

The Broken Bottle

CAPITAL DISTRICT CENTRAL OFFICE 575 BROADWAY, ROOMS 128-130, MENANDS, NY 12204 (518) 463-0906 MARCH-APRIL 2010

"I am responsible. Whenever anyone, anywhere reaches out for help, I want the hand of A.A. always to be there. And for that, I am responsible"

OUR GREATEST DANGER: RIGIDITY BY BOB PEARSON

Bob Pearson (1917-2008) was General Manager of the G.S.O. from 1974 to 1984, and served as Senior Advisor to the G.S.O. from 1985 until his retirement. His story is in the Big Book as "AA Taught Him to Handle Sobriety," 3rd edit. (1976) pp. 554-561, 4th edit. (2001) pp. 553-559. During the 1986 General Service Conference, Bob gave a powerful and inspiring closing talk to the conference at the closing brunch on Saturday morning, April 26. It was an especially significant occasion, because he knew that he was going to retire early the next year, and that this would be his last General Service Conference. The following excerpts are taken from that farewell speech, as published in the Conference's final report: *The Thirty-Sixth Annual Meeting of the General Service Conference of Alcoholics Anonymous 1986* (Roosevelt Hotel, New York City, April 20-26, 1986), *Final Report*.

This is my 18th General Service Conference -- the first two as a director of the Grapevine and A.A.W.S., followed by four as a general service trustee. In 1972, I rotated out completely, only to be called back two years later as general manager of G.S.O., the service job I held until late 1984. Since the 1985 International Convention, of course, I have been senior adviser. This is also my last Conference, so this is an emotionally charged experience.

I wish I had time to express my thanks to everyone to whom I am indebted for my sobriety and for the joyous life with which I have been blessed for the past nearly 25 years. But since this is obviously impossible, I will fall back on the Arab saying that Bill quoted in his last message, "I thank you for your lives." For without your lives, I most certainly would have no life at all, much less the incredibly rich life I have enjoyed.

Let me offer my thoughts about A.A.'s future. I have no truck with those bleeding deacons who decry every change and view the state of the Fellowship with pessimism and alarm. On the contrary, from my nearly quarter-century's perspective, I see A.A. as larger, healthier, more dynamic, faster growing, more global, more service-minded, more back-to-basics, and more spiritual -- by *far* -- than when I came through the doors of my first meeting in Greenwich, Connecticut, just one year after the famous [July 1960] Long Beach Convention. A.A. has flourished beyond the wildest dreams of founding members, though perhaps not of Bill himself, for he was truly visionary.

I echo those who feel that if this Fellowship ever falters or fails, it will not be because of any outside cause. No, it will not be because of treatment centers or professionals in the field, or non-Conference-approved literature, or young people, or the dually-addicted, or even the "druggies" trying to come to our closed meetings. If we stick close to our Traditions, Concepts, and Warranties, and if we keep an open mind and an open heart, we can deal with these *and any other* problems that we have or ever will have. If we ever falter and fail, it will be simply because of us. It will be because we can't control our own egos or get along well enough with each other. It will be because we have too much fear and rigidity and not enough trust and common sense.

If you were to ask me what is the greatest danger facing A.A. today, I would have to answer: the growing *rigidity* -- the increasing demand for absolute answers to nit-picking questions; pressure for G.S.O. to "enforce" our Traditions; screening alcoholics at closed meetings; prohibiting non-Conference-approved literature, i.e., "banning books"; laying more and more rules on groups and members. And in this trend toward rigidity, we are drifting farther and farther away from our co-founders. Bill, in particular, must be spinning in his grave, for he was perhaps the most permissive person I ever met. One of his favorite sayings was, "Every group has the right to be wrong." He was maddeningly tolerant of his critics, and he had absolute faith that faults in A.A. were self-correcting.

And I believe this, too, so in the final analysis we're not going to fall apart. We won't falter or fail. At the 1970 International Convention in Miami, I was in the audience on that Sunday morning when Bill made his brief last public appearance. He was too ill to take his scheduled part in any other convention event, but now, unannounced, on Sunday morning, he was wheeled up from the back of the stage in a wheelchair, attached with tubes to an oxygen tank. Wearing a ridiculous bright-orange, host committee blazer, he heaved his angular body to his feet and grasped the podium -- and all pandemonium broke loose. I thought the thunderous applause and cheering would never stop, tears streaming down every cheek. Finally, in a firm voice, like his old self, Bill spoke a few gracious sentences about the huge crowd, the outpouring of love, and the many overseas members there, ending (as I remember) with these words: "As I look over this crowd, I know that Alcoholics Anonymous will live a thousand years -- if it is God's will."

"IF YOU WERE TO ASK ME WHAT IS THE GREATEST DANGER FACING A.A. TODAY, I WOULD HAVE TO ANSWER: THE GROWING RIGIDITY ..."

Books Available at Capital District Central Office

CODE	TITLE	PRICE
B-1	Alcoholics Anonymous	\$8.00
B-30	Alcoholics Anonymous (softcover)	\$7.60
B-16	Alcoholics Anonymous (large-print)	\$8.30
B-35	Alcoholics Anonymous (pocket-sized)	\$4.00
B-20	Experience, Strength and Hope	\$5.00
B-2	12 Steps & 12 Traditions	\$7.40
B-4	12 Steps & 12 Traditions (gift edition)	\$7.25
B-15	12 Steps & 12 Traditions (softcover)	\$7.00
B-14	12 Steps & 12 Traditions (large-print)	\$7.75
B-17	12 Steps & 12 Traditions (pocket edit)	\$5.50
B-3	A.A. Comes of Age	\$8.50
B-34	A.A. Comes of Age (soft cover)	\$8.00
B-5	As Bill Sees It	\$8.00
B-18	As Bill Sees It (soft cover)	\$7.60
B-27	As Bill Sees It (large print)	\$8.50
B-8	Dr. Bob & The Good Oldtimers	\$9.50
B-9	Pass It On	\$10.00
B-10	Boxed Set Dr. Bob and Pass It On	\$19.50
B-11	Boxed Set Dr. Bob and ESH	\$13.00
B-12	Daily Reflections	\$8.25
B-19	Daily Reflections (large-print)	\$8.75
B-13	A.A. in Prison	\$2.25
B-26	Came to Believe	\$4.75
B-6	Came to Believe (large-print)	\$4.25
B-7	Living Sober	\$4.25
B-25	Living Sober (large-print)	\$4.75
BM-31	A.A. Service Manual/12 Concepts	\$3.55
BM-32	Twelve Concepts for World Service	\$3.45
BM-33	Service Manual (large print)	\$8.30
	Grapevine Language of the Heart	\$13.50

Come in and browse the selection of books—our hours are 11-7 weekdays and 12-4 on Sundays. Besides serving groups we want individuals to always be able to obtain a single copy of any literature. Thus, we try to stock a handful of every book, space and cost permitting. Our phone volunteers are not cashiers so checks or exact change is appreciated, especially if you are picking up a large group order.

CHANGING THE GUARD

AS WE RECOGNIZE CLARK A. FOR HIS SERVICE TO THE CDCO IN MANY CAPACITIES, MOST RECENTLY AS CHAIRPERSON, WE WELCOME MARY ELLEN B. WHO HAS STEPPED UP TO FILL THAT POSITION! THERE FOLLOWS AN ARTICLE BY MARY ELLEN WHICH EXPANDS UPON THE ONE IN THE LAST ISSUE EXPLAINING HOW WE GOT WHERE WE ARE AND MORE IMPORTANT, THE SERVICES PROVIDED BY CDCO TO OUR FOUR PARTICIPATING DISTRICTS. PLEASE STOP IN AND FIND OUT MORE. MAYBE YOU'LL FIND A VOLUNTEER ROLE YOU CAN FILL!

People often ask about the Capital District Central Office's location at the Schuyler Inn, questioning a connection with the Reverend Peter Young, who has many recovery programs in our area.

The CDCO is an independent A.A. entity, and has no connection with any of Father Young's programs. It is important to dispel this rumor which has swirled around the Central Office since it moved into the Schuyler Inn in late 2005.

When the Central Office was searching for a central location, most office space was beyond its skeleton budget. Two rooms at the Schuyler Inn were offered to the Central Office for its use. A Group Conscience of the CDCO Committee decided to pay rent to the Schuyler Inn, to make sure that the Traditions of Self Support and non-Affiliation were upheld.

The CDCO is an active way to do service for the entire Alcoholics Anonymous community and offers opportunities to serve as a phone volunteer, office staff and Twelve Step volunteer.

Please visit the office any day between 11:00am and 7:00pm weekdays and Saturday, or between 12:00noon and 4:00pm on Sunday. We have pamphlets available and A.A. Literature for sale. Also there is an AA meeting in Room 130 on Tuesday afternoon at 4:00pm. The CDCO welcomes your visit and encourages your participation. Please join us! Our telephone number is 518-463-0906.

MaryEllen B., Chair CDCO and the CDCO Committee

...AND WHILE WE'RE ON THE SUBJECT...
WE'RE USING A DIFFERENT MAILING ADDRESS.

CAPITAL DISTRICT CENTRAL OFFICE
575 BROADWAY
Suites 128-130
Menands, NY 12204-2804

We appreciate Group Treasurers using this
address when sending donations to the C D C O.

DONATIONS FROM GROUPS TO CDCO – 1/20/09-1/18/10

59 Minute Meeting		Higher Power		Schenectady Clubhouse	600.00
A Step At A Time		High Road To Freedom		Scotia	
Acceptance		How It Works		Seeds of Change	
Albany Fellowship	\$50.00	I Am Responsible	20.00	Seeing Is Believing	
Albany West End		In Focus Step		Selkirk	50.00
Albany Young People		Joy of Living Step	55.00	Serenity	
Alkathon		Keeping It Green		Seton Hall	
All Are Welcome II	20.00	Late Bloomers Big Book	48.00	Share At Noon	
Altamont		Late Bloomers Candlelight	112.00	Siena Serenity	
Another Chance		Latham Hi-Nooners		Slingerlands Midday Step	100.00
Answered Prayer		L/G/B/T People's	25.00	Sober Circle	
An Unshakable Foundation	50.00	Lambda		Sober Gay Men's	
Any Lengths		Light For Dark Places		Sobriety on Sunday	40.00
Arcade		Live Easy But Think First		Soft Place to Land	
As Bill Sees It		Living Sober Albany		Soggy Tuesday	
A Vision for You		Living Sober		South Mall	40.00
Back On Track	190.00	Monday Miracles Womens		Starting Over	
Bring Your Own Big Book		Morning Wakeup		Step Right Inn	430.00
Bring Your Own Book		Nassau Tuesday Night Step	25.00	Steps To Freedom	
Bring Your Own Coffee	135.00	Near Noon		Summit	
Candlelight Step		New Awakening		Sunday Evening Women's	20.00
Caring & Sharing		New Beginning (1)		Sunday Morning Promises	400.00
Castleton Carry the Message		New Beginning (2)		Sun Nite Big Book Study	60.00
Center Square Promises	60.00	New Beginnings		Teardrop	150.00
Clarksville Tuesday Night		New Hope (2)		The Big O'C	
Cohoes AA Nooners	75.00	New Hope (14)	275.00	The New Start Step	
Cohoes Friday Night		New Lebanon Group		The Round Table	300.00
Cohoes Serenity		Niskayuna Group	20.00	Thursday Afternoon Women's	
Cohoes Sun Night 12 Step		Niskayuna Fresh Start		Thursday Night Gang	
Cohoes Wed Evening		No Free Lunch		Tranquility	
Coming Back	70.00	North Greenbush		Tri-Village	150.00
Conscious Contact	50.00	Not Yet		Tuesday Night Step	
Courage to Change		One Day At A Time		Twin Town	
Crypt		Open Hearts Fellowship	20.00	Unity	
Daily Reflections		Original Clinton Heights		Uptown Sat. Night	25.00
Day After		Original Colonie		Way Out	
Downtown Out to Lunch Bunch		Original Green Island		Wednesday Morning Step	
Duanesburg	100.00	Original Troy	55.00	Wednesday Night Church	
Eagle Mills Bottom Line		Original Voorheesville	300.00	Welcome Back	20.00
Early Risers		Original Watervliet		Welcome Hand	50.00
Easy Does It		Out From Under	70.00	Welcoming Women To Recovery	
End of the Road		Out Of the Pit's		Westerlo	
Fix It Now	25.00	Out To Lunch Bunch	75.00	Westmere Beginners	
Four Corners		Pass It On		Winners Circle	
Fourth Edition Big Book		Pathways		Winning Sober	
Fresh Start	50.00	Peace and Sobriety Step		Woodlawn	
Friday Big Book	360.00	Pine Hills Group	60.00	Women's	
Friends of Bill		Pot of Gold		Wonderful Wednesday Women's	80.00
Friends of Bill W Open Spkr Disc		Preservation of AA		Yankee Doodle Beginners	31.00
Fri Night Life With Hope	30.00	Primary Purpose		Young People's	
Glenville		Promises Group		Cunning,Baffling, Powerful (5)	50.00
Glenville Men's 11 th Step	250.00	Promises Do Come True	25.00	OTHER:	
Gratitude		Quiet Courage Women's		Martha Lake—District 39	10.00
Green Island George St		Rensselaer Wed. Night		Second Chance— Columbus OH	43.17
Groups of District 2	1,125.00	Rotterdam Mid-day Step		Barb L.— Anniversary	41.00
Groups of District 14	200.00	Sad-Bad-Glad Group	25.00	Ed C.	50.00
Hampton Manor Big Book		Saturday A.M. Eye Openers		Estelle D.	25.00
Happy Hour		Saturday Morning Gratitude		Kevin	20.00
Happy, Joyous, and Free		Saturday Night Church			
Healthy Choices		Saturday Night Live			
Helderberg		Saturday Night Newcomers		TOTAL 2009	\$7,467.17
		3			

CAPITAL DISTRICT CENTRAL OFFICE

FALL REPORT 2009

	OCTOBER	NOVEMBER	DECEMBER	OCTOBER, TOTAL
DISTRICT #1	75	68	64	207
DISTRICT #2	21	21	20	62
DISTRICT #14	28	20	9	57
DISTRICT #18	3	3	9	15
TOTALS:	127	112	102	341
Al-Anon	9	3	10	22
NA	5	4	1	10
GA	1	0	0	1
Overeaters	0	0	0	0
Naranon	0	0	0	0
ACOA	0	0	0	0
SLAA	0	0	0	0
DEBTORS	0	0	0	0
Alateen	0	0	0	0
TOTALS	15	7	11	33

OUT OF AREA CALLS

Calls from other districts include 3 from District #4, 8 from District #5, two from District #10, one from District #11, two from District #17 and one from District #19. Most calls (8) came from Saratoga, followed by New York City (6). Four calls came from Clifton Park, and three calls each from California, and Manhattan. Two calls each came from Ballston Spa, Kinderhook, Long Island, Montreal, Malone, Plattsburgh, and Vermont. One call each came from Boca Raton FL, Buffalo, Canandaigua, Chatham, Deerfield FL, Greene Co., Greenwich, Hudson, Hunter, Kingston, Mechanicville, Michigan, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, Pittsfield MA, Putney VT, Queensbury, Rochester, St. Petersburg FL., Salem, Saranac Lake, Schuylerville, South Carolina, Virginia, Washington DC, Westchester, Williamstown MA and Windham. (86)

PROFESSIONAL AND OTHER CALLS

Calls came in from SPARC on Central Avenue for book donations, American foundation for suicide prevention, a clinician requesting pamphlets, request for donations to the HMB convention, three calls for Spanish speaking meetings, SPARC about pamphlets for women, a St. Rose professor who wants a speaker for her class, an Albany Medical College student for doctors' AA meetings, TASC, a nurse to verify AA phone number, Seton Health Counselor, the food pantry to verify phone number, JCC about canceling a meeting due to a banquet, IDEARC about the telephone, Info USA, food pantry, physician's assistant about a patient, printer ink query, McPike treatment center, USPS problem, a funeral home about donations, Verizon and St. Peter's Hospital. (25)

The CDCO makes no referrals to specific treatment facilities or individuals.

WEBSITE CONTACTS (NEW!!)

The **Capital District Central Office has had a working website for some time (www.AAAlbanyNY.org)**, but those contacts have not been included in this report until now.

The website breakdown of visits, from where and how long they lasted is available upon request to the Newsletter Editor. Many emails come in requesting information, contacts and other AA information. In October there were 4 contacts, in November 3 contacts and in December 3, for a total of 10 emails received and answered.

FURTHER BREAKDOWNS

Book sales were lively: on October there were 12 visits, in November 13 visits, and in December 3 visits. People called for directions to the Alkathons, at Thanksgiving and at Christmas and New Year's, eight in November and 25 in December. (61)

The total contact number for the last three months of 2009 was 556!
GOOD JOB, VOLUNTEERS... GREAT JOB , DATA COORDINATOR!



CAPITAL DISTRICT CENTRAL OFFICE	
REPORT FILED BY THE TREASURER	
12/17/2009-1/18/2010	
Beginning Balance	\$3,116.02
Prudent Reserve	1,800.00
Working Capital	1,316.02
INCOME	
An Unshakable Foundation	50.00
Bring Your Own Coffee	25.00
Cohoes A.A. Nooners	25.00
Glenville Men's 11th Step	50.00
Groups of District 2	125.00
New Hope (14)	25.00
Original Troy	25.00
Schenectady Clubhouse	50.00
South Mall	40.00
Step Right Inn	31.00
Sunday Evening Women's	20.00
The Round Table	100.00
Barb L. (Anniversary)	41.00
Ed C.	<u>50.00</u>
TOTAL	+ \$703.00
EXPENSES	
Rent	225.00
Cornerstone Phone Company	55.88
Office Supplies	62.43
Office Cleaning	<u>75.00</u>
TOTAL	(\$418.31)
Ending Balance	\$3,403.71
Prudent Reserve	\$1,800.00
Working Capital	\$1,603.71

PASSING THE BASKET
EXPENSES... on everyone's mind these days... your CDCO has them too: rent, office supplies, filling the rack with pamphlets (free to you)...**MOST OF ALL, the phone...**our 24/7/365 promise to the alcoholic reaching out for help.

On the previous page are the statistics for the last three months of 2009 for telephone and web contacts. Obviously, CDCO's service is necessary. We're so grateful to the groups that continue to keep us in their giving plan. and to new donors. Truly, we couldn't do it without you!

In 2009 approximately 1/3 of the 160 groups in Districts 1, 2, 14 & 18, that is , the four districts belonging to CDCO, kept our doors open, lights on, phones ringing, rent paid, etc. Our expenses of \$9,722 exceeded our income of \$7,467 by \$2255.

We've thought we were using the sharpest pencil possible in reviewing expenses but we'll have to try to do even better. Can your group help? If costs remained the same in 2010, with just 15 new groups contributing an average of about \$150 each, we would break even! Will your group be the first to start the ball rolling?

Thanks, in advance!

CAPITAL DISTRICT CENTRAL OFFICE	
REPORT FILED BY THE TREASURER	
1/19/2010-2/15/2010	
Beginning Balance	\$3,403.71
Prudent Reserve	1,800.00
Working Capital	1,603.71
INCOME	
Friday Big Book	50.00
Nassau Tuesday Night Step	25.00
New Hope (14)	25.00
Out to Lunch Bunch	250.00
Schenectady Clubhouse	50.00
Sober Circle	50.00
Soft Place to Land	75.00
Step Right Inn	25.00
Sunday Morning Promises	75.00
Maryanne S. (Anniversary)	31.00
50 HMB Meeting Schedules	<u>27.50</u>
TOTAL	+ 693.50
EXPENSES	
Rent	225.00
Office Cleaning	100.00
Cornerstone Phone Company	72.81
Grapevine Subscription	27.00
IDEARC (Verizon Ad-2 mos)	71.75
Office Supplies	<u>8.80</u>
TOTAL	(505.36)
Ending Balance	\$3,591.85
Prudent Reserve	\$1,800.00
Working Capital	\$1,791.85



A TNS STORY of RECOVERY

By Juliet B

[The following inspiring story by a former resident of The Next Step first appeared in the newsletter of TNS ALUMNAE ASSOCIATION with this accompanying request from the then residents of the halfway house. Since then, one of the two weekly meetings mentioned has "folded" due to lack of outside support.] "Hello TNS Alumna! As you probably know, there are two autonomous AA meetings held each week at TNS: 1 pm on Wednesdays and 7:30 pm on Fridays (this meeting is inactive. ED. NOTE). These meetings have been steadily losing attendance and are struggling to stay alive. We would really appreciate outside help to see these meetings become active, powerful women's meetings again. As the population of The House is constantly changing, we need assistance from TNS graduates to ensure that these meetings are conducted within AA guidelines (regularly scheduled business meetings, election of officers, rotating chairwomen, etc.) and to teach the current residents how to run and behave at AA meetings.

Please call Susan at TNS Business Office (518-465-5249) if you're able to help us. She'll coordinate the efforts. We thank you in advance. It is not necessary that a woman have gone through TNS; a strong AA program and commitment to recovery will do just fine!"

Now... Juliet's story:

To my sistas going through The Next Step—My name is Juliet; I'm a product of TNS program, a very strong, happy, joyous, and free sister today. The Next Step helped me get my life back: one that I never knew existed. I spent 37 years of my old life in the streets of NYC, Brooklyn, prostituting in abandoned buildings, shooting galleries, crack houses, roofs, anywhere I could find.

It all started in my early years with a drink, cigarettes, and weed. The world sold me a bad dream. I thought it was a good one. I thought my life was and would be wonderful. I started using at the age of ten. By the time I was 15 years old, I was shooting heroin. My disease escalated very fast after the cigarettes, drink and weed began. I had to learn how to be true to the game. When I started prostituting, I became married to the game, along with the lifestyle of living on the streets. I prostituted

NEWS YOU CAN USE...

AND PASS ON

The **CAPITAL DISTRICT CENTRAL OFFICE** holds a meeting on the third Tuesday of every month in Room 130, Schuyler Inn, 575 Broadway, Menands, at 7pm. All AA members are invited to attend to become familiar with our services.



MARK YOUR CALENDARS & SHINE YOUR DANCING SHOES FOR DISTRICT 18's SPRING FLING!

A sober dance jointly sponsored by AA and Al-Anon.

WHEN: APRIL 30, 2010 FROM 9 PM TIL MIDNIGHT (following weekly 8 pm A A meeting in Church Lounge)

WHERE: GREENBUSH REFORMED CHURCH ED. BLDG (from I-90, Exit 10 to right on Rtes 9 & 20 to left on Hays Rd. Park past Firehouse.

DETAILS: SUGGESTED DONATION: \$5.00 PLEASE BRING SNACKS. SODA AND WATER WILL BE AVAILABLE AT NOMINAL COST.

FURTHER DETAILS AVAILABLE FROM: BILL C. AT 732-4380 OR crowebj07@verizon.net

Fred F. chairs District One's Public Information/Cooperation with the Professional Community (PI/CPC) Committee. At Area Inventory Day, he solicited ideas from attendees about ways we could make visitors to the area aware of the presence of A A. We are looking into pricing signs that can be placed in a hotel's registration area as well as business cards with contact numbers for visitors to the area. If you have any brainstormers please leave a message for Fred at 518-463-0906.



Did you know about the wealth of data about upcoming A A activities in the monthly **HMB AREA 48 MONTHLY NEWSLETTER**? Additionally, each month's issue begins with an invitation to reflect on a step, a tradition and a concept ... begun with some thought-provoking questions. Take advantage of this by going to <http://www.aahmbny.org/Newsletters>.

SECOND REMINDER!...2nd Annual CORRECTION CONNECTION...March 27,2010 at Bloomingrove Reformed Church, Rensselaer; 9-1; speakers; Dept. of Correction rep, highly educational; application for service.

And don't forget to check in often at AA.org & AAGrapevine.org The former, A A's official "cyber home" contains thousands of "virtual acres" of material on AA's history, timeline, publications, concepts, location of intergroups and central offices, meetings. AAGrapevine.org has much in addition to the print magazine that is free, PLUS, for a nominal subscription fee, every word, joke, cartoon, and article ever published in AA's inspirational magazine. So if you're a "bored-by-meetings" kind of guy, take heart: there is treasure awaiting at the click of:



Click...if only to get the **BONUS** story of the day from the archives of **THE GRAPEVINE**. Here's a teaser from 1977: **THE FIRST HOSPITAL GROUP**

MARCH 1, 2010 STORY OF THE DAY

IT SOUNDED like a death sentence:"The medical profession has nothing for you. The clergy has nothing for you. There's nobody in God's world can help you. You're a chronic alcoholic, period."

Well, we've pointed you to the end... or rather, the BEGINNING OF THE STORY! ENJOY!

Not just in Brooklyn, but all over. This disease of addiction dictated I be wherever the drugs were. I became powerless over all things and everything. I thought my life would be like this forever. Alcohol, crack, the streets and King Heroin stole and stripped me of everything: mind, body, spirit, and soul. I couldn't stop on my own; no one could help me anymore. I was dead and stinking.

I became helpless, hopeless, powerless, hungry and very lonely. I found myself living in pain and misery. I suffered as long as I stayed out there, being raped and living in insanity. I thought all of this was normal, but God delivered me. After several ins and outs, I went to a rehab, and then Sally accepted me into The Next Step Program. My sistas, it was not easy in the beginning, or the middle, but I hung in there. I learned new and different things. Most of all, my thinking, my attitudes, and my behaviors needed to be changed. Basically, everything about me had to change. I couldn't understand it then; that was the hard part; but I sure understand it today. The Next Step gave me the best tools for the beautiful, sweet life that I am living today. Trust me, there is life, a good life, on the other side. Just as I worked 24/7 at my old life, and then 24/7 at The Next Step, I work very hard today to hold on to my sobriety, ONE DAY AT A TIME! It is sooo worth it!! I don't have to be a slave any longer to the disease of addiction. I have the desire to recover, and I want it, unlike the time when I was enslaved to the drugs, the alcohol and the streets.

Many of you are very young with big ideas; trust me, the disease of addiction has some big plans for you out there in this ugly world. I am deformed on my right wrist from shooting dope, I have scars and dead veins; my heart used to fail me from cocaine use; my eyesight is bad; my feet often hurt from running the streets. Sometimes I still feel paranoid. As long as I don't pick up, I get better, stronger, and wiser. When I look back at where I have come from, I realize my life is SO much better. ...My thankfulness and gratitude go out to The Next Step Program for giving me a chance to realize how strong and powerful I can be without the drugs; and to The Next Step for giving me hope.

My sistas, you can make it if you try. You're doing it already!! I encourage you to be strong in your journey at The Next Step. You'll be glad you did.



Fred F., our CDCO Day Scheduler, uber-volunteer, PI chair for the District, keyboardist extraordinaire, and all round bon vivant has another caption contest percolating at AAGrapevine.org. You can hurry on and vote for him. His latest winner is below:



3. Winner: Ed explains to the group how restraint of tongue and pen have served him well. — Fred F., *SadBadGlad Group, Albany, NY*