

The New Freedom

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Welcome to *The New Freedom*, the newsletter for the Maryland Bid for the 54th ICYPAA. Inside you will find articles written by members of the bid committee and AAs throughout Maryland. We intend to use this as a tool to connect YPAAs throughout Maryland and let them know what is going on with the bid.

Inside this issue, you will find a story of a woman's first months in recovery and the changes she felt. In another, one of our committee members tells her story. In the last, I talk about the changes my home group has recently been going through.

Thank you for picking up *The New Freedom*.

In love and service, Cate

Recent Events

There is a Solution—Don't Dodge It!

With Happy, Joyous, and Free
April 23rd 2011, Doors open at 7:30
Meeting, Dodgeball, and Batting Cages
630 E Diamond Ave Gaithersburg

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Pajama Pancake Brunch
St Andrews United Methodist Church,
Bethesda. 10-noon

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Area 29 Mini-Conference
Severna Park United Methodist Church
Saturday April 16 8:30 am-8:00 pm

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Area 13 Mini-Conference
Providence Hospital—Ross Auditorium
9:00 am – 3:00 pm

Shiny Eyes

Once upon a time there was a little girl growing up in a sad house with a mom and dad who tried to be good parents but they were very sick. They had a difficult time taking care of her. The girl was lonely and scared all of the time. Even as she became a young woman, scared and lonely she remained until one day she found a magic potion. When she drank it her fears evaporated and she found friendship easily! She couldn't believe her good fortune!

There were some side effects when the potion wore off. Sometimes she would forget long periods of time. Sometimes she felt guilty and remorse over the things she did and said when she drank the potion. But the worst side effect by far, was that each time the potion wore off, she was just a bit more lonely and scared than before she drank it. The potion became more and more important to her so she could get relief from these uncomfortable feelings. The day came when the loneliness and fear were all that were left. The potion had stopped working. That was the scariest day of all.

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A friend told her about this place where there were others who felt like her. It was filled with cigarette smoke, laughter and hand me down furniture. Yet there was something magical about this place. Going there always made her feel better. The best thing about the place was the people who went there. She called them "the people with the shiny eyes." They were like no other people she had ever met. They looked directly at you when they spoke and when they laughed, it started at their toes and went all the way up and out. She told them about her fear and her loneliness, her shame and remorse. They always assured her by telling their own stories. They claimed that at one time they had the same kind of feelings. They sure didn't look or sound like people who had those troubles. They told her that hope was found right here in the magical place but that it was dispensed one day at a time.

Before too long, she met a woman at the magical place. It was the woman's very first visit. She excitedly introduced herself, and welcomed her. She told her that though she had been coming but a brief time, she felt so much better. She rarely felt scared or lonely anymore. She told the woman that she needn't feel scared or lonely ever again. When she passed a mirror later that day, she noticed something different about herself. It was her eyes! They were shiny!

And she lived happily ever after.

Susan G

Columbia, MD

Sobriety date: January 11, 1989

For more information about the bid to bring the 54th ICYPAA to Maryland, please see <http://www.mdypaa.org> or email us at info@mdypaa.org.

Changing Perception

My name is Morgan & I'm an Alcoholic & Addict! I'm 30 years old & the mother of 3 beautiful children, I've been divorced 4 times because of my disease. I came into the program for myself when I was 18. My dad is a member of AA & has 26 yrs sober so I started coming to meetings with my coloring books when I was 3. I realized I had a problem at the age of 18. After I got pregnant at 16 & had my son at 17 I wasn't ready for parenthood & ran like the wind & found my release in alcohol & drugs. My addiction at that time was mainly alcohol, I dabbled with pot a few times but loved how alcohol removed me from self & made me into a person that was the life of the party!

After a while though I became to be the nuisance of the party & knew I needed some help & knew where to turn to. From the age of 18 until I was almost 25, I was in & out a lot because I always compared myself right out of the rooms. I had managed to put a little over a year together at one point but it never stuck. In 2005 I got sober & stayed sober for 3 years doing the mommy/wife thing but the complacency set in & I ran from self got in a relationship with a guy who did other substances. This is a very important part of my story because it shows how our disease is cunning, baffling & powerful. I always thought my problem was alcohol so I thought I could do drugs & be fine! It blows my mind how my mind actually worked at that time.

That was the end of 2007. As a result of my using drugs & alcohol I was arrested in December of 2008 & I thought that would never be me. I had just graduated college with my Associates in Legal Studies. I was mortified but still wasn't enough to quit right away & In March 2009 I ended up in rehab because of course after 9 months of not drinking I thought I would be ok if I did. I completed rehab & thought I had this down & was fine, well yet again another relationship (big part of my story)

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& I stayed sober for 60 days. I ended up in Baltimore City, doing Heroin, something I swore I'd never think of doing. My life went downhill real quick, in a matter of 5 months I managed to get myself beat up many times by my boyfriend, pregnant & homeless. Everyone turned their back on me because they had enough!

In November 2009 I had enough! I was scared, lonely, miserable, mentally, physically & spiritually dead & disgusted with myself for letting so many people down & mainly myself! The main thing that changed this time was my perception. I look at things so differently today. I look at how many blessings I received out of so many horrible & disastrous situations!

There are still days where I feel like I wasted so much life but I wouldn't be the person I am today without my past! I don't regret my past, but learn from it so I don't make the same mistakes again. I take care of myself & know my triggers. I stay connected with people that know me best & I tell on myself constantly. One big thing for me today is I'm rigorously honest, some times brutally honest but I take it one day at a time & work on that.

I'm not perfect by any means & know that God loves me & is working on me to be best for Him & His glory! I stay away from people, places & things that hurt me personally. Every one of us is so different yet so much alike! I try to be everyday of maximum service to God & my fellow human buddies! I definitely try to not have any expectations of anyone because that's the quickest thing that leads me to resentment & right back out because resentment is my #1 offender! I treat others the way I would want to be treated & I deep down believe if more of us did that our society as a whole would change so much for the better! So I hope I reached someone with my experience, strength & hope. There is so much more I could share about my journey so if anyone ever needs to talk there are many people who know how to contact me! That's my story & I'm sticking to it! Thanks for letting me share!

Finding Unity Through Inventory

Recently, my home group was experiencing a large turn-over of members. People who had been members for many years had decided to leave the group, and many others were contemplating leaving. Discouraged, I went to several people with long-term sobriety. I asked them, "what would you do?" Every time I asked this question, it was suggested that we look to a group inventory. I had never heard of such a thing, but was guided in the direction of the Traditions Checklist (published by the AA Grapevine) and the questionnaire in The AA Group pamphlet. I brought it to my home group during a monthly business meeting, and the group decided to set up a time to go over the inventory.

So, one Saturday, we sat around a round table and examined, the questions. We looked to see, "Do we emphasize the importance of sponsorship? Can we do more?", "What more can we do to carry the message?" And together, we discussed all aspects of the group. The discussion included those with several weeks to multiple years of sobriety. As we went through it, whatever trepidation and anxiety I felt throughout the process dissipated and I was able to see the power of a true group *conscience*.

Together, we agreed to implement changes to our group. It's been several months now, but the shift that has occurred has been remarkable. This past week, I had the pleasure of attending my District meeting. There, I spoke with several members who have listened to me talk about the slow changes that have occurred. They decided, on a whim, to attend the meeting one Saturday night. Everyone noted the changes that had occurred. The change from an unhealthy to healthier group was marked. Since the inventory, the group has made a point to get to know each other through gatherings almost every Saturday night. I've found that we have a greater accountability to each other and to the group. More people are coming around, we are getting to know each other and have become more unified. It's been an incredible process to watch and to be a part of. I can't recommend it more highly. -Cate B.