

**SOUTH
EASTERN
NEW
YORK**

AREA 49



HISTORY BOOK

5th Edition



SOUTH EASTERN NEW YORK AREA COMMITTEE AND ASSEMBLY OF ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS (SENY, AREA 49) ARCHIVES COMMITTEE

SENY AREA 49 HISTORY BOOK, 5TH EDITION

March 2024

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Cover art images clockwise from top left: View of lower Manhattan, New York County; River in Sullivan County; Montauk Point Lighthouse, Suffolk County; Governor Mario M. Cuomo (Tappan Zee) Bridge spanning the Hudson River between Tarrytown, Westchester County and Nyack, Rockland County; Manhattan and Brooklyn Bridges between New York (Manhattan) and Brooklyn Counties; center, Jamaica Bay Bird Sanctuary, Queens County.

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SENY AREA 49 HISTORY, 5TH EDITION

MARCH 2024

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***Grapevine* Vol. 1, No. 1, June 1944**

INTRODUCTION

In October 1950, Bill W.'s dream for the future of Alcoholics Anonymous was realized with the Alcoholic Foundation Trustees' approval of the General Service Conference (GSC) on a trial basis. The first Conference met the following April at the Commodore Hotel in Manhattan. "AA comes of age" in 1955 when that trial is successfully completed and the GSC becomes a enduring part of AA's service structure by a resolution offered by Bill and passed by the attendees at AA's 20th Anniversary Convention in St. Louis that year. That resolution read in part,

Be it therefore resolved: That the General Service Conference . . . should become as of this date . . . the guardian of the Traditions of Alcoholics Anonymous, the perpetuators of the world services of our Society, the voice of the group conscience of our entire Fellowship, and the sole successors of its co-founders, Doctor Bob and Bill.¹



First General Service Conference, April 1951

Tradition Nine suggests that AA as such ought never be organized, yet recognizes some kind of organization is needed to effectively carry the message in ways that the local groups cannot.

To start, in organizing the Conference, the United States and Canada were divided into 75 delegate areas, and from this mapping came the development of the AA service areas. The first half of the Conference's delegates, elected for two years, was seated in 1951 (Panel 1). The second half, elected for two years, was seated in 1952 (Panel 2). Thereafter, one panel would be elected, and one would retire each year on completion of its two years of service.² This would give the Conference some continuity.

In South Eastern New York (SENY), which is one of the now 93 delegate areas in the United States and Canada, we deal with AA issues and activities for the area which includes

the City of New York (the boroughs of the Bronx, Brooklyn, Manhattan, Queens and Staten Island), Long Island (Nassau and Suffolk counties) and the five nearby upstate New York counties of Orange, Putnam, Rockland, Sullivan and Westchester, along with a non-geographical Hispanic Districts grouping representing all participating Spanish language AA groups throughout SENY. This service beyond the home groups includes connecting SENY to the annual Conference, and carrying out a variety of other service commitments that need to be filled within the area.

Intergroup/Central Offices (ICO), in contrast to General Service, are more on the front-line. Active ICO members answer AA hotlines providing answers to questions about AA to those who call AA for information or help. This may include alcoholics, but also contacts such as the family and friends of alcoholics, and students and professionals who are for whatever reason AA-interested or curious. The ICOs maintain local AA meeting lists.

Although separate service entities, General Service and the ICOs work cooperatively and may share some responsibilities.

OUR STORIES DISCLOSE . . .

Alcoholics Anonymous today rests firmly on the foundation of what went before, our history. The story of our AA fellowship in South Eastern New York is deeply associated with the very roots of our program of recovery, in no small part because AA co-founder Bill W. lived here and did much of his AA writing here.

Beyond the inspiration which may be found in the miraculous chain of people and events that are a part of AA's pre and early history, it is good to look back on how it all happened and perhaps speculate, serendipity or Providence?

Do you know where Bill W. was first introduced to a spiritual road to recovery from his alcoholism? It wasn't Ohio. It was [Brooklyn](#). How about where Bill was when he started on what was to be his last extended drunk? That was [Staten Island](#). Know where the first institutionally based AA meeting was held? That was [Rockland](#) State Hospital. Where was the hospital where Dr. William D. Silkworth treated alcoholic patients, including a fellow named Bill W.? The answer is Towns Hospital, [Manhattan](#).

These answers and other pieces of AA history that belong to SENY are found in the following pages. As you read, you will walk through more than 88 years of the AA story. Perhaps you will find a name you have heard, or even someone you know. Perhaps your group will be mentioned. It is all part of our collective history, and unique to SENY.

ABOUT THIS HISTORY BOOK

This booklet is dedicated to all those trusted servants who gave and give so much of their time and effort to serve South Eastern New York (SENY) as delegates, and to the many more anonymous others who have been trusted servants in the area at any level in both General Service and Intergroup.

Respecting our Traditions on anonymity, in this booklet AA members, living or deceased, are referred to by first name, last initial only.³

Also, while every effort has been made to bring consistency to the style, format and layout of the booklet, it has been a work in progress for some time involving many AA members from throughout SENY making significant and varied contributions. As such, you will hear different voices and approaches to the story telling.

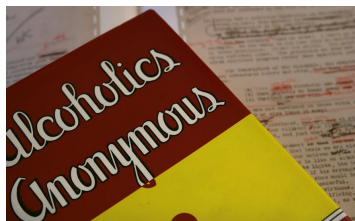
Some of the information in this booklet is firmly grounded in documentation, but some is not. Insofar as the information provided for this booklet has not been closely vetted by the SENY Archives Committee before publication, there may be some inconsistencies from one telling of the story to another. In some cases, these are our best recalls, sometimes passed on second or even third hand, and the further back in time we place an event, the more loose the telling of the story may be. We believe all who have participated are sincere AA storytellers. In the end, this is a collection of stories lovingly gathered and retold by volunteer amateur historians in the best AA tradition.

This Fifth Edition of our history book is available in both print and digital editions. In it, the overall organization and some of the entries remain largely unchanged from the [Fourth Edition](#) which was offered in 2020 in a digital format only. Other entries have seen only minor revisions, and a few are extensively rewritten.

Finally, the digital edition of this booklet contains hyperlinks. Those that link within the book are firm, but those which rely on linking to information on the internet, while reliable now, will probably deteriorate with time.

The SENY Archives Committee welcomes any comments, corrections, or additions. We also thank the many members of the Fellowship, area, county and Intergroup archivists and historians, editors, graphic artists, photographers, proofreaders, friends, and others who have helped make this current revision possible. They have helped us once again to “pass it on,” even as the chain continues to grow.

—SENY Archives Committee, March 2024



First Edition “Big Book” with printer’s manuscript

THE “HEADQUARTERS” BUILDINGS

- **17 William Street** (William Street near Broad Street), Newark, New Jersey ⁴

While not in SENY, this is where Hank P. and Bill W. set up the first AA Headquarters office here at the office of Honor Dealers, an auto dealership owned by Hank. Bill wrote much of the “Big Book” from this office. Ruth Hock worked for Hank as a secretary and with Bill on the book; she was AA's first non-alcoholic employee. The office remained at this location from about 1938 to 1940.

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

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

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

AA headquarters moved to the Grand Central Area after Bill and Lois found their new home at Stepping Stones in Bedford Hills. Bill could easily take a train from Stepping Stones to Grand Central Terminal and walk from there to the new office, making for an easy commute. The offices remained here from about 1944 to 1950. The new mailing address was PO Box 459, Grand Central Annex, still used by AA World Services, Inc. today.

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

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

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

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

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

This served as AA's General Service Office for over 20 years (from 1970 to 1992), eventually occupying five floors in two buildings.

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

The [General Service Office](#) (GSO) moved to this building, adjacent to the Riverside Church, in 1992 and remains there today. Offices occupy the 11th floor and are shared with the [Grapevine](#) offices. John D. Rockefeller made the entire block of land available for the structure which houses many church groups, interdenominational agencies, and non-profit organizations.



475 Riverside Drive, Riverside Church in the background.

WHERE ALCOHOLICS WENT FOR HELP

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

Bill landed in Towns Hospital four times, between 1933 and 1934 for treatment of alcoholism, and ultimately had a spiritual experience there in 1934 that led to his sobriety.

CHARLES B. TOWNS HOSPITAL
293 Central Park West New York, New York
For ALCOHOLISM and DRUG ADDICTION

ANY
PHYSICIAN
having an ad-
dict problem is
invited to write
for Hospital
literature.

This institution has specialized in addictions for over 30 years. Its method of treatment has been fully described in THE JOURNAL A. M. A.; in The Handbook of Therapy, from the A. M. A. Press; and in other scientific literature. The treatment is a regular hospital procedure, and provides a definite means for eliminating the toxic products of alcohol and drugs from the tissues. A complete Department of Physical Therapy, with gymnasium and other facilities for physical rebuilding, is maintained. Operated as an "open" institution. Physicians are not only invited but urged to accompany and stay with their patients.



Located Directly
Across from Central Park

Dr. William Silkworth, Medical Superintendent at Towns, treated 40,000 alcoholics there, including Bill W. and Hank P., and wrote the "Doctor's Opinion" in *Alcoholics Anonymous*.

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

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

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

Here Bill met Willard Richardson, a friend of his brother-in-law and the connection to John D. Rockefeller, Jr. Bill met Rockefeller in October 1937 in his 66th floor office, and told him about the AA program. The meeting went well, and in many ways, Rockefeller helped the fledgling organization survive its early years while at the same time leading us to our Seventh Tradition.

- **New York Clubhouse**, 334½ West 24th Street (between 8th and 9th Avenues), Chelsea,
Manhattan

This first clubhouse was rented in 1940 for 100 dollars a month. This was the first establishment acquired specifically to house Fellowship meetings. Bill and Lois, virtually homeless during this time after losing their Clinton Street, Brooklyn home, lived in a small upstairs room for about a year. It was at the Clubhouse that Bill first met Fr. Ed Dowling who would become Bill's spiritual mentor and who was instrumental in bringing AA to his hometown of St. Louis, MO.

The Clubhouse becomes a de facto clearing house for local AA information from which New York Intergroup formally emerges in 1946.



Interior of the New York Clubhouse

BILL AND LOIS W.'s HOMES

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

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

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

Lois's family owned this home for many years. Lois Burnham was born in this house in 1891. Bill and Lois lived here briefly in 1919, with her parents, when they were just getting on their feet. They moved there again in 1930, when the couple's financial situation had deteriorated severely after the stock market crash. Lois's mother was dying of cancer and Bill's drinking was quite bad. Lois's father gave the home to Lois and Bill after they married a few years after his wife's death.



182 Clinton Street

Elby T. brought Bill his message of spiritual healing and recovery in 1934 sitting with him in the kitchen at 182 Clinton Street, and it was in this house that Bill finally got sober. In 1935, Bill began hosting meetings at the house on Tuesdays, meeting with drunks constantly, some of whom lived there with Bill and Lois if they had nowhere else to go.

After Lois's father died in 1936, the mortgage company took ownership of the home, but the couple continued living there, renting the property until 1939 when they could no longer afford the rent. They were virtually homeless for two years, living with friends, above offices and in the 24th Street Clubhouse.

- **[Stepping Stones](#)**, 62 Oak Road, Katonah (Bedford Hills), Westchester

About an hour north of Manhattan, Bill and Lois moved to this home in April 1941, and lived here for the rest of their lives. A wealthy woman named Helen G. heard that the couple needed a home and offered them the property for a small price, with no down payment and modest monthly installments.

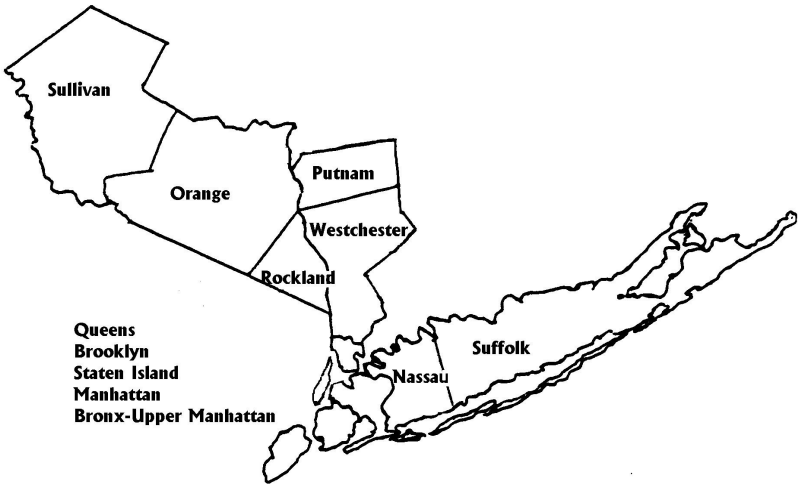


Stepping Stones

THE COUNTIES

South Eastern New York (SENY) includes the City of New York (the boroughs of the Bronx, Brooklyn, Manhattan, Queens and Staten Island), Long Island (Nassau and Suffolk counties) and the five nearby upstate New York counties of Orange, Putnam, Rockland, Sullivan and Westchester along with a non-geographical Hispanic Districts grouping representing all participating Spanish language AA groups throughout SENY.

For organizational purposes, each county and the Hispanic Districts are autonomous service entities within SENY, but Manhattan groups above 179th Street work with the groups in the Bronx, hence the county-level service entity named “Bronx and Upper Manhattan.”



The South Eastern NY Area Map

BRONX AND UPPER MANHATTAN

At the 1995 Alcoholics Anonymous Convention Old-Timers meeting in San Diego, California, of 15 speakers chosen at random from among 129 old-timers with 40 plus years of sobriety, three of the speakers got sober in the Bronx. This is indicative of the great impact that early Bronx AA had on our fellowship.

The Bronx had its sober roots in the 24th Street Clubhouse where most of the outer borough members went after being Twelfth Stepped by our AA early timers in the late 1930s and very early 1940s. One of these members, an ex-cop, seemingly doomed to insane asylums, was Twelfth Stepped by an AA while in his 16th Bellevue hospitalization for drinking. He got sober in 1942. Before his second AA birthday, he started the first Alcoholics Anonymous group in the Bronx in 1944. We know this from early postings in the then new AA magazine, *The Grapevine*, which printed the story of his tireless efforts.

Early issues of *The Grapevine* recall that the first Bronx group held its initial meeting on August 6, 1944, at 518 Willis Avenue. Shortly thereafter, in October of that same year, the group found “a permanent and very spacious” place at 2500 Marion Avenue. The Bronx County Group came into being with Wednesday night open meetings. Through ardent Twelfth Step work, great enthusiasm and self-sacrifice for “the cause,” membership exploded. That early group lasted 66 years. With its primarily Irish working-class population, there were more than a few bars in the Bronx. Not surprisingly, AA groups seemed to flourish most in the neighborhoods rife with bars. Within a few years, the Bronx saw the beginnings of the South Bronx, Parkchester, Mott Haven, Gun Hill, Woodlawn, University Heights, City Island, and Riverdale groups.

These groups usually had open speaker meetings and often had hundreds of members and potential alcoholics in attendance. Making coffee and setting up chairs was a big job. In the early decades, outgoing speaking commitments were often a journey taken by carloads of members to Brooklyn, Connecticut, New Jersey, upstate New York, or wherever else they were needed in order to “carry the AA message.” A very close relationship existed with the New York Intergroup Office because there were almost daily Twelfth Step calls coming to the groups.

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

For General Service's purpose of organizing to help the alcoholic who still suffers, the [Bronx and Upper Manhattan Committee](#) has been broken into ten districts; Woodlawn, Riverdale, South Bronx, Fordham/Bedford Park, Bainbridge/Gun Hill, Upper Manhattan,

Morris Park/Parkchester/Tremont, and Northeast Bronx. These districts help to carry the AA message through committees on Public Information, Cooperation with the Professional Community, Treatment Facilities, Corrections, and Special Needs. They all focus on how best to carry the AA message to those who might need our program of recovery. In addition, the Bronx and Upper Manhattan Committee has sponsored annual Share-A-Day events that have gone from scores of workshops on topics of Recovery, Unity, and Service to much smaller events that continue to carry the message of what we do. We also have the tradition of hosting an annual Spiritual Breakfast, held in a restaurant setting, in order to invite members to share in the fellowship of the spirit.

In 2005, the county went through an overall review of the area by the District Committee Member Chair (DCMC), the county chair for General Service. As a result, county by-laws were written based on SENY's by-laws to better serve its community. At one point, there were as many as 135 groups reported in the 1990's. However, since that time, we have seen great population shifts and demographic changes. Some groups have closed in some communities while growing in others. In recent years, there have been few to no active districts with District Committee Members (DCMs). The pandemic of 2020 saw the groups "in-person" meeting places shut down by law. Many groups were able to find ways to meet in cyberspace using a variety of technologies, even new video platforms like "Zoom" have paved the way through our difficult times. Our service committees at the Area, County and Intergroup levels have been able to function and even thrive. By year's end 2020 there is hope that we will bounce back. It remains to be seen how the impact of both the pandemic and technology will change our fellowship. Will we value our in-person meetings and their sacrifice? Will our service structure change now that we are not constrained by geographic boundaries? It is hoped that our principles will guide us in years to come, as we trudge the road of happy destiny.



To the Bronx and Upper Manhattan

BROOKLYN

In November 1934, Ebby T., an alcoholic who found a solution to his problem in the Oxford Group, visited Bill W. at his home at 182 Clinton Street in Brooklyn. That meeting, recounted in Chapter 1 of the book, *Alcoholics Anonymous*, laid the foundation for Bill's recovery, and in turn, for AA as a whole.

After traveling to Akron in the spring of 1935, which led to his meeting with Dr. Bob and the first stirrings of what would soon become the Fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous, Bill returned home to Brooklyn. There, he started weekly meetings, which, after several moves, relocated to the St. George Hotel downtown. In February of 1942, these gatherings became known collectively as the Brooklyn Group. Considered the second oldest group in the nation and the oldest group in New York City, the Brooklyn Group achieved this status by virtue of its origins on Clinton Street.

By the end of 1946, there were six more groups meeting in Brooklyn, including the country's first foreign language meeting, the Sunset Norwegian Group.

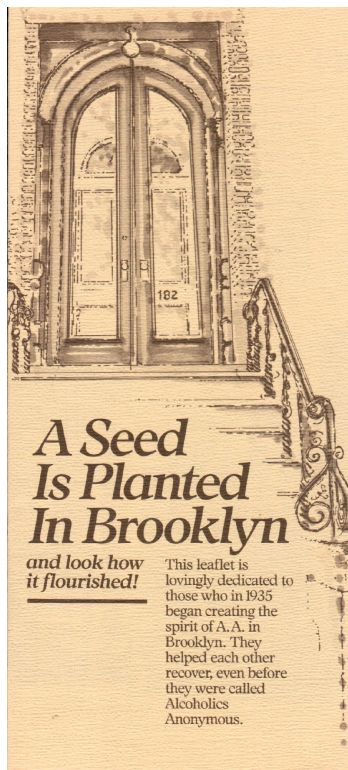
In 1980, the first Brooklyn Get-Together was held at Bishop Kearney High School in Bensonhurst, an annual tradition that lives on today as [Brooklyn County Share-A-Day](#). In November 1988, Brooklyn held its first annual Spiritual Breakfast. This event, along with the Share-A-Day, provides Brooklyn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

By 2006, [Brooklyn Intergroup](#) listed 158 groups throughout the borough.

—MORE BROOKLYN MILESTONES—

LISTS, 2011— Brooklyn's participation in the Long Island Spirituality Through Service (LISTS) workshop began in 2011 when the event was hosted by Suffolk County. (Nassau County hosted the prior and first LISTS event. The hosting of LISTS rotates among the four counties of Long Island—Brooklyn, Nassau, Queens and Suffolk.) LISTS is partly a Share-A-Day, partly a workshop that emphasizes the spiritual benefits of service for the recovering alcoholic. By 2020 each of the counties of Long Island has hosted a LISTS workshop at least twice.

Sandy, 2012— Super storm Sandy (October 22-November 2) brought unprecedented destruction and flooding to Brooklyn. Many meetings in the flood zone were closed as



**Brooklyn General Service, 1985
pamphlet**

How Did A.A. Really Begin?

One chilly morning late in 1934, in the red brick house at 182 Clinton Street, Brooklyn Heights (cover), Bill W. sat at the basement kitchen table, gin-drunk. He had been a Wall Street "hot shot," but could hold no job now because of his drinking. His wife Lois supported them, working in a department store. They lived in her father's home, where she had been born.

When the phone rang, Bill answered it and heard an old drinking chum, Ebby T., whom he instantly invited to Brooklyn.

Ebby showed up happily sober!

He said he had been helped by the Oxford Groups, an evangelistic Christian sect then very popular. Bill learned the Groupers had suggested to Ebby six simple ideas, which later became the twelve steps suggested as the A.A. program of recovery.

Ebby and the still-drinking Bill went to Oxford Groups meetings at a Calvary Church Mission on East 23rd Street, Manhattan, for down-and-outers. At the meetings, some of the "reformed drunkards" stood and "witnessed" about their former life of "vices"—drinking being among the most popular. Despite hands tugging his coattails, a tipsy Bill spoke at one such meeting.

But Bill was hospitalized for his final detoxification at Towns Hospital December 12, 1934. There he had a transforming spiritual experience, and never drank again.

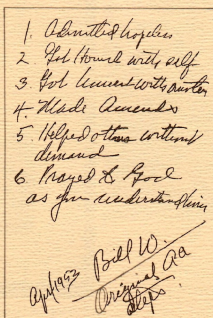
Cover drawing: 182 Clinton



Calvary Mission



Bill and his "sponsor," Ebby



Bill jotted down six ideas which preceded 12 steps

their venues had to be repaired or rebuilt. Some meetings were temporarily held at members' homes while new venues were sought for these meetings. Meanwhile, shelters were inundated by people displaced from their homes by the flooding. Brooklyn's Special Needs Chair brought AA meetings to the Park Slope Armory which was a mental health and special needs shelter with lots of alcoholics.

The Passing of Long-Timers, 2016—

The year had barely gotten out of the gate, and Brooklyn suffered not one, but multiple losses. Boyce B. from

Slope Open Discussion was SENY's Panel 39 Delegate. Thomas K. from the Bay Ridge Group had gotten sober when Dr. Bob was still alive. He had 58 years "back." Don D. from the Bay Ridge group made it to 62 years sobriety. He is often quoted as saying that to get to that many years sober, "You don't drink, and you don't die," They all could be counted on to participate as keynote speakers in county-wide events and as panelists in workshops sponsored by various districts. They embodied the maxim that, "In order to keep it, you have to give it away."

2012-2017— Venues of Brooklyn's Spiritual Breakfast changed twice over the decade between 2010 and 2020. Bay Ridge Manor was discontinued as a venue in 2012 because there was a half flight of stairs between the entrance and the dining room which made the venue wheelchair inaccessible. After that, the Dyker Beach Golf Course Clubhouse served Brooklyn well, but the popularity of the Spiritual Breakfast in Brooklyn increased to such an extent that a larger venue, Grand Prospect Hall, was selected in 2017.

2018— The venue for Brooklyn Share-a-day changed in 2018 from Bishop Kearney High School to St. Francis de Sales School for the Deaf owing to the former venue's doubling of the rental price. Area events hosted by Brooklyn have been using St. Francis de Sales School as well.

North Brooklyn District 404's proposal that the agnostic/atheist pamphlet, *The God Word* from the UK be adopted by AA World Services was approved at the 68th General Service Conference (GSC). From home group to the GSC, the campaign took place within the year 2018.

2019-2020— In 2019 Brooklyn Intergroup verified that its cleaned-up meetings database was accurate and up-to date. It launched the new website, www.bigaa.org. Brooklyn Intergroup also began hosting an annual “Dr. Bob-E-Que” in the spring of 2018.

When COVID 19 struck Brooklyn in 2020, virtual meetings were launched by individual groups. Brooklyn Intergroup took the lead in coordinating this activity and publishing Brooklyn's online AA meetings on its web site.

Brooklyn County approved a motion to send a recommendation of the TRANScend group's GSR to the Area to have the 70th GSC add an agenda item to replace the phrase in the AA Preamble, “a fellowship of men and women,” with “a fellowship of people.”

2022— The General Service Conference of the United States and Canada moved its annual meeting to the New York Marriott at the Brooklyn Bridge, downtown Brooklyn.

2023— By the close of 2023 Brooklyn has approximately 126 groups. Brooklyn has the most Hispanic meetings in New York City.



First Brooklyn Branches Of The A.A. Tree

The scanty A.A. correspondence still in existence, oldtimers' memories, A.A. Directories and meeting lists indicate these seedlings of the Brooklyn A.A. tree had taken root by 1950:

Group Name	Starting Date
Brooklyn	February, 1942
Kings County	February, 1944
Bay Ridge	October, 1945
Flatbush	March, 1946
Ridgewood	Spring, 1946
Norwegian (in Norwegian language)	April, 1946
Park Slope	August, 1946
Stuyvesant Interracial	January, 1948
Prospect	April, 1948
Greenpoint	May, 1948
Bushwick	Summer, 1948
Crown Heights	October, 1948
Kingsway	December, 1948
Sunset	March, 1949
Windsor Terrace	September, 1949
Ovington	November, 1949
Rogers	January, 1950

(As of A.A.'s golden anniversary year, 1985, more than 300 meetings were being held weekly in Brooklyn.)

© Brooklyn General Service Assembly

COMITÉ DE DISTRITOS HISPANOS (HISPANIC DISTRICTS COMMITTEE)

According to the Archives at the General Service Office (GSO), the first Spanish AA group was *Grupo Central* founded by Carlos Z. and registered with the GSO on February 18, 1963.

A few years later in 1976, with the assistance of New York Intergroup, the Service Committee of the Hispanic Groups (now called the [Hispanic Central Office, Oficina Central Hispana](#)) was invited to participate in a SENY area committee meeting. The members of the area committee expressed the necessity of electing a member of the Hispanic committee who would attend the area assemblies and form a Hispanic district, so that the Hispanic groups would be included in the General Service structure with their respective General Service Representatives (GSRs). This would bring life to the “Fourth Concept for World Service.”

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

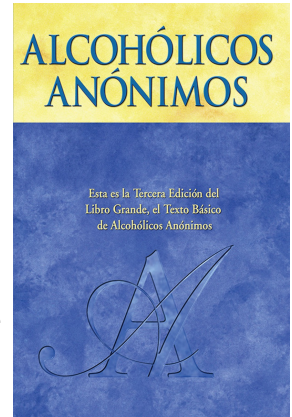
After attending several SENY committee meetings, the General Service Committee of the Hispanic groups made an announcement to all the groups regarding the new alliance whereby the SENY area assembly agreed to designate the Hispanic district within any county as number 14, and collectively as the Hispanic Districts SENY-wide, a county-level service equivalent entity.⁵



Spanish *Pass It On*

The Hispanic DCM began to serve in 1977, as the only Hispanic representative in the area committee. He gave his report once a month at the meetings of the [Hispanic General Service Committee](#), and was an officer of the Board of the Service Committee of the Hispanic Groups until 1983. At that time, District 614 established its own service meetings, held on the last Saturday of every month. The Hispanic Central Office lent their premises to District 614, giving up one of their meetings each month, so that District 614 could meet and be fully functional.

By 1981, there was a broader understanding of where we were located within our area. At the request of the DCM, the Hispanic General Service Committee held its first Hispanic Convention. In order to pave the way, the DCM arranged for there to be Hispanic representation and participation at the 21st SENY Convention. On April 24th–26th of 1981,



Spanish “Big Book,” Third Ed.

the Hispanic General Service Committee, the Bronx Committee, and representatives from groups of Brooklyn, Nassau, Suffolk, and New Jersey Intergroup participated. This convention took place at the Sheraton Inn at La Guardia Airport, in Queens. At this convention, a program in Spanish was created.

District 614 continued its efforts to locate and to lead GSRs within the context of their functions. An idea formed in 1985, to hold the first Share-A-Day jointly with the Hispanic General Central Office. The event was first held on Sunday, June 16, 1985. By then, there was great anticipation, joy, and enthusiasm for the celebration of the 50th anniversary of AA. What better way was there to celebrate this anniversary than to celebrate it at the first Hispanic Share-A-Day. Other Share-A-Day events followed for the next six years. District 614 later hosted this event themselves from 1987 to 1991.

District 514 hosted the Hispanic Districts *Asamblea* for the first time in Staten Island in November 2023.



Spanish *Living Sober*

MANHATTAN

Although AA dates its start from June 1935, when Bill and Bob first met in Akron, Ohio, [Manhattan](#)'s involvement with AA began in December 1934, when Bill, with the help of Dr. William Silkworth, sobered up for the last time at Towns Hospital, located at 293 Central Park West. When Bill returned from Akron, he began to put his ideas into action.

In April 1938, the first Manhattan meeting formed, taking place at Burt T.'s tailor shop on West 46th Street. Alcoholics everywhere are ever grateful to Burt, who hocked his business to keep the book *Alcoholics Anonymous* in print.

In the spring of 1940, AA's first AA clubhouse, located at 334½ West 24th Street, opened. The "Corporation," the body that governed the clubhouse, organized meeting times; meetings were held on Sunday and Thursday at the clubhouse, on Tuesday at Webster Hall, 113 West 57th Street, and at Steinway Hall at 14th Street and Union Square. Foreshadowing New York Intergroup, the Corporation also began to function as a central committee for the handful of meetings in the metropolitan area.

April 13, 1944, marked the formal creation of the Manhattan Group, purported to be the first AA group number one in New York (number two nationally). Manhattan Group has a 1966 letter from Bill W. substantiating this information. With the formation of the Manhattan Group, the original "Corporation" dissolved, although a new one formed to run the new clubhouse on 41st Street, with the Manhattan Group as the paying tenant. Alcoholics being alcoholics, a fight soon began over who should run AA area affairs, and how. And in June 1946 17 groups, holding 29 weekly meetings across Brooklyn (2), the Bronx (1), Manhattan (11), Nassau County (5), Queens (4), Staten Island (1), and Westchester County (5) formed [New York Intergroup](#). In February 1947, the St. Nicholas Group, in Harlem, was founded. By May 1947, when New York Intergroup published its second meeting list, there were eighty-six meetings throughout the city, adjoining counties, and Connecticut. The earliest listing of a New York City Spanish language meeting appeared in April 1948.

As of August 2020, there were over 400 groups listed in Manhattan, with well over a thousand weekly meetings. There are an increasing number of linguistic meetings, including meetings in Spanish, French, Polish, Russian, and Ukrainian. Furthermore, members who identify as members of various communities, including young people and the LGBTQ+ community, have formed AA meetings, a testament to the vitality of AA within Manhattan.

New York Intergroup, a partnership of AA Groups, supports AA Groups and members within and outside Manhattan. It is often the first AA contact for New Yorkers who believe they have a problem with alcohol. Intergroup lists meetings in Manhattan and across Area 49 and provides members with meeting books and AA literature. Every day, Intergroup volunteers, AAs all, answer phone calls from members and non-members. In 2020,

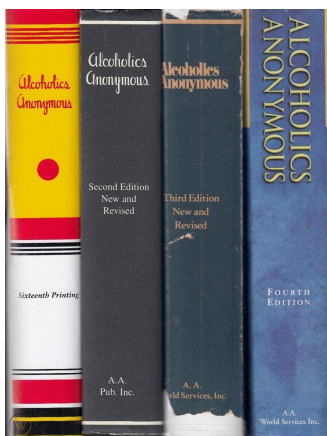


Towns Hospital

Intergroup stepped up to meet the challenge of COVID-19 by providing a virtual platform that allows groups to move their meetings online.

In the last two decades, it has become increasingly difficult for AA groups to find meeting spaces in Manhattan. Church closings and rising rent have contributed to the decreased availability of meeting spaces, creating a competitive market for inexpensive meeting space by AA and non-AA entities alike. Although groups have been forced to move and even close, AA in Manhattan continues to thrive as groups find new ways and places to meet.

Alcoholics Anonymous' world headquarters, the [General Service Office \(GSO\)](#), is located in Manhattan at 475 Riverside Drive and 120th Street, as are the offices that facilitate the production of *The Grapevine* and *La Viña*. GSO supports and serves alcoholics across the United States and Canada, creating and providing a wide range of conference-approved literature and information for members and outside organizations, both public and private. GSO handles AA's media relations, maintains our archives, and holds our annual General Service Conference,⁶ where AA Delegates, Trustees, and select GSO staff members discuss and come to collective decisions on behalf of AAs across the United States and Canada.



NASSAU

NASSAU AA TIMELINE: “WHAT WE USED TO BE LIKE, WHAT HAPPENED, AND WHAT WE ARE LIKE NOW.”

1940— The first group in Nassau County started in a member’s home in Garden City, Manhasset, or Freeport. Sources agree as to about when, but not where. At this time AA was five years old.

1946— The first meeting list printed by New York Intergroup (NYI), then serving the entire greater NY area including Long Island) carried five meetings in Nassau:

- The South Shore Group (first meeting May 1945, later named the Baldwin Group) met in the Girl Scout Building on Park Avenue in Baldwin on Sundays and Thursdays;
- The Mineola Group met in the New Court House on Old Country Road on Mondays and Fridays;
- The North Shore Group met on Plandome Road in Manhasset on Wednesdays.



While not listed in NYI’s printed list, there were also meetings in Freeport, Glen Head and Valley Stream.

1948 - 1969— The Manhasset-Roslyn Group undertook to fulfill the need for a telephone answering service when there were relatively few groups on Long Island and membership was small. The “Manhasset-Roslyn Telephone Service” operated unassisted by other groups or by NYI.

The vast growth in population on Long Island following WWII brought with it a growth in the Fellowship, an increasing demand for AA information and an expansion in answering service activity. The burden of handling the service progressively became more than any one group could sustain.

About 1968— Chaired by the Panel 17 SENY Delegate, Tom M., the first [Nassau General Service Representatives](#) meeting was attended by a small number of members representing their groups. The Mineola Group held these meetings at their location.

1970 June 24— Representatives (Reps) of the AA groups in Nassau met at the Church of the Advent, Westbury, and voted overwhelmingly to assume the burden of handling the telephone answering service for Nassau. This service was called the “Nassau Answering Service of Alcoholics Anonymous.” There were 53 groups in Nassau at this time.

With the support of our non-alcoholic clergy friends at the Church of the Advent, the service was set up there in the basement of the church’s Winthrop Hall, Advent Street,

Westbury. It was the intention of this volunteer group to establish better communications for Twelfth Step calls. While unconfirmed, some suggest this may have been the first AA hotline in the United States.

1971 January— The first Nassau newsletter was distributed to the groups. The newsletter was published monthly thereafter until an extended break September 2022 through December 2023 when it lacked an editor.

1976— The Nassau General Service Representative Meeting moved from the Mineola Group location to the Church of the Advent, Winthrop Hall, and they elected the first Local Committee Member.

1977— In February the Nassau Answering Service moved from Winthrop Hall to its own office at 266 Fulton Avenue, Hempstead. In September the service's name was changed to "Central Office for Nassau County," and a proposal was presented to form an intergroup. 24/7 phone service was provided by the volunteers, a service which has continued uninterrupted.

1978 June 17— Nassau's Central Office hosted its first annual Share-A-Day at Adelphi University, Garden City. The following year's Share-A-Day was held at Molloy College, Rockville Centre.

1980— The Central Office moved to a second office at 357 Hempstead Turnpike, West Hempstead. The service underwent another name change and became "Nassau Intergroup of Alcoholics Anonymous," an all volunteer organization serving 153 groups and answering about 1000 calls a month.

The Nassau General Service Representative Meeting became the Nassau General Service Committee and was chaired by a District Committee Member at Large, or DCM at Large. SENY requested that Nassau General Service form into districts. Ten groups per geographical district were established, and districts were able to merge or split as needed. Nassau General Service Committee decided however to cap the number of districts at twenty.

1982 July 11— Intergroup hosted its first annual picnic for members, families and friends at Eisenhower Park, East Meadow.

1983 August 31— "[Nassau Inter-Group of AA](#)" incorporated under the laws of the State of New York as a non-profit.

1984— A small number of General Service members, having attended a Spiritual Breakfast in the Bronx, decide to organize a similar event in Nassau. The purpose of the event was to offer fellowship as well as to inform groups about General Service and the services provided.

1985— Nassau County's first Spiritual Breakfast, an open AA event, was hosted by the Nassau General Service Committee. Held at a catering hall in Massapequa, some two hundred attendees enjoyed the event.

Mid-1980s— Intergroup organized a Dinner Dance for the evening of Share-A-Day.

1989— Intergroup outgrew the original West Hempstead office and moved to a larger office in the same building.

1990s— Nassau General Service Committee underwent another name change to Nassau General Service Group, chaired by a District Committee Member Chair (DCMC), formerly titled DCM at Large.

1990 August 12— Nassau's Spiritual Breakfast formally changed its name to Nassau's Unity Breakfast.

1991 June 15— Co-hosted by Nassau Intergroup and Nassau General Service, the first annual "Nassau Big Meeting" was held at the Tilles Center, Brookville, commemorating the 1940 start of AA in Nassau.

1994 October— The Institutions Committee serving Nassau and Suffolk disaffiliated from NYI. An independent Institutions committee became Nassau Intergroup's largest standing committee bringing numerous AA meetings to hospitals, detox facilities, rehabs, other treatment facilities and the Nassau County Jail. A similar independent committee started in Suffolk.

1998— Nassau General Service Group had been holding its meetings at the Advent Group's meeting place in the Church of the Advent, Westbury, since 1976. In the late 1990s, changed church leadership advised Nassau General Service Group members they needed to find an alternative location. The following year, they started meeting at the Nassau Intergroup office in West Hempstead.

1998 June— After much discussion, the Intergroup Reps agreed to post Nassau's meeting list online. The fledgling Nassau Intergroup website also included copies of the monthly newsletter and a calendar of events.

1998 August— Nassau Intergroup moved the office once again, a very short trip, downstairs and next door to 361 Hempstead Turnpike, a move to expanded quarters that were at least partially wheelchair accessible.

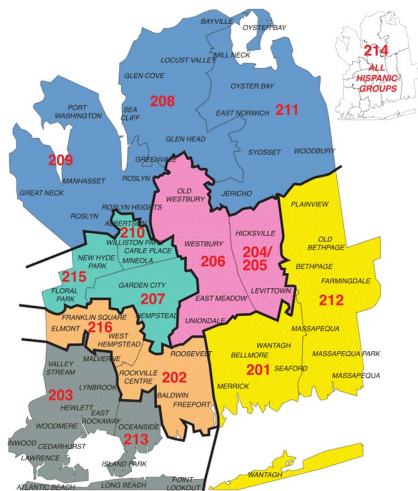
1999 - 2000— Nassau General Service Group reorganized its districts increasing to 16 including a Hispanic District.

2000— Allan W. of the Advent Group elected SENY Delegate.

2005— As a public information effort, members from General Service District 206 contacted libraries and high schools in their district, and offered them a copy of the book *Alcoholics Anonymous*.

2005 - 2006— In this period the Intergroup office was extensively renovated. The Dinner Dance, initially combined with Share-A-Day but which had been standing on its own, was discontinued and the co-hosted Big Meeting began a hiatus.

2006 October 23— The first issue of Nassau General Service Group's newsletter, *The Gazette*, debuted.



Nassau General Service Districts Map

2007 - 2008— Meeting lists were continually updated and by now included almost 300 meetings. Despite rising production costs, the Intergroup Reps voted to continue to publish and offer meeting lists without charge. Different formats were used to reduce costs and to accommodate the growing number of meetings. January 2008 the Intergroup Reps meeting moved to a larger space at the Garden City Community Church for a period of time. June 2008 the Big Meeting was revived by Nassau General Service. Nassau Inter-Group did not co-host that year.

Nassau General Service Group's bylaws underwent amendment. Though there were active districts meeting regularly, inactive districts were a concern. In an effort to help rebuild inactive districts, the DCMC suggested district meetings be held at the bi-monthly county General Service meeting until such time as these districts are able to meet regularly on their own. Two GSRs become DCMs of their respective districts at the February 2008 meeting.

2008 April— Nassau General Service Group received its New York State tax-exempt certificate.

2008 May— Nassau Intergroup's meeting list was updated and released containing various types of AA meetings available for alcoholics and interested members of the public. At this time groups and meetings throughout Nassau County spanned two cities, three towns, and sixty-four unincorporated areas. The meeting list included 269 distinct AA groups offering 690 AA meetings each week.

2008 June 14— Nassau General Service Group resurrected Nassau County's Big Meeting at the Garden City Community Church. Nassau Intergroup did not participate.

2008 August 18— Nassau General Service Group conducted its first county inventory.

2008 September 13— Nassau General Service Group hosted the SENY Election Assembly for the first time. The Garden City Group offered their location, the Garden City Community Church. Nassau's DCMC, Brenda P. was elected SENY Chair.

2009— Nassau General Service Group and Nassau Intergroup worked together placing two copies of the book *Alcoholics Anonymous* into every library throughout the county. Information on how to contact AA was included with each book.

2009— The Big Meeting returned to being co-hosted by Nassau Intergroup and Nassau General Service.

2009 May 9— Districts 208/209 hosted a "Spirituality and Sponsorship" workshop. Later, interested members from California enquired about this workshop as they are interested in holding a similar workshop there.

2010 June 6— The General Service committees in Nassau, Queens and Suffolk hosted a first tri-county workshop on "Service and Spirituality" at St. William the Abbot School, Seaford.

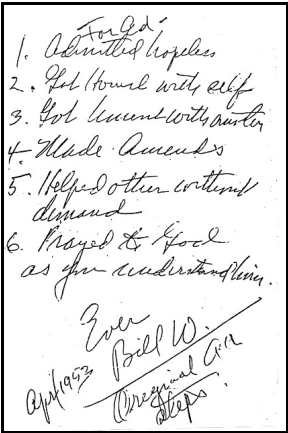
2010 August 14— A large turnout of members, family and friends attended the Big Meeting held on the beach in Long Beach.

2010 September— Nassau General Service Group conducted a second county inventory.

in nearby parts of Queens and Suffolk counties. It brings AA meetings into numerous institutions, and serves to bring AA to the community through numerous additional service activities, all supported by many volunteer trusted servants.

Nassau General Service Group serves the same groups organized into 16 districts, and continues to cooperate and coordinate with Intergroup on numerous service committees and special projects.

Today, members, groups and service committees in Nassau continue to carry the message of a road to recovery from alcoholism through Alcoholics Anonymous in the many ways they did in the past using methods, tools and technologies old and new to “pass it on.”



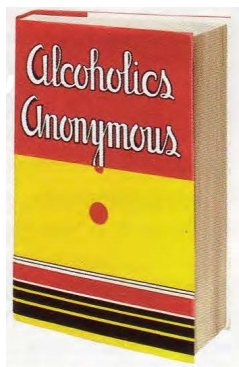
Six Steps

ORANGE

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

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

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



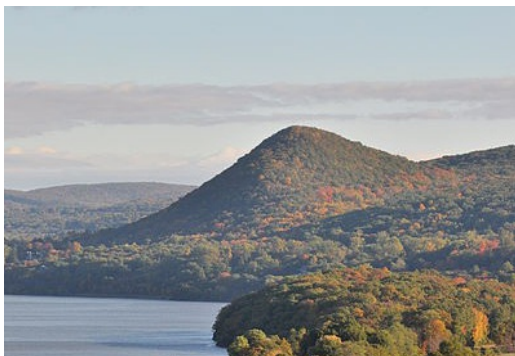
Over the last several years, many changes have molded the current state of AA in Orange County. The 2007 Share-A-Day, held at the Washingtonville High School, coincided with the thirtieth anniversary of the founding of [Central Services of Orange County](#). The anniversary also included the founding of the twenty-four hour hotline phone service, which is still successful because volunteers have maintained the hotline for the last thirty years. Ten years ago, there were over one hundred meetings a week. By 2008, there were over two hundred meetings held weekly.

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

PUTNAM

Early meetings were held in Brewster, Patterson, Cold Spring, Garrison, Carmel, and Putnam Lake.

Founded in 1948, the Brewster Group was the first formal group in Putnam County, and held its meetings in Brewster on Saturday at the First United Methodist Church. The group moved several times, first to Old Route 6 in Carmel, and then to St. John's in Mahopac before finally finding its way back to the First United Methodist in Brewster.



Sugarloaf Hill, Putnam County

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

The Gong Show (not the group of that name in Pawling, Dutchess County) produced the first known coffee pot with the groups names engraved in brass. The Cold Spring Group began in 1957. The Garrison Group, founded in 1962, still

meets at St. Phillips Church. The Putnam Lake Group was founded in 1972, and the Patterson Group was formed in August 1973.

The Carmel Recovery Group changed names in 1987, to Brewster Recovery and moved to St. Andrew's Episcopal Church in 1990. They now meet at the Longview School.

The county's Bylaws were adopted June 15, 2007, and in the spring 2008 the first edition of *The County Crier* newsletter was printed.

In March 2020 the COVID pandemic caused a sudden shutdown of AA meeting places. Many groups began virtual meetings almost immediately. A few groups continued meeting even if it meant getting together in parks, parking lots and people's homes. As meeting places slowly reopened, we had space and mask requirements from the State. Some groups continued hybrid meetings for a while following the COVID shutdowns, but currently only Putnam Mid-Day Promises and Sisters in Sobriety continue as hybrid meetings.

For many years the county Unity Breakfast was held in October at Graymoor in Garrison. It is now held at the Centennial Golf Club in Carmel, usually still in October with a virtual option for those unable to attend.

A Founder's Day celebration has been started in June, and an Alkathon is held from New Year's Eve into New Year's Day. Both are virtual.

There are currently 22 active groups in Putnam County. Among them, the Patterson Group celebrated 50 years in August 2023. In 2024, the Cold Spring Group will celebrate 67 years and the Garrison Group, 62 years.

County commitments currently include the Putnam County Jail and at the Arms Acres Rehab.

Putnam County General Service now has its own website, www.putnamcountynyaa.org/.

—Putnam County General Service Archives Committee, 2024



Putnam Founders Day 2023

QUEENS

Queens County has been and remains quite active on the Area, County, Intergroup, District, District-Cluster, and group levels. The [Queens County General Service Assembly](#) meets on the last Monday of the even months at St. Mary Gate of Heaven Church in Ozone Park.

Our “GSR Bootcamp,” started in 2013 to help new GSRs, was renamed the "Love and Service Workshop" in 2023. This meeting is held before the bi-monthly county assemblies and helps train GSRs or anyone interested in service. It is hosted by the Sponsorship Chair, a part of our service structure since 2010. Queens County has a vibrant service



Gantry Plaza State Park, Queens

network, and anyone needing a service sponsor can be connected with one. The Sponsorship Chair also holds workshops for those wanting to become service sponsors.

As a result of this active service structure, many of our Queens DCMCs have become SENY committee chairs and officers such as Treasurer, Convention Chair, Alternate Delegate, and Delegate.

Queens has seen its share of tragedy and has always come together to help those impacted. After the events of 9/11, 2001, Queens hosted a shift of the 24/7 AA meetings held during the cleanup efforts at Ground Zero.

Super Storm Sandy hit the Rockaway Peninsula in Queens on October 29, 2012. Water was up to six feet in areas, and any ground floors or basements were flooded. Cars were destroyed; stores closed. It wiped out power, plunging the peninsula, Broad Channel, and most of Howard Beach into darkness. The boardwalk washed away, along with many homes, and as one AA member so eloquently put it, “I've lost everything except my sobriety.”

We essentially lost all our meeting rooms. There were a few people holding impromptu meetings in their homes before industrious members got permission from a local church to use its small kitchen area. Some meetings were held there during the day with candles, as there was no power, and with most cars gone and roads impassable, most members attended on foot.

Some members got in touch with [Queens Intergroup](#), which came through with a gas-powered generator so meetings could now be held at night, but as it was winter and there was no heat, the stove was used with pots of water to provide some heat.

It didn't look as if a lot of our rooms would ever be available again, but a full-time room was secured at the First Congregational Church, Beach 94th Street. A large number of groups started using the space as their meeting room, and a good number of groups still call it home today.



Unisphere, Flushing Meadows-Corona Park, Queens

In 2020 the COVID-19 pandemic struck. We lost members to the disease, and all of our groups were upended. With the public health shutdowns, some groups closed, some met outdoors, and some became Zoom meetings, later

becoming hybrid Zoom/in-person meetings. Zoom became a tool for Queens AAs who could still go to their local meetings when they traveled or when they were under the weather, and AAs were also able to attend meetings from around the world. The “Zoom bombers” some groups encountered at first were thwarted by technologically minded AAs who came together, got extra training, and helped keep those annoyances to a minimum. The NY Intergroup Office helped host many groups on Zoom during these times. After we were allowed to reopen, there were groups that went back to completely live formats, though others closed their doors permanently, not surviving low attendance.

Queens County started hosting its Assemblies on Zoom in April 2020, went to a hybrid system in August 2021, and was back to fully in-person assemblies in February 2023. While some events continue to be held virtually, most are now hybrid or completely live.

This year will be the 40th Anniversary of Queens Share A Day, which started in 1984. During the pandemic, the Share A Day scheduled for April 2020 was canceled, but organizers hosted a virtual event in October 2020. There was no Share a Day in 2021, but we came back in September 2022 as an in-person event, followed by another successful live event in September 2023.

Likewise, the annual Spiritual Breakfast has returned strong after a two-year pandemic hiatus. This event started in October 2015 at the Italian Charities of America on Queens Boulevard, and in recent years has been held at the Immaculate Conception Center in Douglaston. The breakfast returned to a packed house in October 2022 and continued in October 2023. We are excited about more opportunities to come together and share the joy of service with other AAs.

Queens Intergroup hosts the Holiday Share-a-Thons and the Queens County Exchange Meeting. These events were held virtually on Zoom during the COVID-19 shutdowns. The Quarterly Exchange Meeting reopened live in 2023, while the Monthly Exchange continues as a virtual event.

Queens Intergroup continues to cover the phones, a 24-hour service. The Intergroup Rep meeting is back live, following the in-person Quarterly Exchange Meeting in Jamaica.

There has been some Queens County redistricting over the years, with a major redistricting in 2018-2019. Many districts were combined, and new clusters were formed.

Though some districts are inactive, others remain exceptionally active, hosting regular events and workshops. These activities were virtual during the shutdown but never stopped, and they've included such events as the August 2022 virtual District 305 workshop: "How to Use Robert's Rules of Order." Individual groups in Queens also carry the message, such as the September 2023 "History of AA," a hybrid workshop hosted by the Queens Gratitude Group in Ozone Park.

Queens County General Service continues to participate in the multi-county event LISTS (Long Island Spirituality Through Service) which started in 2010 in Seaford, Long Island. The event is a large-scale workshop on service, the service structure, and how to get involved. Hosting rotates among Queens, Nassau, Suffolk, Brooklyn, and the Hispanic District. LISTS was held virtually during the pandemic, but in 2023 the event was live again, hosted by Queens County at Archbishop Malloy HS in Briarwood.

Our Queens County General Service website, which was created in 2013, has been updated several times. The county service manual was last updated in 2015, and is now being updated again with expected completion in 2024.

We wish to thank our past Queens County DCMCs for their service and their input to this history.

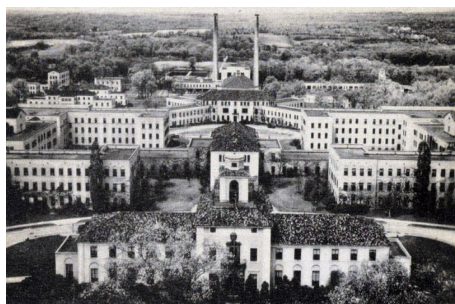
—January 2024



ROCKLAND

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

In December 1939, Bob V. started meetings for alcoholic patients confined to the grounds of the Rockland State Hospital. This was the first AA group in an institution. Dr.



Old Rockland State Hospital

Russell E. Blaisdell, then head of the hospital, was key to this beginning and in developing processes for encouraging patients to continue with AA after “graduating” from what came to be known as the Blaisdell Rehabilitation Center.

A few months later, Dr. Blaisdell let bus-loads of alcoholics from the hospital go to AA meetings in South Orange, NJ and New York City. (Read more in, *AA Comes of Age*, page 12, and *Pass It On*, page 218.) The rehab subsequently moved to a new building on the same grounds where the New York State Education Department has placed a sign marking this historic 1939 AA event. By 2008, the Rockland County Intergroup Hospitals and Institutions Committee was holding six weekly meetings on the grounds of that facility.

ROCKLAND GROUPS

The oldest continuously active Rockland group is the Suffern Group founded in 1945. Other long-standing groups include: New City (founded 1963), Pearl River (1963), West Nyack (1974), Palisades Group (1974) and Nauraushaun Group (1983).

Some other early groups which have since shuttered their doors are: Pomona (1970), Spring Hill (1973), Nanuet 12 and 12 (1974), Ramapo Valley (1975), Key to Sobriety (1976), Alumni Group (1977) and Congers Legacy (1977). Key to Sobriety, which started the first Step Meeting in Rockland, did not survive the 2020 pandemic, but their pioneering spirit lives on in the practice of the Step Meeting now held regularly by other groups that followed. Congers Legacy was also a victim of the pandemic.



Suffern Group in 2000

The 1980s and 1990s, saw some significant growth for AA in Rockland County. The Grapevine Group (1985) got its name from our print magazine which it used as a catalyst for discussions. Their membership grew to 140 or so

members, and they met six times weekly. However, as with most groups there was an ebb and flow, and they currently meet three times a week with a smaller post pandemic attendance.

Any Lengths (1990) was formed when some members from Key to Sobriety started a meeting in the North Rockland area finding a need there for a beginners meeting and an open speaker meeting.

The Sunrise Group (1990) was started when Scott E. and several members from the meeting at Grace Episcopal Church moved across the street to the Pilgrim Baptist Church, and started a new morning meeting. It is the only early morning meeting in Rockland, and begins at 7:30 AM five days a week. Over the years the group has helped countless AAs to start their day the right way with a proper morning meeting.

With the Key to Sobriety starting a trend in specialized meetings, others followed suit. The Congers Men's meeting was the first county men's meeting. Feeling the need for an earlier men's meeting, Tony F. and a few others started the Thruway Men's Group (1986), so named because they met at the Science of the Mind Church which was almost under a New York State Thruway overpass on Strawtown Road in West Nyack. The original small group grew quickly, and when the church was sold, they moved to their current location at the New Hempstead Presbyterian Church Hall on New Hempstead Road in New City, holding meetings six days a week with an average attendance of 100 plus men, five meetings a week at New Hempstead and one at the Brick Church Hall on Sundays. The group also hosts an online meeting six days a week, this an outgrowth of the pandemic.

Another specialty meeting was Tobacco Road (1994). It was started in Billy T.'s garage, but as it grew it moved to the Rockland Psychiatric Center, in Orangeburg, and then settled in at Our Lady Queen of Peace Church Community Hall. Another group, Friday Night Fellowship, also met at the same church. The two groups merged in 2005 and became Fellowship Road. Although not originally for the patients of Rockland Psychiatric Center, patients from the Blaisdell Institute for Alcohol Addiction and Recovery housed on the campus of the Psychiatric Center often did come to meetings. Although both groups at the Center



Fellowship Road Group

were primarily men's groups, the merged meeting eventually became a coed meeting. After the Archdiocese closed Our Lady of Peace, the group moved to St. Stephan's Episcopal Church in Pearl River, its current home. The group continues to thrive and grow, and currently hosts six very well attended meetings at 6 PM Monday through Saturday.

The Footprints Group (1999) was started by Brendan D., Danny C., Tommy C., Sean Q. and Mike K. who felt there was a need for a Big Book Meeting. They meet three times a week and are a very strong group.

The Live and Let Live Group, Rockland's first and only LGBTQ+ AA group, was started in the early 1980s, and has been around for at least 42 years. The group was mainly promoted

in the community through word of mouth for safety and anonymity reasons. The meeting originally was founded because of a need for a safe space for LGBTQ+ persons in Rockland, and that need still exists today. They, like all AA groups, open their doors to any member of AA who happens to show up in need of a meeting.

In keeping with Tradition Four, the principle of autonomy, another specialty group, the Young and Free Group (2015) was started by Nick C. and a few others. This group has been a life line for many young people as well as the young at heart. In addition to Young and Free, some of the younger members of AA in Rockland got together with those in Orange and Westchester to form the Westchester, Orange and Rockland Committee of Young People in Alcoholics Anonymous (WORCYPAA). Like all the YPAAs in AA, they are active in General Service and Intergroup at the county level as well, and serve an important need for activities involving sobriety and younger members.

It is not quite known when the Congers Women's Group got started, but it has been going strong for the last 22 years. They meet three times a week according to the Meeting Guide app.

Another group to avail itself of Tradition Four is the Rockland Free Thinkers which was started as an online group on July 19, 2020. Rockland's first known secular group, they began meeting in person August of 2021. They assure alcoholics they can find sobriety without having to accept someone else's beliefs or to deny their own. Crying and cursing are welcome.

In addition, as the Spanish speaking population in Rockland County has continued to grow, so has the need for meetings in Spanish, and there are currently several that meet in the county. The Rockland General Service Committee of AA has created a position on its board for a Hispanic Liaison whose responsibility is to help to keep information flowing between English and Spanish language AA groups.

In addition to all of the mentioned groups, there are many others that also carry on in church basements and meeting halls serving the needs of the next sick and suffering alcoholic according to our primary purpose as stated in Tradition Five.

ROCKLAND GENERAL SERVICE

In the early 1990s, Steve K. discovered that Rockland had no General Service committee. He became Rockland's first District Committee Member Chair (DCMC) as the county-level General Service chair position is known. Under his leadership the committee took shape and began to grow. And although at the end of his rotation through the position it was just Steve and a few group-level representatives (General Service Representatives, GSRs), that nascent committee managed to survive and grow into the [Rockland County General Service Committee of Alcoholics Anonymous](#) (RCGSCAA) as it is formally known today.

The early members of the committee continued the work stimulating interest in General Service in Rockland. Newer members who came along computerized the records, and developed a list of job descriptions and criteria. Building on that information, a committee was formed that would look into the writing of bylaws. The bylaws were worked out in 2021, completed in 2022, and formally passed on April 4, 2022 by RCGSCAA in accordance with the newly formed voting procedures, which state that the adoption of or any change to

the bylaws be by a 2/3 vote in favor by the then sitting committee. An historical footnote, they passed unanimously. This important moment in Rockland's AA History could not have come to pass if it had not been for the work of those who came before.

With the committee growing through more groups in the county sending their GSRs to the meetings, the committee decided to hold the first of what was hoped would be many Spiritual Breakfasts. The first Spiritual Breakfast was held in Nanuet on March 5, 2005, and about 170 people attended. On March 9, 2008 the fourth Annual Spiritual Breakfast boasted 413 attendees. The breakfast has grown into a well-attended, much loved and eagerly anticipated county event. Following a COVID imposed break, the breakfast's return in April of 2022 was the rebirth of a beloved tradition. The most recent Breakfast was held on April 16, 2023 at the Pearl River Hilton with 368 attending.

The committee also hosts two other Unity events in keeping with our Three Legacies of Recovery, Unity and Service. Included is the 24-hour Alkathon Christmas Eve into Christmas Day at the Haverstraw Center. Originally put on at the Blaisdell Institute, the event there was cancelled in 2013. Feeling the need to do service and seeing a continuing need for the Alkathon, Mike H. restarted the event at the Haverstraw Center in 2017 where the RCGSCAA has since hosted it. Envisioned as a way for the groups of Rockland to step up and host twelve, hour-long meetings interspersed with an hour of fellowship in between, it was welcomed back with open arms by the groups. The Alkathon is now an *ad hoc* committee of RCGSCAA.

Beginning in 2022, RCGSCAA joined with Orange and Putnam counties to host a Tri-County Unity Event called, "Sober Jam." This event is well attended and brings AAs from the three counties together in AA spirit to share their experience, strength and hope in a fun way in a family like carnival atmosphere showing, "We aren't a glum lot."

Currently, RCGSCAA has about 17 GSRs from the many groups in Rockland who attend on a regular basis. It also has standing committee chairs who facilitate Accessibilities, Archives, Cooperation with the Professional Community, Grapevine/La Viña, Literature, Public Information and a Hispanic Liaison. There is also a Technology and Communications Officer (TCO) whose job is to act as the registrar for the county, and to handle most of our computer-related needs other than the website. The website responsibility is shared with Rockland County Intergroup (RCI) whose Web Administrator manages the site.

Rockland sends our GSRs and DCMC to the area assemblies thus ensuring that the voice of Rockland is heard by our sitting delegate to the General Service Conference.

Rockland AA has grown tremendously from our beginnings, and we look forward to continued healthy growth of this vital link to our area and to AA as a whole.

ROCKLAND COUNTY INTERGROUP

[Rockland County Intergroup](#) (RCI) had its beginnings in 1986. It slowly grew and then took off, especially since there was no General Service committee in the county at the time.

Taking their cue from New York Intergroup, local members organized as a boots on the ground operation to serve the next sick and suffering alcoholic in Rockland County.

Committees were formed including to establish a 24 hour Hotline Answering Service. Working with the county sheriff, members entered the Rockland County Jail to bring AA meetings to incarcerated alcoholics. They established a Bookers' Exchange serving as a speaker exchange between the groups in Rockland and beyond as a way that to further carry the message. Members also set up a Hospitals and Institutions Committee to help meet the needs of alcoholic patients needing help with their recovery. RCI currently maintains a print and online meeting list with updates to the AA Meeting Guide app.

In keeping with the service to hospitals and institutions which started at Rockland State Hospital back in 1939, Intergroup now brings meetings into Good Samaritan Hospital, Nyack-Montefiore Hospital, Open Arms and several other rehab facilities. It continues to be a vital part of what RCI does.

In addition to their Public Information Committee, which shares duties with RCGSCAA's Public Information Committee, they have recently started a Bridging the Gap program. RCI has a Virtual Meeting Committee that was an out-growth of their virtual committee work during the pandemic. They also maintain liaisons to SENY and WORCYPAA. RCI puts on a county wide Share-A-Day.

In 2005, the RCI Public Information Committee started the development of Rockland County's AA website. The website went online in April 2006. The website sees hits numbering in the thousands per month including visitors from foreign countries.

In 2008, RCI had 19 group representatives participating. And while Rockland is the smallest county in New York, in 2008 its meeting list topped 150 weekly meetings.

In 2019, RCI updated its bylaws to reflect the state of local AA at the time. And in the post pandemic environment, there were over 100 in person meetings as well as hybrid and online meetings.

THE COVID PANDEMIC YEARS: MOVING INTO UNCHARTED TERRITORY—SURVIVING AND STRIVING DURING THE PANDEMIC

In March 2020, AA as we knew it in Rockland County and the world changed. Suddenly, because of governmental shutdowns to fight the spread of COVID, live meetings were no longer possible and a new way to share the message had to be found. There were many heroes who jumped into action and were able to use technology to help establish the way to continue to share the message of recovery previously delivered in face-to-face meetings.

Then Rockland County Intergroup Chair, Toby G., working with Diane M., the Website Administrator, started three virtual meetings a day when the in person meetings shut down thinking this would be a temporary service. Many members helped chair these meetings which were a lifeline to AA.

Some of these meetings became so successful they decided to become independent from Intergroup and register as a group in late 2021. Out of those original Intergroup meetings arose the Hour of Power Group. It became the first and only online group in Rockland, and it continues to host 24 virtual meetings a week. The group also sends a General Service Representative to the Rockland County General Service meeting, thus maintaining their connection to AA as a whole.

On the Hospital and Institutions front during this time, Thomas K., the then H&I Chair for RCI, got a call on March 15, 2020 that no further in person meetings would be allowed into



Stony Point Lighthouse

Nyack Hospital or Good Samaritan Hospital for the duration of the pandemic. He quickly got in touch with the contacts he had made at both institutions, and arranged virtual meetings three times a week for the alcoholic patients in those programs. Once again, people eagerly stepped up to chair and speak at these virtual meetings. Thanks to Thomas K., Rockland was one of the few counties able to bring virtual meetings into hospitals in SENY and indeed in many parts of the USA as well. They were so successful that AAs from as far away as Texas and California were

asking Thomas for help. Esty A. took over in January 2021, and continued the virtual meetings until the hospitals reopened their doors and AA was allowed back in person.

Our DCMC at the time, Bob C., kept the monthly Rockland County General Service meeting going virtually helping to keep the groups informed as to what was happening in the area and how other counties were coping. Rockland General Service hosted a fully virtual Alkathon Christmas Eve 2020.

As a legacy, both Rockland County Intergroup and Rockland County General Service continue to have monthly hybrid meetings. This helps both organizations make service available to people who otherwise would not be able to attend.

Individual AA groups also responded to the difficulties of the pandemic shut down. The Sunrise Group from Nyack, saw the writing on the wall and practically overnight had a virtual meeting up and running five mornings a week. They also established a web site to keep their members informed about what was happening, and used it as the online forum for the dissemination of group information, anniversaries and such. They removed all their literature from their meeting place prior to its closing, and were able to distribute it to those in need during the shut down. The group continues to have a hybrid meeting every morning, and their website is still active.

Many other groups also hosted virtual meetings during this period including Pearl River, West Nyack, Footprints, Any Lengths, The Palisades Group, Live and Let Live and the Thruway Men's Group. Several groups in the county continue hosting hybrid meetings.

When weather allowed, some groups met outside. Congers Women's Group had a phone in meeting. Sober Sisters stayed virtual, and people from all over attend regularly. Many AAs stepped up to chair these meetings, and share their experience strength and hope during this difficult time.

POST PANDEMIC AND BEYOND

Exiting the pandemic lock downs, several groups passed out of existence. This was a loss to the Rockland AA Community. However, the good news is that several new groups have formed and are gathering momentum. Things are starting to look up.

The Hour of Power, which arose out of the RCI online meetings during the pandemic is a registered Rockland virtual group. It has business meetings, a GSR, other service positions, a website, outings, and steady attendance. It currently has over 175 members, and 24 meetings a week. The group registered with GSO in October 2021.

During the pandemic lock down, a virtual committee was formed to write and establish a set of bylaws for the Rockland County General Service Committee. The newly created *ad hoc* committee, chaired by Kevin F., held numerous meetings. The Bylaws Committee's efforts were built upon the work of previous RCGSCAA members. On April 20, 2022 the Rockland County General Service Committee of Alcoholics Anonymous as it came to be known passed by unanimous consent the set of bylaws that they currently operate under. It had taken almost 27 years from the first meeting of General Service in Rockland to achieve this accomplishment. Moving forward, the bylaws will act as a base on which to build a stronger AA program in Rockland County.

—Updated, September 2023 by the RCGSCAA Archives Committee



STATEN ISLAND

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

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

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

AA marks its founding date as June 10, 1935, the sobriety date of AA number two, Dr. Bob. Yet it was not until January or February 1945, that Staten Island's first regular AA group began to meet. The March 7, 1945 edition of the *Staten Island Advance* headlined an article, "Alcoholics Anonymous . . . has come to Staten Island and has already begun its work quietly, and effectively, just as it has in hundreds of other communities . . . the Island group held its first meeting only a few months ago. Within a short time after it began . . . eight Islanders—six men and two women—have been helped." That first group, called the St. George Group, initially met at midday in Borough Hall to accommodate office workers in the area.

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

Staten Island had an active Public Information Committee in the early forties. A few newspaper articles carried comments about Box 301, a Twelfth Step PO Box at the St.

George Post Office. This apparently was a way for Island AAs to reach out to active drinkers and their families before the InterGroup 12th Step phone lines were established.

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

Our next still existing group, the Great Kills Group, began September 6, 1952. At the time, the *Staten Island Advance* reported that it was the sixth Island unit, the 161st in the greater New York area and the 4511th in the world. The group held its meetings on Monday and Saturday nights. When the congregation built a new church in 1952, AA was invited to meet in their new parish hall beneath the church. The group continues to meet there many years later, a truly awesome relationship.

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



Staten Island

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

Christmas is an important season for Staten Island AAs. A Christmas Eve Marathon began in 1984, and it has evolved into an all-day sober celebration with fellowship and open meetings from 10 AM to midnight. Members contribute their favorite holiday foods, and they come to share the fears and joys associated with the holiday. Members' children and other loved ones are invited to attend.

November of 1996 saw Staten Island's first Spanish AA meeting called Grupo Para Todos (Group for Everybody) which began meeting at the Immaculate Conception Church on Wednesday and Friday nights. Today, two more groups, Vida a la Vida (Life to Life) and La Copa Rota (The Broken Cup), join Grupo Para Todos to bring the weekly total of Spanish language meetings in Staten Island to 11.

Staten Island also welcomed its first sober clubhouse, Traditions House, in 1997. Members say it is no coincidence its opening day was June 10th, Dr. Bob's anniversary. Traditions House hosted 18 AA meetings weekly over the course of its nine-year existence, and supported countless members of AA on their road to recovery. The HOW Club in Port Richmond opened its doors on December 1, 2006 as the second Staten Island clubhouse. It closed in 2020. A third clubhouse, Jaywalkers Club, opened in Port Richmond in 2019.

Meanwhile, on December 1, 2002, at the Snug Harbor Cultural Center, members of Staten Island AA created the 1st Annual Spiritual Breakfast. In 2007, over 350 people attended the breakfast. Other notable 2007 occurrences included the first SENY Archives Workshop held in October, the creation of a new General Services Website at www.statenislandaa.org and the reorganization of Staten Island's General Service districts. These currently number seven including an Hispanic district and a virtual district.

Staten Island AA currently offers 120 meetings a week including 30 that are virtual. Our Institutions Committee, working in conjunction with New York Intergroup, remains very active organizing members to bring 88 meetings a week into a range of institutions such as the Camelot Counseling Center, South Beach ATC, The PREP Center on the Bayley Seton campus of Richmond University Medical Center, Amethyst House and Christopher's Reason. The committee also provides meeting lists, "Big Books" and AA pamphlets to the residents, clients and patients in the institutions we visit as we did for the incarcerated alcoholics in the Arthur Kill Correctional Facility before it closed in 2011.

During the COVID 19 shut down in 2020, AA lost most meeting places and many meetings went virtual on Zoom. Some members on Staten Island put their heads together and said, "Hey, why not an outdoor meeting?"

Around March 5, an outdoor meeting was put together by members Jim A., Trish, and Steven G. to take place at 6:30 PM at Gateway National Recreation Area on Staten Island. The meeting met seven nights a week for 15 months with meetings ranging from five to 15 people in the winter to as many as 75 in the summer. There were a couple of picnic tables to use, otherwise it was bring your own chair. During the winter the group took up a collection and bought an 8 by 30 foot construction tarp and two propane tanks with drywall heaters. The group made donations to New York Intergroup, had an Intergroup number and was called the Gateway Beach Group. The "Preamble" was read before each meeting, and the group tried its best to follow AA's Traditions and its service structure.

The meeting continues on as of this writing on Thursdays and Saturdays at 6:30 PM. It is not unique as there are other outdoor meetings notably at Lemon Creek in Princes Bay and one in Midland Beach, Staten Island. We could often hear members in the dead of winter saying to each other, "Hey, you going to the beach tonight?"

Coming out of COVID, four Staten Island DCMs got together to talk about how to get the fellowship on Staten Island active again. They came up with the first Fellowship BBQ/Block Party. It was a huge success and has continued. This year will be the third annual.

In 2023, a young, hungry GSR brought to the monthly General Services meeting her idea for a dance around the time of St Patrick's Day, and a new event was started on Staten Island. Called the Spring Fling, the dance had a "Back to the 90s" theme showing

newcomers to the fellowship that we can still have fun. This year's dance will be a "Back to the 80s" theme.

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



Gateway Beach Group, 2020



State Island Ferry

SUFFOLK

The earliest mention of Alcoholics Anonymous in a Suffolk County newspaper discovered so far appeared in the *Mattituck Traveler Watchman*, January 23, 1941 issue. "There is a group called Alcoholics Anonymous in New York They've succeeded where doctors and psychiatrists have failed, working on the theory that only a drunk knows how to talk to a drunk."

Within one and a half months, the far more influential article by Jack Alexander would appear in the national magazine, *The Saturday Evening Post*, and as a result, AA would quadruple in size. Needless to say, it set in motion activity out here.

In 1941, AAs from Suffolk were trekking to a weekly meeting in Forest Hills. When that meeting had grown enough, an offshoot was started in Hempstead. According to a 1944 *Grapevine* article, that meeting started in 1942 and was called the Nassau-Suffolk Group. The first anniversary of that group warranted a full page article in the August 11, 1943 issue of *Newsday*. The first sentence described us as "a strange assortment of luses, rum-dumbs and reformed reprobates"

That is not to say we sat by idly out in Suffolk. The very first attempt at a meeting in Suffolk County was front page news in the August 7, 1941 *Long Islander* newspaper. The article goes on to call us, "Perhaps the strangest organization in history" But it does mention the meeting was started by a member who had moved out from New York City to Huntington. How long this meeting lasted is unknown. A follow up article in the same newspaper March 1, 1945 mentioned that the original group disbanded due to "wartime conditions." Pearl Harbor was bombed a mere four months after this group started.

An article in the July 1946 *Grapevine* states that in November 1944, meetings were brought into the Veterans Administration in Northport. These would be the first AA meetings ever in a VA hospital. A very pleasant fringe benefit was that one person who attended those meetings, in turn, started the first meetings at Kings Park State Hospital in 1946. This information is likewise confirmed in the book, *The History of the Kings Park Psychiatric Center*.

Huntington AAs would rebound. The *Huntington Times* reported that the first regular meeting of another attempt at AA was held on Wednesday, January 9, 1946. When it started, it was called simply the Suffolk Group because it was the only group out here. That group meets to this day. In 1947, Bill W., our co-founder, sent a congratulatory letter to the Huntington Group on its first anniversary. Within a year other groups joined Huntington with meetings in Sayville, Southampton, Bay Shore and Amityville. By the end of the 1940s,



The Saturday Evening Post, March 1, 1941

there were also meetings in East Hampton, Kings Park, and Cherry Grove. Alcoholics Anonymous was on the move.

According to information obtained from the AA World Services Archives, a clubhouse may have existed in Bridgehampton. At least two more clubhouses would be created over time, one behind an auto parts store in Lake Ronkonkoma and another above a saloon in Islip. Legend has it that the one in Islip was asked to vacate because the bar owner claimed it was hurting his business.

As Suffolk County grew in the Fifties, so did Alcoholics Anonymous. Lake Ronkonkoma, Wyandanch, Patchogue, Brentwood, Northport, Stony Brook and Babylon Mid-Island would join our ranks. With our growth came the need for some type of service structure. We had been part of the New York Intergroup since the 1940s, and much of our services were being arranged through them. This arrangement would lead to difficulties later on, but for a while, it served an important need.

The Sixties would continue the expansion with at least 30 new groups joining our roster from Copiague to Greenport with stops along the way in Port Jefferson, Centereach, Commack, Dix Hills and Bohemia, just to mention a few. The East Moriches Group was born in Center Moriches, then moved to East Moriches and then back and forth. We were learning to roll with the punches

During the Sixties, several groups on the East End banded together and formed an answering service to better serve those in need of our help. The groups would each commit to contribute a set amount of money to keep it afloat. The service was headquartered in a motel out in Quogue. Previously all phone calls were handled out of New York City. The need for a more localized system was warranted. It would eventually evolve into our present day hotline with volunteer AA members available 24 hours a day all year long to answer.

That answering service expanded with a majority of the groups in the county contributing to it. In the phone directory, the main number was still a New York City number, and troubles brewed. The calls were not being answered quickly enough. One long timer claimed post cards were being sent days later in response. Those answering the hotline were sometimes unfamiliar with Suffolk geography, and it was not unusual for a person from Montauk, for example, to be hooked up with an AA from Amityville. Back then too calls from out of the area were considered "long distance," and incurred steeper charges. Some people were reluctant to incur the cost.

Trying to fix these and other problems, meetings with city representatives were unproductive with accusations on both sides. We had reached an impasse. There were talks of splitting off and forming another intergroup. Recently discovered notes taken at the time suggest one option was to merge with Nassau County with a centralized office near the Nassau/Suffolk border. Obviously that didn't happen, and we did form our own [Suffolk Intergroup Association](#) as of May 1973. Not all groups were on board with this. Some remained loyal to New York City, and the separation was not as amicable as one would have liked. Some bad blood lingered for a while, but the spirit of "principles before personalities" did finally prevail.

Now that we were on our own, ways to honor our new found independence were explored. The consensus was to create an annual event. Out of these ideas came the Share-a-Thon, the first of which was held at the old Colonie Hill in Hauppauge in 1975 with hundreds in attendance. There was a banquet with a live orchestra providing music for dancing. This followed a day of workshops. The Share-a-Thon has become a tradition. The banquet and dancing may be gone, but the all-day workshops live on.

[Suffolk General Service](#) created its own annual event, the Unity Breakfast with the first being held on January 28, 1998. For many years, this was eagerly anticipated with AAs and guests heading to the Polish Hall in Riverhead. However wonderful that facility was, it became too small for the many who wished to attend. In 2012, the Unity Breakfast was moved to the East Wind in Wading River. Now over a thousand can attend and do.

The final event held each year in Suffolk County is the Big Meeting. A day long workshop dedicated to the many service options available and the importance of getting involved, this too is well-attended, and the commitment alternates from year to year between General Service and Intergroup.

There is also much work going on to coordinate services, and reach out to the sick and suffering alcoholic. Suffolk General Service acts as our direct line to the broader AA fellowship, getting information back and forth. It is vitally important these lines of communication remain open. Committees like Cooperation with the Professional Community reach out to those in a position to refer people to AA. They help clarify mistaken notions about our fellowship while providing information about the work we do. Other committees deal with public information and corrections.

Suffolk Intergroup concerns itself more with countywide services like the hotline which still remains fully a volunteer covered service after all this time. The office recently relocated to Ronkonkoma and is open six days a week to answer questions, and sell Conference-approved AA literature. Other committees bring meetings into treatment facilities and the jails. Both General Service and Intergroup maintain an archive. We learn from our past and have an obligation to save it for future generations.

For example, the pandemic taught us a lesson that nothing in life is permanent. Change can happen when you least expect it, and it may not be of your doing. With the pandemic AA was faced with challenges unlike any we had experienced before. Suddenly the advice, "Don't drink and go to meetings" was up ended when all regular meetings were pulled out from under us. For the most part, we rallied together and improvised. Both General Services and Intergroup worked together to assist us in navigating these uncharted waters. We came out battered, but we did finally come out.

As of May 2023, there were 337 groups offering 894 different meetings weekly in Suffolk. From the early morning to midnight, there are meetings of all sorts. These meetings are as diverse as our membership itself. We have held meetings on beaches, in parks, parking lots, colleges, high schools and grade schools. Meetings have met in hospitals, rehabs and outpatient treatment centers. We have gotten together in jails, yoga studios, bingo halls, coffee shops, sporting good stores, music venues, various municipal buildings, garages, recording studios, and biker clubs. We have met both above and below restaurants. There have been AA gatherings in Knights of Columbus, Masonic and American

Legion Halls. And of course, we have met in houses of worship of all religious denominations. COVID introduced us, as a matter of necessity, to online and phone meetings, both of which were fairly unknown out here before.

Wherever we do meet, we share our experience, strength and hope. It has been that same formula found in our basic text, the “Big Book” passed on from one alcoholic to another. We are bound together by our mutual desire to stay sober, and to understand the way back. That newspaper article quoted at the beginning of this history mentions the process of one drunk talking to another being so successful in helping people stay sober. That was written back in 1941, and still holds true 83 years later.

We may be trudging that Road of Happy Destiny, but we are not alone on that journey.



**Suffolk Intergroup Association office,
Ronkonkoma**

SULLIVAN

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

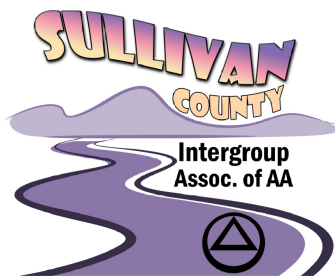
On or about 1946, meetings in Sullivan County were held in the Grange Hall in Liberty on Wednesdays. The first anniversary of the Liberty Group was a gala affair held at the Columbia Farms Hotel in Hurleyville. Unfortunately, though this event no longer exists. This group currently meets at St. Paul's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

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

Monticello meetings started in either 1948 or 1949 on Mondays and met, ironically, in the back room of Slim W.'s liquor store. Reportedly, around 1946, a woman up on Walnut Mountain stayed sober by calling Slim every day at the liquor store. The group later moved its meetings to a private home on High Street and then to various churches. This meeting, until recently, was at the St. John's Church on Saint John Street in the village on Monticello, but recently moved to the Neighborhood Facility. Also in the late 1940s, a doctor who practiced on Broadway in Monticello was very interested in helping drunks. He gave vitamin shots to them and if a dire case showed up at his office, he would take them in through the back door ahead of the crowded waiting room. The first Step meetings in the area began, approximately, in 1970 at the Parksville School. These meetings ended in the winter since there was no heat. Some early AAs were heard to say, "No souls saved after 10 PM." One would think that meetings could go on for hours.

Our [Sullivan County Intergroup Association \(SCIA\)](#) started in 1979. There are currently 42 active meetings in Sullivan County. These meetings range from Beginner to Big Book and include Open and Closed Discussion, Speaker, Step and Tradition meetings. Currently, an alcoholic can find a meeting any day or every day of the week in the county in contrast to the 1960s when it would take 1,500 miles to get to 90 meetings in 90 days.

Intergroup publishes meeting lists, which undergo quarterly revisions. These include 20 meetings in the neighboring counties and 42 local Sullivan County meetings. Our Hospital and Institutions Committee distributes Public Information packets and provides information at health fairs, which help carry the message to the still suffering alcoholic. Additionally,



this committee holds six meetings in prisons and rehabs. SCIA also maintains a professional answering service, which is available 24 hours a day.

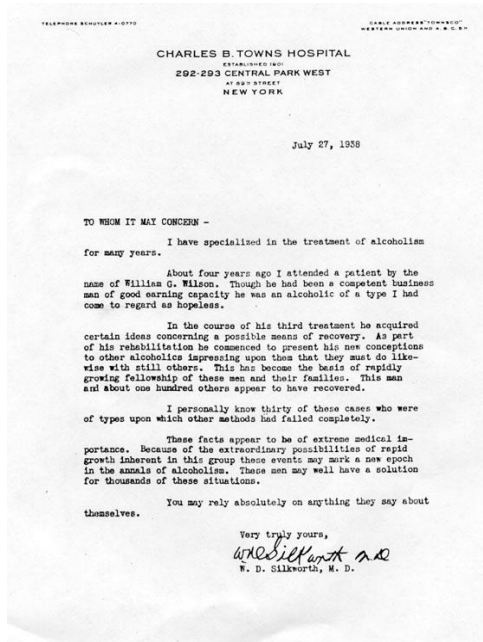
In cooperation with SENY, District 1295 sponsors various workshops and informational Share-A-Days to further our knowledge of the disease of alcoholism. This enables us to educate and inform our members, and to pass along knowledge to the public at large, so that we may be better able to help those who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

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

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

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

(As of early 2020)



"The Doctor's Opinion"

WESTCHESTER

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

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

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

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



The Mount Vernon Group came out of people from Bill W.'s old home town of Brooklyn in 1943, while he and Lois were making their first cross-country tour to visit the recovered miracles of our century. The “city people” brought with them the structure and the sharing of experience, strength and hope with one another. All the groups supported one another discussing ways and means of living the sober life, and coming together on a daily basis. Bronxville, with twelve groups today, absorbed Fleetwood, and sent out many to the East and West. One member wrote, “It is often observed, with the partial accuracy of most ‘old wives’ tales, that there is a ‘terrific turnover’ in Alcoholics Anonymous. And yet, of the many who discovered sobriety that vintage year of 1948, there are some known to most of us who have never flown far or fatally from the White Plains nest.”

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

By 1970, there were 30 groups in Westchester. The Old Purdys Group, formed in 1969 out of the Cops and Robbers Group in Mount Vernon, began to carry the message North and West. One member of that group visited the Big Book Group in London and invited the

members to visit any time they were in America. Soon after, a young man came, three years sober, and led a step meeting using the “Big Book” as a reference. His joy and peace were so awesome to behold that after that night the elders said, “We'll have to have ‘Book Meetings’ if that's what happens in a person's life from studying it!” As a result, many groups such as It's Guaranteed, Maryknoll, Katonah, Crow Hill, Patterson, Putnam Lake, Plug in the Jug, and several “Step” named groups in Putnam County forming during the 1970s and 1980s took with them a Big Book meeting as well as the Step and Open meetings.

Besides the parent group, White Plains now boasts sixteen AA groups, Yonkers has fourteen, Bronxville has twelve, New Rochelle and Rye have eight each, while Mt. Kisco, Ossining, and Yorktown Heights each have seven groups. All together, there are well over 175 groups today.

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

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

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

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

—2020 UPDATE—

In Westchester County, meetings were created for specific demographics in the county. Meetings were created for Spanish speakers. These include the following groups; *Grupo Unidos* in Yonkers; *Felices En Sobriedad* in White Plains; *Grupo en Busca de la Verdad* in Port Chester; and Mt. Kisco *Grupo* Latin American in Mt. Kisco. Additionally, in Pelham and Dobbs Ferry, AA Gay and Lesbian Groups were formed.

In Westchester County, there are a variety of AA events that are held. A key Westchester County AA event is Share-A-Day. During this event, AA, Al-Anon, Young People's, and Spanish speakers share their experiences, strength, and hope. Groups, such as the Pelham Players, have performed entertaining skits and plays during this event. Besides Share-A-Day, the Stepping Stones Picnic, held in Katonah, is another widely attended event. This picnic, which is held in the former home of Bill and Lois W., has been held since 1959. Besides hearing captivating speakers, people have the privilege of touring

the historic home of Bill and Lois. In June of 2020, the event was turned into a virtual event due to the COVID-19 pandemic. From March 22–24 in 2019, Westchester County had the honor of hosting the 51st SENY Convention. Events included speaker meetings, history presentations, an Alkathon, and a banquet.

Beginning in March 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic forced churches to cancel AA meetings throughout Westchester County. Innovative alcoholics took the initiative to set-up virtual meetings for their groups. Following in their lead, virtual meetings were created by various meetings in Westchester County. As of July 2020, most Westchester County groups have online meetings scheduled.



Croton Gorge Park

MORE AA HISTORY IN SENY

YOUNG PEOPLE IN ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS (YPAA)

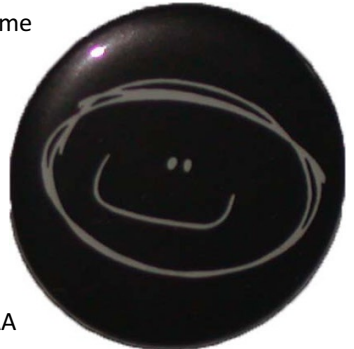
South Eastern New York's history with younger AA members extends back to the pioneering days of Alcoholics Anonymous. The first AA groups specifically intended for young sober alcoholics were named “thirty-five and under groups,” and first appeared in the local AA directory in 1947.

Currently these groups are referred to as “young people's groups,” and the term “young” has taken on a broader meaning so as not to exclude any member from attending the meetings. Today, “young” is defined as “young at heart” or “room to grow.” Presently, Young People's groups meet every day of the week in most of New York City, on Long Island and in most of the more upstate counties in SENY. These meetings can be easily found in local AA directories.

As specific young people's groups grew in numbers and popularity, some chose to organize beyond the group level and form committees directly responsible to the young people locally. For some committees their purpose was to plan and host conferences and conventions, while others structured themselves instead as mainly service committees.

Of the early committees, the Bridge Over Troubled Water Young People's Conference (BOTWYPC) formed in the Bronx in 1984. This committee hosted conferences for seventeen consecutive years with the exception of 1993 because of the [International Conference of Young People in Alcoholics Anonymous](#) (ICYPAA) hosted that year by New York City. In February, BOTWYPCs met at Cathedral College in Douglaston, Queens, and in June at SUNY Maritime College in the Bronx or the College of Mount St Vincent in Riverdale. BOTWYPC hosted a Young People's Hospitality suite at the annual SENY Convention for many years, sometimes under ICYPAA's name and sometimes under its own. BOTWYPC was also very involved in bringing the 36th ICYPAA to New York City in 1993.

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



ICYPAA Button, 1993
New York, NY

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

Another large-scale young people's committee began in the 1980s spanning the entire state of New York, the New York State Conference of Young People in Alcoholics Anonymous (NYSCYPAA) which hosted approximately ten years of conferences. Two of these conferences unfortunately are remembered as being rather troubled. One conference held on Long Island lost a great deal of money, and SENY contributed to the host committee to help it pay the balance due to the college where NYSCYPAA had rented space.

Another conference, this time held at the Crowne Plaza in White Plains, suffered the fate of being shut down by the hotel on Friday night because of their failure to meet room block and banquet commitments. BOTWYPC and a new Young People's service committee, the Tri-State Conference of Young People in Alcoholics Anonymous (TRICYPAA), raised money to reimburse SENY for the Long Island mishap, and to pay the remaining balance to the Crowne Plaza. The majority of the money owed to the Crowne Plaza was eventually paid with the hotel relieving NYSCYPAA of the remaining balance through negotiations with the ICYPAA Advisory Council.

These two failed conferences were quite controversial in AA all the way to the level of the General Service Conference. All delegates at the time received a letter regarding the matter. It took many years to repair these relationships, particularly in SENY.

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

LOCAL YPAA COMMITTEES

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

NYCYPAA attended the first panel for young people at the New York State Informational Workshop in 2006, and the first roundtable for young people at the Northeast Regional AA Service Assembly in 2007. They held Grapevine/*La Viña* writing workshops, and reviewed *In*

Our Own Words, hosting a feedback session with the Executive Editor of the Grapevine. NYCYPAA also facilitated a screening of AA's videos for young people to provide feedback to our area delegate, and later shot video footage for submission to AA World Services after a call for new videos for young people in AA. Later, they presented their video submission at district workshops, a SEAT Area Assembly, and at the Eastern Area Convention of Young People in Alcoholics Anonymous to encourage participation. NYCYPAA also hosted the 52nd ICYPAA in 2010.

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

The Long Island Committee of Young People in Alcoholics Anonymous (LICYPAA) was formed in 2000 serving the communities in Suffolk and Nassau counties, as well as points west and north.

A third strong committee emerged in 2015 to serve the northern SENY counties, the [Westchester, Orange and Rockland Committee of Young People in Alcoholics Anonymous](#) (WORCYPAA).



WORCYPAA

These three YPAA committees, in the best tradition of AA, work both independent of each other and in harmony with one another, often co-hosting events to be more encompassing and inclusive. At the heart of each committee's mission is our primary purpose, helping another alcoholic to achieve sobriety.

In addition to these three “standing” committees, there is the “278 Bid Committee” (named for the Interstate running through Brooklyn and Queens), which has come together to bid on a future International Conference of Young People in Alcoholics Anonymous (ICYPAA). This is an *ad hoc* committee whose stated purpose is to be able to host another ICYPAA in South Eastern New York as was done in 1982, 1993, and 2010. The process of securing an International bid can take a number of years, and a Bid Committee exists for as long as it takes to achieve that event.

YPAA EVENTS

While each committee has at least one “signature event” (NYCYPAA's boat trip and LICYPAA's Luau come to mind), all three committees sponsor numerous events throughout the year. Each event has a 7th Tradition monetary and spiritual nature seeking to be self-supporting, and to reach out to the still-suffering alcoholic and bring them into the AA fold. Events are either hosted by the committee, or co-hosted with one or more additional committees, either in or outside SENY. These smaller, more flexible events do not bring in the thousands of participants of the big conferences (such as the [Empire State Convention of Young People in Alcoholics Anonymous](#), ESCYPAA, 2016), but they are the bread and butter means of reaching out locally to young people seeking sobriety.

SENY AND THE YPAAs

Prior to 2007, one of the SENY Alternate Delegate's duties was "Liaison with the New York State Conference of Young People in Alcoholics Anonymous (NYSCYPAA)." When the 8th Edition of the SENY Handbook was released in January 2007 that description was broadened to what it remains today: "[Serves as] Liaison with the Young People in AA service groups, the various YPAAs." The Alternate Delegate visits each YPAA a number of times each year, to bring news of General Service and SENY, and to invite the YPAAs to send their own liaisons to area assemblies and the SENY Convention.

TECHNOLOGY ADVANCES

Technology and Communications have “rocketed into a fourth dimension” in the last decade. As might be expected, Young People lead the way, and the YPAAs use technology effectively and energetically.

All three YPAAs (and the 278 Bid) have skilled “Graphics Chairs” who produce their own flyers and publicity; chat groups provide for rapid and efficient communication; and members who cannot make a live meeting simply give their reports virtually or by other electronic means. All this means that the YPAAs can respond quickly to both challenges and opportunities, and they do.

THE COVID PANDEMIC

In March 2020 South Eastern NY became the COVID-19 epicenter of the United States. Late into 2020 SENY was still struggling with reopening, social distancing, and all the other challenges that the world and Alcoholics Anonymous were then experiencing.

The YPAA committees responded early and well, and were especially quick to use their technology skills to keep AA's primary purpose functioning. As restrictions slowly began to lift, the YPAAs started to move back to live events where feasible (and legal), but many early committee meetings were still being held either on a virtual platform or on a hybrid (virtual and live) basis. Like the rest of AA, the YPAA committees longed for face-to-face fellowship, but accepted and appreciated that having another option was invaluable.

Since that first difficult year, many but not all things have returned to a pre-pandemic normal, and the YPAAs have learned essential lessons in using the resources at hand to keep the AA message and program accessible.

IN SUMMARY

On page 24 of the current AA Service Manual there is a sentence that refers to General Service's relationship to the local intergroup/central offices, "These two autonomous but vital service structures coexist in many areas. All of AA benefits when intergroup/central offices and general service work together in mutual cooperation." This applies as well to the relationship between SENY, the YPAA committees and the rest of AA. While each is autonomous, both have the same primary purpose; while "passing the hat" might not be the same as "selling merch," the fact is that each one strives to provide a safe haven for alcoholics, whether they have decades or days of sobriety, and even if they are still in the throes of active alcoholism. YPAA is part of our present and our future. They do active outreach and are inclusive, and we do well to embrace and support them.

THE OCTOBER 1944

The **Reader's Digest**

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"Maybe I Can Do It Too," Readers Digest, October 1944

AA AT GROUND ZERO

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

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

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

By Friday, September 28, about 15-20 volunteers gathered and were ready to go to the Red Cross headquarters in downtown Brooklyn. At this point, the extent of the AA work, or even the location for it, was unknown. Many details still needed to be worked out among the overlapping authorities who were responsible for the ongoing search and recovery work. Security clearance and ID cards would be required of all however, so on that first day the volunteers were obliged to wait many hours as the details were completed. Eventually, most of the disappointed volunteers were sent home, but around 6 PM that evening, a small group of three volunteers were credentialed and transported through the security lines into Respite Center #1. There they waited several more hours until finally, around 8 PM, Room 231 was designated as their room and became the main center for AA activity at Ground Zero for the next two and a half months. Although no formal AA meetings were held that night, the room was set up and identified for the "Friends of Bill W.," anonymity being a major concern given the mix of uniformed and non-uniformed workers streaming through the building. A few first visitors arrived, some unbelievably, simply to bask in the thought of an AA presence there, before the volunteers were obliged to leave that night. What followed was more than a day of uncertainty until on Sunday, September 30, another

group of volunteers were brought to the Red Cross headquarters and this time nine of them were credentialed and a real presence was established in room 231 by 4 PM that afternoon. One of the issues that had to be resolved was under what umbrella the AA volunteers were to be grouped, religion or mental health. The latter won out (to the amusement of the AA volunteers), and for the next two months all the AA work was conducted through the mental health division of the Red Cross. At 6 PM, that Sunday night the first official meeting gathered in room 231. The speaker was a police officer from the Bronx, who said he had opened the "Big Book" that morning and just happened to read in "Bill's Story" the description of his going off to World War I. Appropriately, he used that familiar AA text as the focus of his talk, and so began [AA at Ground Zero](#).

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

As mentioned, Respite Center #1 was a Saint John's University building, and Room 231 was a one-time classroom with a large blackboard that covered one wall. There, the three volunteers who entered the room that first Friday night wrote their names and home groups, and in the weeks that followed pretty much all the volunteers and visitors who entered that room followed suit. When the AA presence ended and Room 231 closed, that blackboard was totally filled with names and home groups. Likewise, there was a logbook for volunteers and visitors to sign at both Respite Centers. Although the blackboard was not able to be preserved, and is probably in use today as another classroom tool, photos of it at the end of AA's presence have been preserved, and the logbooks have been turned over to the AA archives at the GSO. Other mementos, such as two large "Ground Zero Group" plaques, forged by the steel workers from metal salvaged from the twin towers site, were given to New York Intergrupp and to the GSO for safekeeping.

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

you a glove. And this [Room 231] was just a piece of the puzzle. And for me and other guys like me, it was a big piece of the puzzle, probably the biggest piece.”

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



Ground Zero Group, Respite Center #1, Room 231

SENY IN 2020, YEAR OF THE COVID PANDEMIC

From 1935, Alcoholics Anonymous' members and its service structures weathered numerous wars, hurricanes, floods and all other forms of natural disasters, economic crises and social turmoil, but nothing would have prepared the Fellowship for the events of 2020 in the wake of the COVID-19 driven pandemic.

By February-March, Federal, State and local public health authorities were recommending limiting non-essential activities, and some saw the writing on the wall, that our AA way of life might soon be upended, challenged in unprecedented ways. In New York, that challenge formally came when the government effectively shut down the State for all but "essential" activities at 8 PM on March 22. Home groups, the heartbeat of AA, and all service groups overnight disappeared, and many had not been ready.

Geographical South Eastern New York (SENY) was at the epicenter of the worst of the early pandemic in the US, and at least initially, members and groups struggled to respond to the loss of physical meetings. But quickly, after some fitful initial efforts, members were able to reach out to each other through phone calls and social media, began to discover or rediscover phone and online AA meetings and other options for virtual gatherings, resources that had in some cases been around for decades but underused until now. Service meetings too learned to migrate many of their activities to virtual space. Local Inter-groups rallied their resources and quickly became critical information centers for their counties pointing the way to resources for offering virtual meetings, maintaining anonymity in these new settings, and on the availability of those offerings in lieu of local face to face AA, a new kind of meeting list.

Prominent among the Intergroups was the response from NY Intergroup which quickly pulled together an offering of both general information about keeping AA afloat during the shutdown, and material support for any who wanted to mount an AA meeting on what would become the go to platform, Zoom. Numerous groups and meetings were supported.

Institutional SENY, for its part, saw the need to cancel all face to face activities it had scheduled. This included the cancellation for the first time of the area's annual convention which had completed its planning phase and had been accepting registrations by the time it was called off. Similarly, SENY moved its committee and assembly meetings to virtual platforms, historically holding its first virtual election assembly September 12, one of the first if not the first in the Fellowship to do so. Its standing committees too moved to virtual meetings and events including SENY's "Return of In-Person Meetings" workshop in June, and two virtual Archives workshops May and October, the latter entitled, "2020, What a Year! Our Fellowship During the Pandemic," capturing the impact of and response to COVID-19 in the local Fellowship.

AA's 70th General Service Conference had been scheduled to meet in Westchester in the spring of 2020, but instead held its first historic Conference in virtual space April into May. Also, by the end of March the AA General Service Board had concluded it needed to cancel the International Convention later offering a virtual experience in its place which ran July into August.

At the Fellowship's grass roots during the core of the shut down, there were members getting sober in AA who had never been to a face to face meeting, had never shared a cup of coffee or thumbed through the "Big Book" sitting across from a sponsor. There were those too in this period for whom the Fellowship fell short. Unfortunately, we also saw the enhanced anonymity of virtual meetings allowing some individuals to show their baser selves.

Locally, most members, groups and service groups accepted the need to support the public health related restrictions while some others chose to disregard them, and there was an increasing strain for many as the period of restrictions wore on. Later too during the reopening phase, the Intergroups remained informational resources, but also struggled with what was their responsibility in considering listing meetings known or suspected to be poorly or non-compliant with COVID restrictions. More about the local experience of COVID-19 in 2020 in SENY is reflected in the individual county sections of this history book.

As of this writing the ultimate impact of the pandemic of 2020 on AA remains to be fully appreciated. New ways of carrying the AA message developed while at the same time long standing pillars of AA were shaken and in some cases shattered. Some venerable meetings failed to return from shutdown. Some meetings returned in new forms as hybrid (a combination of virtual and face to face participation options for the same meeting) or parallel (the same meeting being held in virtual space and face to face simultaneously but separately) gatherings. New ones would continue to exist in virtual space alone.

As SENY emerged from the shut down, it was a time to reflect on how well we had done in assuring the hand of AA was always outstretched for anyone who wanted it, anywhere. There were successes and failures. We saw both the best and the worst of ourselves in that period.

What had we learned about ourselves, and our program and Fellowship?

—SENY Archives Committee, October 2020



New York Public Library Lion 2020

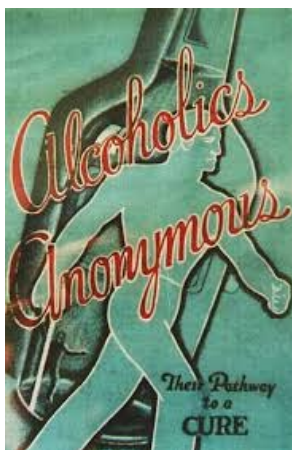
BRIEF HISTORY OF PIONEERING GROUPS IN SENY

Among the early groups in South Eastern New York there are those like the Brooklyn Group (believed to have gotten its start in the Brooklyn Heights home of Bill and Lois W.), the St. Nicholas Group in Harlem (the first African-American group in the area), the Baldwin Group on Long Island, the Brewster Group in Putnam County, and the Suffern Group in Rockland County. These venerable groups all still meet to this day.

There are also many pioneering “special interest” groups throughout our area like the We Agnostics Group (established in 1986), and the Caduceus Group for medical professionals, both of which meet in Manhattan. There are also LGBTQ groups which have served AA for many years. Among them, the first transgender recovery group in SENY, TRANS (Transgender Recovering Alcoholics Navigating Sobriety) began in 2014 in the Pride Center at the downtown Brooklyn Metrotech Center. All these groups and others like them help to widen the doorway into AA and to hold the door open for untold alcoholics.

As “the only requirement AA for membership is a desire to stop drinking,” Alcoholics Anonymous strives to be the diverse, inclusive, spiritually grounded fellowship that our Three Legacies: Recovery, Unity and Service poignantly describe in our literature. What we make of it is up to each of us every day, every meeting.

Our history accrues. What of groups and changes of which SENY is unaware? We hope that members may be able to provide us with historical information that has not yet been recorded or to help correct mistaken information. Please contact our Archives Committee at archives@aasenya.org.



Optional design for the dust jacket, “Big Book” First Edition

RESEARCHING YOUR GROUP HISTORY

AAWS/GSO offers information on how to research AA group history. Go to www.aa.org. Under “Inside AA” you can find “[GSO Archives](#).” Then go to “[Local AA Archives Committees](#).” You may download both the “[Guidelines for Conducting Oral Histories](#),” a resource for capturing individual member stories and recollections, and, “[Researching AA Group History \(SMF-169\)](#),” a service piece with suggestions and resources for preparing a group history. (If you have trouble locating either of these, use the Search feature on the site.) You may also reach GSO by phone at 212-870-3400. Ask for “Archives” which has historical records on many groups. You may also enjoy a visit to the office to review first hand the holdings on your group, and the rest of the collection.



AAWS/GSO Archives

SENY DELEGATES BY PANEL

Years		County		Years		County	
1	'51-'52	Henry Z.	Queens	39	'89-'90	Boyce B.	Brooklyn
3	'53-'54	Wesley I.		41	'91-'92	Jimmy D.	Bronx
5	'55-'56	Chris A.	Brooklyn	43	'93-'94	Denise B.	Manhattan
7	'57-'58	Adrian F.	Suffolk	45	'95-'96	Paul S.	Brooklyn
9	'59-'60	Ham K.	Brooklyn	47	'97-'98	Isadora D.	Brooklyn
11	'61-'62	Fred V.	Nassau	49	'99-'00	Cookie S.	Manhattan
13	'63-'64	Ralph A.	Nassau	51	'01-'02	Allan W.	Nassau
15	'65-'66	Frank C.	Brooklyn	53	'03-'04	Terry F.	Manhattan
17	'67-'68	Tom M.	Nassau	55	'05-'06	Bill C.	Nassau
19	'69-'70	George S.	Suffolk	57	'07-'08	John W.	Putnam
21	'71-'72	John R. *	Nassau	59	'09-'10	Richard S.	Manhattan
23	'73-'74	Ruth H. *	Queens	61	'11-'12	Susan F.	Manhattan
25	'75-'76	Walter F.	Queens	63	'13-'14	Linda McG.	Brooklyn
27	'77-'78	Jimmy S. *	Bronx	65	'15-'16	Jim W.	Bronx
29	'79-'80	Jospehine K.	Queens	67	'17-'18	John W.	Manhattan
31	'81-'82	Alex MacA.	Queens	69	'19-'20	Jane E.	Suffolk
33	'83-'84	Cathy J.	Nassau	71	'21-'22	Tom B.	Suffolk
35	'85-'86	Emily R.	Brooklyn	73	'23-'24	Jo Ann McC.	Queens
37	'87-'88	Mike F.	Suffolk	75	'25-'26	?	

* Later served as Class B Trustee

NOTES:

1. "Resolution Authorizing the General Service Conference," *The AA Service Manual*, 2021-2023 Edition, AAWS, page 123.
2. SENY's first delegate was seated during Panel 1, 1951, so SENY's delegate always begins their service in an odd numbered year and Panel. See also, "Conference Panels," *The AA Service Manual*, 2021-2023 Edition, AAWS, page 125.
3. Insofar as the digital edition of this history book is available online (public media) and in order to keep "principles before personalities," the personal anonymity of AA members living or deceased is maintained.
4. While the William Street office was not within SENY, it is included here for historical completeness.
5. Counties in SENY are numbered from 100 in Suffolk to 1200 in Sullivan, and the Hispanic District within each county is number 14. Under this arrangement the Hispanic District in Suffolk for instance is District 114. All the county-level Hispanic Districts collectively form the Hispanic Districts *Asamblea*, a non-geographical service entity equivalent to the other counties.
6. From its first meeting in 1951 the General Service Conference was held exclusively in Manhattan. Around 1991, the GSC was in some years held in Rye Brook, Westchester. In 2022 it moved to downtown Brooklyn.