

## **YOUNG PEOPLE IN ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS**

South Eastern New York's (SENY's) history of 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 AA directory in 1947. Currently these groups are referred to as "young people's groups." The term "young" has taken on a broader meaning so as not to exclude those aged above thirty-five from attending the meetings. Today, "young" is defined as "young at heart" or "room to grow." At present, there are Young People's groups meeting every day of the week in Manhattan alone. Young People's groups are also in the other four boroughs of New York City and scattered throughout 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 outside the group level and form committees directly responsible to the young people in their local area. Several committees' purpose was to plan and host conferences, conventions, while others structured themselves to be recognized as service committees instead.

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 conflict with the International Conference of Young People in Alcoholics Anonymous (ICYPAA), which New York City hosted that year. Generally held in February, BOTWYPC's met at Cathedral College in 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 their own. BOTWYPC was also highly involved in bringing the 36<sup>th</sup> 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 1982, when it was hosted in New York City. The 25<sup>th</sup> ICYPAA of 1982, took place at the Statler Hilton Hotel, now renamed the Hotel Pennsylvania, across from Madison Square Garden. ICYPAA returned to New York City in 1993. The 36<sup>th</sup> and 52<sup>nd</sup> ICYPAA's took place at the Marriott Marquis Hotel in Times Square with an attendance close to 5,000 each time.

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, NY. Rockland County Young People in Alcoholics Anonymous also hosted a conference in Stony Point, NY during this same time. The Orange County Fellowship of Love Conference also existed during the 1980s in Warwick, NY.

Another large-scale young people's committee began in the 1980s and spanned across the entire state of New York, the New York State Conference of Young People in Alcoholics Anonymous (NYSCYPAA) hosted approximately ten years of conferences. Two of these conferences unfortunately, have been remembered as rather infamous. A conference held in Long Island lost a great deal of money. SENY contributed to the host committee in order to pay the balance to the college where NYSCYPAA was renting space.

Another conference, this time held at the Crowne Plaza in White Plains, NY, 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 paid, and the hotel relieved NYSCYPAA of the remaining balance due to negotiations with individuals of the ICYPAA Advisory Council. These two failed conferences were quite controversial in AA all the way to the General Service Conference level. All current delegates at the time received a letter regarding the matter. It has taken many years to repair these relationships, particularly in SENY.

TRICYPAA began the process of mending these relationships for the sake of current and future Young People's 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.

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 every month, 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. The committee 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 *The 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 the Area Delegate, and later shot video footage for submission to AA World Service's 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 52<sup>nd</sup> 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.