

The MAICO

March/April 2009

# GAAZETTE

*Our area meeting in print.*

## *About MAICO*

*The mission of MAICO (Madison Area Intergroup Central Office) is to help A.A. groups within its service area (South Central Wisconsin) carry the A.A. message. MAICO helps coordinate and facilitate communication and cooperation among individual A.A. groups, area 12-step and other committees, and components of the A.A. service structure. MAICO provides needed services that are beyond the scope and ability of any individual A.A. group, and is at all times responsible to the groups it serves.*

## *Easy Does What?*

When I first entered AA, I often heard people say that if I didn't drink I would start to feel better. I don't believe that this happened for me in the way that most people thought it would because for my first three months in AA, the longer I stayed sober the better I felt those things (rage, guilt, hopelessness, fear, alienation and depression ) that so often led me to a drink. Partly as a result of this I never made it past day ten of continuous sobriety despite going to over 200 meetings in my first 90 days. Feeling all of that better on a day-by-day basis soon brought me to a point where I would arise, having spent most of yet one more night staring at the ceiling wishing I could fall asleep rather than sleeping, trying to decide whether it was a better idea to get drunk or commit suicide. Sobriety felt like it was making my life worse rather than better and chasing oblivion seemed like the only reasonable response.

Thankfully I had a sponsor who believes that the Big Book gives us the most accurate instructions on how to recover from alcoholism through working AA's only program of recovery as well as instructions on how to work with

others. Having observed my actions, attitudes and refusal to follow a few simple rules through some very ugly times, he concluded that my approach to recovery up to that point would inevitably lead me back to failure. Following the instructions found in the chapter, "Working With Others," he finally told me that if I continued to avoid doing what was necessary to recover, he would step away and let me drink myself to death so that he could spend his time trying to help someone who was willing to accept what The Program of Alcoholics Anonymous had to offer.

I now find myself feeling gratitude for what was then a very traumatic moment. Thanks to his belief in the instructions found in the Big Book, my sponsor displayed what I generally find to be my hardest challenge as a sponsor: He showed that he was willing to love me enough to risk hurting my feelings by telling me the truth without worrying about how I would react to it. This was a moment that truly changed and saved my life.

Since my first few months in the program were

spent entirely in a fog caused by either alcohol or crippling fear and anxiety, I cannot be sure how this conversation actually went. I suspect that my response to my sponsor telling me that I was not doing what I needed to do was along the lines of, "Not doing what I need to do? I go to at least two meetings a day and talk to you every day. In fact, I spend hours with you most days. What else could I possibly be doing?"

I assume that his response was something along the lines of, "Take AA seriously. Work the steps."

I do not remember what my precise reaction to the conversation was. However, I have come to realize that this conversation led me to accept that I truly had only two alternatives: "One was to go on to the bitter end, blotting out the consciousness of our intolerable situation as best we could; and the other, to accept spiritual help."

The stark realization that those were my only two alternatives enabled me to surrender sufficiently to take steps one through three in spirit rather than merely in words. Surrendering to the fact that my will power was not enough to keep me sober and that my judgment as to what I needed to do to stay sober was almost infinitely inferior to that of my sponsor's allowed me to stop the futile battle I had been waging on my own and start doing what others before me had done, regardless of how contrary those things were to my old ideas. That day is my current sobriety date.

It has since become clear to me that up until that point my approach to The Program of Alcoholics Anonymous had been "easy does it" when it came to any work that would lead to internal discomfort. Regardless of how much time I spent going to meetings or being with my sponsor, I had been unwilling to do the rigorous inside work that I needed to do to recover from alcoholism.

After all, if meeting makers make it why not just go to meetings and skip the tough work of taking the steps? Why would I make myself vulnerable by telling someone all of my secrets, much less make amends to all of those jerks who

I had merely treated the way they deserved to be treated, when all I had to do was just keep coming back until the miracle happened? Why go to the trouble of changing if I just needed to hang on until others loved me enough to allow me to start loving myself?

Do not get me wrong. All of those slogans are great and helpful in the right context. However, I have two problems that seem to be inherent in me that led me to use those slogans in a way that actually harmed my chances at recovery. One of these problems is that I am incredibly self centered by nature; the other is that I have a well-developed ability to rationalize anything and everything to support a predetermined conclusion. It was child's play to take those slogans out of context and use them to justify my self-centered behavior and avoid seeing myself as the root of my problems. I needed a set of "clear-cut directions" designed to show "other alcoholics precisely how we have recovered" that would eliminate most of the wiggle room that I was grasping onto.

It took roughly three-and-a-half months in AA for me to get more than 10 days of continuous sobriety. During that time I truly believed in my heart that nothing could possibly as miserable as life without drugs and alcohol. I was plagued by depression and anxiety and obsessed with suicide. Yet within one and a half months of making a true surrender and working the steps with the "desperation of a drowning man," I had had a number of spiritual awakenings followed by a spiritual experience. My whole attitude and outlook on life had been transformed from one of pessimism and unbearable mental and emotional anguish to one of optimism and joy. I still remember the shock of realizing that I was feeling good and having people point out to me that I was smiling.

From further study of both the Big Book and the history of Alcoholics Anonymous, it has become clear to me that the program of Alcoholics Anonymous is a call to action whereby I am supposed to work on removing the blockages from my life that are hindering me from having a personal relationship with my Higher Power, thereby allowing for a return to

spiritual, mental and physical health. The Big Book “suggests” that I do this by working The Steps rather than relaxing and waiting to be nursed back to health by the fellowship. It exhorts me to grasp onto the solution of The Steps with the desperation of a drowning man, to be willing to go to any lengths necessary and to be fearless and thorough from the very start. It warns me that that half measures will avail me nothing and that I must be hard on myself because my troubles are of my own making. It advises me to take a course of vigorous action and that the spiritual life is not a theory and has to be lived.

What an order!!!

Fortunately, the Big Book does tell me not to expect to be able to maintain perfect adherence to these principles; that I should take it easy on myself when I fall short of these ideals because spiritual progress rather than spiritual perfection is my goal. That the answer to “Easy does what?” for me is that I need to take it easy when it comes to measuring my spiritual progression, not to the taking of the Twelve Steps.

Through my experience sponsoring others and paying attention to those who stick around and those who do not, nothing seems to me to be as great a determinant as to whether or not one picks up a one year chip than whether one sees the steps as a way to get better or as something one only starts to do after they begin to get better. Personally, I do think of the steps as a horse race. But rather than racing those around me my race was against the four hideous horsemen - Terror, Bewilderment, Frustration, Despair.

I do find that my biggest challenge as a sponsor is do to what my sponsor did for me: to love my sponsees enough to tell them precisely what the Big Book says even though I may hurt their feelings; to take the risk of them seeing me as an AA ogre when I tell them that even though

they are already mentally and emotionally drained they need to take even more action; to tell them that I am not really interested in what they think or feel but what they do. It is easier for me to tell someone to just keep coming back and wait for the miracle to happen than to tell them that their troubles and misery are not the fault of others but mostly of their own making. I am sure that my sponsees would talk more about what a great and kind man I am if I told them to place themselves at the top of their amends list rather than not to even put their name on their eighth step list since self-centeredness is the root of our problems. I would be less tempted to avoid some conversations with my sponsees if I were to say that they can just wait for their problems to pass rather than that they must look at their own faults, regardless of what was done to them, and take the lead in correcting the matter by making amends. It does seem to make one more popular when one tells a newcomer “Easy Does It” than that, “Unless each AA member follows to the best of his ability our suggested Twelve Steps to recovery, he almost certainly signs his own death warrant,” as stated in tradition nine.

I owe my first sponsor a great deal for taking the often unpopular stance that AA has only one program and that the only place we are given instructions as to how to work that program is to be found the Big Book, Alcoholics Anonymous; that anything else would be my program, not The Program. I feel that part of my debt to him and to those who came before me is to pay attention to the wording of step twelve and try to carry “this message;” the message that “There is a solution” even though “almost none of us liked the self-searching, the leveling of our pride, the confession of shortcomings that the process requires for its successful consummation” and that it should be approached with a sense of urgency.

Gary S.

# MAICO GROUP REPRESENTATIVES NEEDED

*Copied from the M.A.I.C.O. Bylaws - April 16, 1992*

## ***Representation:***

Each A.A. group in the service area elect or appoint one member to represent it at M.A.I.C.O. representatives meetings. An alternate may also be elected and attend, however under no circumstances may any group have more than one voice or vote at meetings of the representatives. No one person may represent more than one group. In addition, no person on the Steering Committee of MAICO may also be a group representative.

## ***Duties and Responsibilities:***

The representatives of the groups to MAICO are responsible for the final oversight of the activities of the office. Although they do not exercise any direct control over the day to day operations, through the powers of election, recall and the ability to influence their respective groups to contribute or not to MAICO, control is thus maintained over the actions of the office and

the Steering Committee.

In addition, the representatives are responsible for the relationship of MAICO to individual A.A. member and the uninvolved groups. MAICO representatives may and are encouraged to take on various projects which are larger than the domain of any individual group, yet not appropriately accomplished by either MAICO or the local "Twelfth Step" committees. Such activities may include social activities, special service projects, etc.

**MAICO Reps Meetings are held monthly on the 2nd Tuesday of the month at 7:00 p.m., at the MAICO Office, 6033 Monona Drive, Madison, Suite 204.**

The Steering Committee Meetings are held monthly on the 2nd Tuesday of the month at 6:00 p.m. at MAICO.

*Everyone is Welcome to both meetings.*

**MAICO is a 501(3)c nonprofit corporation.**

**Your donations are tax deductible up to \$2,000 per AA member per year.**

## **Service Opportunities**

- A) MAICO Reading Room available for a group to start a meeting during MAICO business hours 11am to 6pm**
- B) Are you proficient in American Sign language – please let us know in case needed in the future**
- C) Support needed for AA meeting at Operation Welcome Home, 2918 Turbot Dr., Madison, Wed. 7:30pm, Contacts: Luke at the home (358-9993) or Ron M. at (347-4402) or (242-0395) outside sponsor.**

# Upcoming Events

**March 6-8 – Agape Weekend**, Open AA. Wellspring, Newburg, WI. Near West Bend. Weekend cost \$50 per person. Contacts: Andy L. 847-975-3000, Steve R 414-342-1000, Sandy M 414-482-3114

**March 14 – Wi. Bid for ICYPAA, International Conference of Young People of AA, St Patrick's Day event**, Fitchburg Serenity Club, 6048 McKee Rd., Fitchburg. Workshop from 12-4pm, Fellowship at 6pm, Al-Anon speakers 7pm, AA speakers 8pm. Dance to follow.

**March 21 – Madtown Speaker & Dance sponsored by 2009 Tristate roundup committee**, East Side Alano Club, 1017 Northport Dr., Madison, dinner at 5:30pm, chili \$2.00/bowl, Speaker: Greg S. at 7:00pm, Dance \$5.00 donation, 8pm to 11pm. Raffles food, fun, fellowship

**March 28 – MAICO Reps Spring Into Action Breakfast**, Trinity Lutheran Ch., 1904 Winnebago St., Madison, Breakfast 8:30am-9:30am, Speakers: 10:00am to 11:00am, Donation of \$5.00 gratefully accepted, however no one will be turned away. **Please bring a dish to pass if you can but not required.**

**March 29 – Area 75 Delegate's Workshop**, 9am, Madison Senior Ctr., 330 W. Mifflin, Madison

**April 4 – Wisconsin Dist. 9 Mini-Conference**, Immaculate Conception School, 3685 County Hwy H, Keiler, WI. Registration: 8:30am, morning & afternoon panels, Keynote speaker: Mary B. of Sioux City, IA. (20 yrs sobriety) at 6:00pm. Please bring a salad or dessert to pass.

**April 18 – 33<sup>rd</sup> Annual Badger Intergroup**, Waukesha Exp Center, Speaker: Clancy I. from LA, California. Social hour: 5:30pm, Dinner: 6:30pm, Speaker: 8:00pm. Dance to follow. Tickets: \$23.00 each. Payment must be received by March 15, 2009.

**April 19 – Area 75 Pre-Conference Assembly**, 9am, Madison Senior Ctr., 330 W. Mifflin, Madison

**April 17-19 – 22<sup>nd</sup> International Men's Conference**, Omaha, NE. Hilton Omaha, 1001 Cass St.

**April 16-19 – 33<sup>rd</sup> Annual Springtime in the Ozarks Convention**, Eureka Springs, Ark

**April 26 – May 2 – General Service Conference**, New York, NY

**May 15-17 – 58<sup>th</sup> Annual Area 75 Spring Conference**, Marriot Hotel & Conference Center, Racine, WI. Hosted by Dist. 7, 17 & 36. Friday Speaker: Crickett R. from Texas, Saturday- Area 75 Delegate's Report & Standing Committees. Panels, Al-Anon Speaker: Cindy H from Kenosha, WI., Saturday Speaker: Deb H. from California. Sunday morning speaker: Brian M fro Wauwatosa. Registration: \$15.00, Sat Banquet: \$35.00, Sunday Buffet: \$15.00.

**May 21 – 24 – 51<sup>st</sup> International Conference of Young People in Alcoholics Anonymous**, Atlanta, GA

**May 22 – 24 – Gopher State Roundup**, Sheraton Bloomington Hotel, Bloomington, MN

**June 19 – 21 – 1<sup>st</sup> Annual Northeast Wisconsin Tristate Roundup**, Radisson Hotel & Conference Center, 2040 Airport Dr., Green Bay, WI. [www.newtristateroundup.com](http://www.newtristateroundup.com)

**June 27 – WI/UP Corrections Conference**, Appleton, WI. – Flyers to follow shortly

**July 9 – 12 – 13<sup>th</sup> Annual Keep It Simple Washington Island Weekend**, Island Campground & Recreation, Washington Island, WI. For info email: [wi.retreat@yahoo.com](mailto:wi.retreat@yahoo.com)

**August 8 – MAICO Reps 4<sup>th</sup> Annual Picnic**, Brigham Park, Blue Mounds, WI. 10am – 9:30pm

**September 12 – Dist. 31 Workshop – Carry the Message**, Poynette, WI

*Thank You's*  
*December 13, 2008 to February 20, 2009*

*Thank you to all our volunteers that help answer the phones on Monday & Tuesday nights & Sat afternoons.*

***General Fund***

511 Mon & Sat Grps  
511 Step Grp  
Baraboo Wed. Afternoon  
Barney's Grp  
Beaver Dam Thursday 9:30am Grp  
Berlin Fri. Night Grp  
Boscobel 12 Step Grp  
Deerfield Downtown Grp  
DeForest Grps  
Early Risers Grp  
East Side Grps  
Easy Breathers Grp  
Easy Does It But Do It Grp  
Foxhall Recovery Grp  
Ft. Atkinson Mon Wed Fri Grp  
Freedom Grp  
Green Lake Tues ODAT Grp  
Horicon Grp  
Janesville Keys to the Kingdom Grp  
Keep It Simple Grp  
Mad Book Grp  
Mauston Wed. Afternoon Meeting  
Midvale Grp  
Mon. Night Rock River Grp  
Monona Serenity Grp  
Monroe Early Birds Grp  
Montello Grps  
Morning After Grp  
Mt Horeb Sat Morning Grp  
Mt Horeb Wed Grp  
New Beginnings Grp  
New Freedom Grp  
New Glarus Sobrietyfest Grp  
No Butts Grp  
North End Grp  
Not a Glum Lot Grp  
Richland Center Grp  
Richland Center Primitive Grp  
Sat. Morning Eye Opener Grp  
St. Dunstan's Beginners Grp  
Sister Blandine Grp  
Suburban Sobriety Grp  
Sunlight of the Spirit Grp  
Tues Night Grp  
Wed. Night Big Book Grp  
Westfield 12 & 12 Grp  
Whitewater Tuesday 11am Grp  
Women's Reflection Grp

***Prudent Reserve***

Larry L.  
Sunlight of the Spirit Grp

***Answering Service***

Deerfield Downtown Grp  
Early Risers Grp  
Easy Breathers Grp  
Ft. Atkinson Mon Wed Fri Grp  
Harold S.  
Mark & Pam V.  
Tom B.

***Faithful Fivers***

Larry L.

***Gratitude Month***

511 Tues 8pm Young Peoples Grp  
A Vision for You Grp  
Baraboo Sat. Morning Eye Opener Grp  
Beloit Fel-O-ship Grp  
Cambridge Thurs Nite Grp  
Dist. 2  
Dist. 30  
Ft. Atkinson Mon Wed Fri Mrng Grp  
Ft. Atkinson Fri Night Grp  
Ft. Atkinson Sat Night Candlelight Grp  
Good Fellowship Grp  
Janesville Sat. Nite Live 7pm Grp  
Monroe Early Birds Grp  
New Freedom Grp  
No Butts Grp  
Our Group  
Portage 207 Grp  
Watertown Mon/Thurs/Sat Grps  
Watertown Sun Big Book Study  
Women's Reflection Grp

***Individual Donations***

Individual anonymous donations  
Carrol P.  
Dan B.  
Don M.  
Doug & Judith C.  
Janis R.  
Kathleen W.  
Kris W.  
Richard D.

## *Changes to "Meeting Directory" (December 2008 to February 20<sup>th</sup>, 2009)*

<u>Date</u>	<u>Action</u>	<u>City</u>	<u>Day</u>	<u>Time</u>	<u>Type</u>	<u>Change, Addition or Deletion</u>
1/21	Add	<b>Beloit</b>	Mon to Sat	7:30pm	Spanish	Spanish Speaking Meeting, 414 E. Grand
1/21	Add	<b>Beloit</b>	Sun	11:00am	Spanish	Spanish Speaking Meeting, 414 E. Grand
1/09	Change	<b>Ft. Atkinson</b>	Wed	5:30pm	C,NS,H	Mental Health Consultants Bldg, 509 McMillen St., This is an Open meeting
1/21	Moved	<b>Janesville</b>	All	All		12 & 12 Drop In Ctr., 407 W. Van Buren moved to 402 W. Delavan, park in GM lot #6
1/30	Delete	<b>Janesville</b>	Fri	8:00pm	O,NS	1 <sup>st</sup> Presbyterian Ch., 17 N Jackson
1/1	Add	<b>Lake Delton</b>	Sun	7:00pm	C,NS,H	Presbyterian Ch., Cedar St., ½ block south of Broadway
12/2	Delete	<b>Madison</b>	All	10:00pm		Fitchburg Serenity Club, 6048 McKee Road
2/17	Add	<b>Madison</b>	Wed	7:30pm	Spanish	Fitchburg Serenity Club, 6048 McKee Road
12/2	Add	<b>Madison</b>	Mon	6:00pm	C,NS	Plymouth U.C. Ch., 2401 Atwood Ave., AA literature/Grapevine study, ring buzzer
2/17	Delete	<b>Madison</b>	Mon	2:00pm	C,NS	MAICO Reading Room, 6033 Monona Dr
1/27	Change	<b>Madison</b>	Tues	6:30pm	C,NS	Highland Manor Mobile Home Park, 10 Malibu Dr., Beginners & BB Study (2 mtgs)
2/17	Needs Support	<b>Madison</b>	Thur	4:00pm	C,NS,W	Warner Park Ctr., 1625 Northport Dr., Craft Room
2/17	Needs Support	<b>Madison</b>	Sat	10:00am	C,NS,W	Warner Park Ctr., 1625 Northport Dr., Craft Room
1/27	Add	<b>Madison</b>	Sat	10:00am	C,NS	Plymouth U.C. Ch., 2401 Atwood Ave., step study, ring buzzer to left of door
2/12	Add	<b>Mauston</b>	Sun	6:00pm	C,NS	Hess Memorial Hospital, Division St. (2 <sup>nd</sup> Floor)
3/2	Add	<b>Mt Horeb</b>	Mon	7:30pm	C,NS	Mt Horeb Methodist Ch., Hwy 78 & Cty Rd S, Grapevine
1/1	Change	<b>New Glarus</b>	Tues	7:00pm	C,NS,H	Shepherd of the Hills Ch., 12 <sup>th</sup> Ave, changed format, step 1 <sup>st</sup> & speaker 3 <sup>rd</sup> Tues/Mo
1/1	Change	<b>Portage</b>	All	All		Rhymes Drugstore sign taken down, meeting still held at 117 E. Cook, lower level
1/21	Add	<b>Prairie du Chien</b>	Mon	7:00pm	C,NS	St. Gabriel Catholic Ch., Old Rectory, 506 N. Beaumont
1/21	Moved	<b>Prairie du Chien</b>	Wed	6:30pm	C,NS	Catholic Charities moved to St. Gabriel Ch., Old Rectory, 506 N. Beaumont
1/21	Add	<b>Viroqua</b>	Fri	5:30pm	O,NS	Good Shepherd Lutheran Ch., 504 S. Main (Big Book)