetings or do other work for a group, you are doing service work to help carry the message of hope to the suffering alcoholic. Your effort is recognized by others in the fellowship, believe me. Just speaking at meetings is not service work. That is participating in your own recovery. Good for you! How about the alcoholic that hasn't been to a meeting or the one that can't get to a meeting because of being locked up in jail? If you have been sober for any amount of time as the result of AA, then you can volunteer to help any one of several committees at the district.

(Continued on the next page)

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If you have two years sobriety, you can serve as a committee chairperson. No experience is necessary to do service work. Anyone that is sober can do something. Together we do big things. You can help. Come to a District 11 business meeting. We meet the first Thursday of every month at 7:30 PM in Crystal Lake at the church on the corner of Dole and Crystal Lake Avenue. The person you help the most just may be you.

Respectfully –Yours In Service,
Dan Michel

Why Is He Doing This For Me?

“There have been millions and millions of alcoholics stagger across the face of this earth. They have lived and died in alcoholism.

They have died, and they have carried down in disgrace, families, friends, and associates with them. They have caused carnage in this world, and they have died hopelessly. It's been a tragedy.

Out of all these millions of people, therefore, why?

You tell me why just a few thousand of us have this opportunity. Why are we chosen for this? Why am I chosen for this? Why do I get this chance? Why do you get this chance when thousands and thousands and millions and millions of other people never had this chance and there are probably millions around who never will or never shall? Ask yourself this, sometime. It might put a new value on your membership here.

These are the things we ought to check ourselves with once and awhile. I think it's a miracle that any of us are here. 'Cause no one ever gets here until he's hopelessly lost.'"

Clarence S. – 1963

Monthly Meeting Minutes for District 11 November 5, 2009

(Editor's Note: Dates and times contained in the following minutes are a reflection from the minutes taken on November 5, 2009, not the date of this publication.)

Meeting Time: 7:30 PM
Attendance: 41
Committee Members: 10
Groups Represented: 26

Anniversaries: CONGRATULATIONS! Ric-2yrs, Bob-5 yrs, Chuck-16 yrs, Justin-6 yrs, Clarence-10 yrs, Brad-1 yr, Peter-28 yrs.

Welcome to all who joined the Dist. 11 meeting for the first time as well.

Secretary's Report: (*Christine G.-Temporary*) (**Alt. Open**)
Written committee report forms must be submitted to secretary to be included in minutes. Please submit any changes or updates. Updated Rosters and Contact list as of August 09 on back table. Please be reminded that Group Change Forms are on table, by me or can be submitted on website: niaregistrar@gmail.com. If submitted by website, please cc. Christine G. and Linda S., Schedule Maker. Thank you for your cooperation, support and the opportunity to be of service.

DCM Report: *Dan M.* See report below.

Treasurer's Report: *Lynn B.*

Starting Balance	\$3139.98
Expenses	\$1242.88
Income	<u>\$1324.25</u>
Ending Balance	\$3139.98

Old Business:

- DCM discussed changing facility for District 11 meetings. Rent paid at Crystal Lake First United Methodist Church thru December 2009. Paid thru Jan.2010.
AD Hoc committee on Dist. 11 mtg location site location
- Update from 2010 IL State Conference Planning Committee: Still need volunteers

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New Business:

- Elections are in November 2009. Please consider rotating into another service position and talking to others who you think are good candidates (2 yr. sobriety required to chair committee)
- Motion made to change Dist.11 meeting location to McHenry Township. 1 year commitment. Donation amount up to the group conscience. Decision 35 For /2 against.
- 1) Elections – Show of hands suggested with candidates out of view (in case of multiple candidates), 2 counters appointed by the Chair, simple majority, Voting members include: GSRs (or Alt. if GSR not present), District 11 Service committee chairs (Alt. if chair not present), Treasurer (or Alt.), Secretary (or Alt.) and the Alt. DCM. The DCM only votes in the case of a tie. (This was the procedure used past 2 elections) for the following positions:

Elected or Open AS OF 11/09

- 1) Secretary OPEN (postponed)
- 2) Alt Sec OPEN (postponed)
- 3) Treasurer Linda Leaf
- 4) Alt Treas. OPEN (postponed)
- 5) DCM Brandon L.
- 6) Alt DCM Frank G.
- 7) P I OPEN (postponed)
- 8) Alt PI OPEN (postponed)
- 9) Corrections Chuck L.
- 10) Alt Corr. Julie Z.
- 11) Hosp/Tr Mike R.
- 12) Alt H T Dave (Scooter) R.
- 13)CPC Jon S.
- 14) Alt CPC Julie Z.
- 15) Ans. Ser. Fred G.
- 16) Alt Ans. Justin K.
- 17) GV Steve L.
- 18) Alt GV Brad B.
- 19) Special Nd Pat C.
- 20) Alt SN OPEN (postponed)



Editors Note:

Open positions are available –
Be part of the solution
at the District Level.
Join us at our next meeting on
Dec. 3rd



“Our Twelve Steps, when simmered down to the last resolve themselves into the words “love” and “service.”

Dr. Bob S. Co-Founder

- All other positions are by appointment of the DCM
- 2) NIA Chair has asked groups to consider questions about the use of literature profits for GSO operating expenses. A handout is here for you to take back to your groups to discuss and arrive at a group conscience. Ray would appreciate any feedback from groups or individuals. See handout for background information, questions posed, and contact info for Ray. Time will be allotted for discussion at the NIA Winter Assoc.

Public Information: Brandon L. (Alt. OPEN)

- Plan on placing small announcement in the NW Herald around thanksgiving & Christmas stating something like “If you want to drink that’s your business, If you want to stop that’s ours.” With the Dist.11 phone # and website. I also plan on getting an AA PSA aired in our area. Thank you.

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Corrections: *Chuck L. (Alt. OPEN)*

- Volunteers rotated. Case of Big Books delivered. Had request at County for Spanish speaking meeting.

Hospital and Treatment: *Mike R., Dave "Scooter" R.(alt)*

- (1) BTG calls from Allison @ Centegra on 10.31.09. Subject didn't follow thru.

Cooperation with Professional Community: *Tammy C. (John S., alt)*

- *No report*

Answering Service: *Jim M., Tom F. (alt)*

- Needs volunteers from 7 am – 7 pm.
- Received 127 calls total as follows: 87 meeting info, 4 open meeting info, 10 hang-ups, 2 wrong #, 3 refused to give a call back #, 9 wanted to talk to an AA, 2 Al-anon, 1 intervention, 1 NA/CA, 3 treatment info, 1 solicitors, 2 Spanish info, 2 Polish, 1 Korean, 0 needed ride.
- 4 calls were from out of the district
- 0 were from out of state
- Response times were as follows: 0–10 minutes (80), 11–20 minutes (14), 21-30 minutes (5), and over 30 minutes (3)

Newsletter: *Dave G., Ric (alt)*

Updated by editor:

The Deadline for the Feb/Mar 2010 IntoAction Issue is January 23, 2010

The Theme will be Steps 1 and 2 or Came to Believe— or anything you wish.

Group news and events and your personal Experience, Strength and Hope.

Thanks for all of your shares and efforts.

Please send any flyers to Chuck at the Districts' website.

DISTRICT 11's WEB SITE:

- <http://www.aa-nia-dist11.org>

Archives: Clarence J.

- Old Timer's Brunch is Feb.21, 2010 at the American Legion Hall, Wauconda. Doors open at 9am, brunch from 9:30-11 am, Speakers at 11 am. Contribution \$6/person. Speaker: TBA. Thank you

Grapevine: *Frank G.(Steve L.)*

- Ordered and received new subscription forms from Grapevine to display at Soberfest and pass around. Thank You

Special Needs: *Dave S.(alt) Chuck S.*

- No report.

Local Committee Member: *Linda S.*

- No report

Workshop: *Craig C, Sue C.(alt)*

- District workshop at Soberfest will be held at 3 pm in main ballroom. The topic will be The Traditions in Relationships. Guest speakers will be George & Tina H. from Waukesha, WI.
- Any groups willing to do a Workshop, please contact me (Sue C.) at 815-861-4812.

Webmaster: *Chuck T.*

- Not present – no report

Schedule Maker: *Linda S.*

- Got some changes thru email address below. Will send new one for web address. Planning to print new schedules Jan. 2010. Anyone available and willing to help with schedules, please let me know. Please make effort to keep schedule updated.
- Suggested to put procedure for schedule changes into Into Action Newsletter. Changes can be done via schedulermaker@ymail.com Thank you.

2010 IL State Conference Planning Committee:

Dale H.

- Still need volunteers
- **Still need Alkathon & Decorations Chairs! Plus any volunteer help needed!**
- **Please tell your groups – 3rd Sunday every month 3 pm – Centegra Hospital, Classroom B, McHenry.**

Upcoming Events

- 2010 State Conference - Volunteers 25-100 needed. Meetings held third Sunday each month until event. (3 pm at Centegra, McHenry, Classroom A)
- Reminder of 75th International Conference in San Antonio, TX, July 2010.
- 2009 E. Central Reg. Forum, Nov. 13-15, Kalamazoo, MI
- Winter Assbly, Dec12th, Lord Life Church, La Fox, Dist. 40 Host,
- McHenry's 20th Annual Soberfest, Nov. 20-22, Grand Geneva Resort, Lake. Geneva, WI →

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Open Mic

- Dave – Soberfest – Nov. 20th-22nd, 2009 - Grand Geneva, WI. Still has rooms available.
- Mike – Co-Chair for Soberfest , brought Soberfest registration forms.
- Steve-NO IL. State Conf. 3rd Sunday mtg in November due to conflict w/Soberfest
- Lynn – 12/20 8 am Breakfast Open mtg. Burtons Bridge – 11 am
- Dave, Newsletter - Please send any flyers to website for newsletter

Updated by editor:

**** The next district meeting will be held on
Thursday, January 7, 2010****

Respectfully Submitted, Christine Grechis, Secretary

Upcoming Events

NIA

Winter Assembly

December 12th

Lord of Life Church

**40W605 IL Rte. 38 @ La Fox Rd,
 La Fox, IL,
 Kelly 630-510-3069**

We Are Not Saints Convention

January 15-17

*Holiday Inn Chicago North Shore
 5300 W Touhy Ave, Skokie, IL
 60077*

*hiskokie.com,
 Eric 312-523-3477 or*

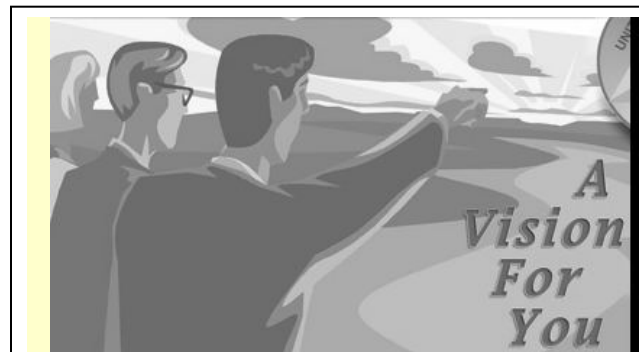
wearenotsaints@wearenotsaints.com

**“The Usual Suspects” Men’s
 Retreat**

*Inspiration Center, Walworth, WI,
 Joe----1-815-728-1281*

**“Heart to Heart” Women’s
 Retreat**

*Inspiration Center, Walworth, WI,
 Debbie 815-728-1281*



**2010 State
 Conference –**

Volunteers 25-100 needed.
 Meetings held third Sunday each
 month until event. (3 pm at Centegra,
 McHenry, Classroom A)



**75th International
 Conference in San Antonio,
 TX, July 2010.**





Design For Living Group Meetings,

Held at 7: PM on Tuesdays and Wednesdays ~

During December

will be held at the

McHenry Senior Center

3519 N Richmond Rd

Johnsburg, IL.

Just a block south of the McHenry Township Building and one block due west of the Moose Lodge – Just off Rt. 31 North at Johnsburg Road.

In January 2010, the meetings will return to the McHenry Township Building

20th ANNUAL MCHENRY SOBERFEST 2009 **WORKING WITH OTHERS**

Thank you to everyone who participated and/or attended this year's Soberfest. With the economy the way it is right now we know what a sacrifice you made to attend. Without you all it would not have been the success it was again this year.

The 20th Annual McHenry Soberfest 2009 Conference was once again held at the Grand Geneva Resort in Lake Geneva, Wisconsin on November 20th, 21st, and 22nd. The Soberfest committee worked very hard and long to bring this event to fruition and I'm extremely honored to have worked with them.



This year's conference sat approximately 1220 for dinner Saturday night and there was approximately 2400 guests registered this year. This year's Al-Anon and AA speakers which always highlight this event were Rick J., Toronto Canada, Don M., Louisville, KY., Brian M., New York, N.Y., Stephanie B., Granite Shoals, TX., Gretchen T., Lake Zurich, IL., Sheldon F., Las Vegas, NV., Deb H., Yucca Valley, CA. A very heartfelt thank you to them for sharing their experience, strength and hope with us.

Father Patrick Boyle opened our Saturday night banquet with an amazing prayer, then a dinner of chicken, sirloin, garlic mashed potatoes, mixed vegetables and cheese cake was served.

This year's conference once again featured Karaoke on Friday night and a huge dance on Saturday night with music brought to you by "George and Tina".

Our Literature room, Archive room, Alcathons, Al-Anonathons, District 11's workshop "Traditions in Relationships" saw high attendance. Area 20 workshops "The AA Group" and "Bridging the Gap" were well attended. AMOT tapes worked tirelessly to provide CDs of the speakers.

Soberfest 21 will be held again at the Grand Geneva Resort on November 19th, 20th, and 21st 2010. The 2010 Soberfest committee elections will be held in January at 7:30pm at the Home State Bank in McHenry.

For more information please contact
Jay D at 224-392-4248 or Dave G. 815-344-6523

Yours in service,
Jay Dzik
2009 Soberfest Chair

HOLIDAY-SOBRIETY (Continued from page 2)

With service work as a key part of my continuous sobriety, I accepted despite my fears of being judged, misinterpreted or that this contribution could be an abject failure. However, my experience has been that **any selfless service work** in A.A. (or out) **usually works out just fine.**

Our Founders were not kidding when they included in the Big Book that “the problem of the alcoholic centers in his mind.” My early recovery was painful and frustrating because I did not work the early steps (especially Step One each day) to cope with my alcoholic mind, which was obsessive about alcohol and made my life revolve entirely around it. Working my program instead of The Program in late 1995, I found myself drunk on Thanksgiving, battled to sober up through December and New Years only to go on a Florida vacation (binge) a week later and, fortunately, completely surrender upon my return.

The bottom line for me is I must live/work The Program to the best of my abilities or I will get drunk, and, frankly, I DON'T EVER WANT TO SOBER UP AGAIN!!!

Especially during the holidays with all the activities, dates, deadlines, relatives, friends, drunks, other sick people etc., my erratic emotions or “mood swings” can take my alcoholic mind from the depths of depression, despair, fear and loneliness (my old drinking partners) to delusional optimism, happiness, courage and “people pleasing”. **The only hope for this alcoholic is to stay “plugged in” to the Program.** I try to: **1) make more meetings** (ideally another 90 & 90); **2) slow down** so that my reaction time between my actions and the “mood swing” or the related incident will include a “spot check inventory” (Is this A.A. thinking/behavior or Alcoholic thinking/behavior? What Step(s) do I need to apply here?); **3) stick to my prayer and meditation** routine (for consistency and stability not to “go through the motions”) and **pray more often** throughout each day; and **4) step up Twelfth Step work** with sponsees and newcomers for mutual encouragement, support and guidance. **It's about growth in sobriety** so take what you need to strengthen your spiritual condition and efforts in The Program.

Remember a sober alcoholic is a one day at a time miracle. The holiday season is a celebration of miracles if you are open to it. Stay “plugged in” to the Program, stay “spiritually fit”, and you won't have to watch. “It's A Wonderful Life” because you'll be living it.

Dan S.
Island Lake, IL

HOLIDAY-SOBRIETY

4.

When I was still out there, it was all about excess. It didn't matter if it was the holidays or just another family function. How much beer could I consume at this family member's house? How much liquor, and who might have some pot or maybe a line or two? Those were the first things that would pop into my head; food and gifts would be an afterthought. I eventually isolated myself, not wanting to be at any family functions, including holidays. I would pretend to be sick or just blow it off all together since I knew my family would give me their constructive criticism and be brutally honest with me. Who needed it?

My first sober Christmas I had only been in the program for a couple of months and even though I was still on my honeymoon I knew that it wasn't going to be easy. I had the openness, honesty and the willingness but would it be enough? Not everyone in my family knew about A.A. and I didn't want anyone to think they had to change because of me. I had already done so much to affect and change these people's lives; did I need to do any more damage? Every time someone would crack open a beer or pop open a bottle of wine it wouldn't matter where I was in the house, I would smell it. My mouth would water and I could almost taste it! Looking back, it could have been a serious mistake to be in this type of environment, but I managed to stay sober.

My second year was a little bit easier. My whole family knew I was in the program and even though most of them would ask me if their drinking would bother me, some just **acted as if I were cured** and it wouldn't matter if they had a drink in front of me. In the end,

(Continued on the next page)

HOLIDAY-SOBRIETY (Continued from page 10)

I had tools that the program had given me and was proud the comments from my family had changed from criticism to congratulations. I was finally **starting to understand what A.A. was all about**. It didn't matter what Cousin Joe or Aunt Pat were doing, **it was about what I was doing**. If I drank, I would feel I had let myself down, the fellowship, my sponsor and above all my Higher Power. **I fought too hard and struggled mentally and physically for too long to throw it all away!**

I'm about to enter my third Christmas and **things are much clearer now. I realize that keeping things simple and remaining humble and true to myself are the skills that make me a valued employee, co-worker, friend, son, brother, husband and father**. This Christmas will be about the **gratitude** I will always have for **the A.A. program** and for **all the people in the fellowship** who have given me back my life through their caring, sharing and understanding. They have given me the **courage** to be the man I've always wanted to be. I will continue my efforts to give to others, to never forget the past and to keep my future goals in sight. **One day at a time, I can truly be happy, joyous and free!** Thank you to all! The will of God will never take you where the grace of God will not protect you!

May God bless you and keep you! Merry Christmas!

Heard Around the Tables District 11's Wisdom and Witticisms

- ⊗ AA is in the Hope Business. That is what we do; give Hope to those that are suffering.
- ⊗ I've found that asking myself three questions have saved me countless amends:
Does it need to be said?
Does it need to be said now?
Does it need to be said by me?
- ⊗ When I was drinking, people didn't tell me I was an alcoholic.
People told me I was a jerk and they didn't want me around anymore.

THE McHENRY ALANO CLUB

IS MOVING!!!

January 1ST, 2010
To 409 Front Street (route 31)
McHenry, IL Unit D

The club will be open all day, 1/1/10
for key exchange, new
memberships, fellowship, etc.

The regular Friday 10:00 a.m. and
7:30 p.m. meetings will be the first
to be held at the new club.

Come and see this beautiful new facility and
help support the new MAC

**For more information, call
Ray S. at (847) 812-4084**

- ⊗ "Faith is taking the first step without seeing the whole staircase."
- ⊗ Chinese Proverb
When someone shares something of value with you, and you benefit from it, you have a moral obligation to share it with others.'
- ⊗ I read 38 "self-help" books and got drunk 38 times. I read 1 "help-others" book and have been sober ever since.
- ⊗ "Spirituality is doing what I said I was going to do, when I said I was going to do it, and being somewhere when I said I would be there!"
- ⊗ "United we stand . . . divided we stagger."
- ⊗ The biggest room in the world is the room for improvement!

Twelve Tips on Keeping Your Holiday Season Sober and Joyous

Holiday parties without liquid spirits may still seem a dreary prospect to new A.A.s. But many of us have enjoyed the happiest holidays of our lives sober—an idea we would never have dreamed of, wanted, or believed possible when drinking.

Here are some tips on having an all-round ball without a drop of alcohol.



1. Line up extra A.A. activities for the holiday season. Arrange to take newcomers to meetings, answer the phones at a clubhouse or central office, speak, help with dishes, or visit the alcoholic ward at a hospital.

2. Be host to A.A. friends, especially newcomers. If you don't have a place where you can throw a formal party, take one person to a diner and spring for the coffee.



3. Keep your A.A. telephone list with you all the time. If a drinking urge or panic comes—postpone everything else until you've called an A.A.

4. Find out about the special holiday parties, meetings, or other celebrations given by groups in your area, and go. If you're timid, take someone newer than you are.

5. Skip any drinking occasion you are nervous about. Remember how clever you were at excuses when drinking? Now put the talent to good use. No office party is as important as saving your life

6. If you have to go to a drinking party and can't take an A.A. with you, keep some candy handy.

7. Don't think you have to stay late. Plan in advance an "important date" you have to keep.



8. Worship in your own way.

9. Don't sit around brooding. Catch up on those books, museums, walks, and letters.

10. Don't start now getting worked up about all those holiday temptations.

Remember—"one day at a time."

11. Enjoy the true beauty of holiday love and joy. Maybe you cannot give material gifts — but this year, you can give love.

12. "Having had a . . ." No need to spell out the Twelfth Step here, since you already

Have a SAFE and SOBER Holiday Season