

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.

Sassy

The last year that I was drinking, a little cat appeared on my doorstep. She was a skinny, skittish tortoise shell with a bad limp, a motley mangle of black and gold. I'd pull up in my car in the late afternoon, and she'd watch warily from the top of the steps. As I approached she'd relinquish her spot in the sun and limp off down the street without a backward glance.

Eventually, of course, we became friends. I was living alone, and I was lonely. I looked forward seeing her there when I came home. I'd put down my briefcase and sit on the step to talk to her. I gave her some kibble I had left in the cupboard, and then I bought tuna fish to give to her. I courted her. Since I didn't know her name, I called her TunaBreath, or, mostly, just Kitty. On the weekends I'd peer out the window to see if she had stopped by, and if she were there on the step I'd open the door and give her some food. All summer long and into the fall we kept up this routine. Then, one windy cold fall afternoon, I opened the door and she moved in.

I lived alone because I wanted to drink. I know this now. I had lived in the same

neighborhood for years, in a charming Midwest city, a thousand miles away from any family. I had worked my way up at my company and had a job I was good at. I thought of myself as a successful career girl, in the Mary Tyler Moore tradition, independent and modern. I had an expensive apartment (which I couldn't afford to furnish.) I was single, never married, with no kids, and happy about it. And I drank every day.

Kitty didn't mind. She respected my freedom as I respected hers. I never tried to force her to stay, and she came and went freely. When I realized that she was planning to stay for the winter, I asked around and was told that despite her scraggly appearance and lack of collar, she already had a home a block away. With a sinking heart I drove by the house and noted the name and street number, and called the occupant. It turned out to be an older woman, who was delighted to hear that I had her cat and wanted to pick her up right away. Fortunately, Kitty was out for a walk, so I could truthfully say she wasn't home. I promised to call when she came back.

I never called. A week or two went by, while I justified not calling. It was too early in the morning, or too late in the evening. The house wasn't clean enough for company. I was too busy. (Of course, there was only a small window of opportunity between the time I got home from work and the time I began drinking.) Then one day, the doorbell rang.

I recognized Jane from around the neighborhood, though I doubt we had ever spoken. She marched into the living room where the cat, whose name I now learned was Sassy, was napping on the sofa. Jane petted her, and Sassy glared, seemingly both alarmed and annoyed. Impervious, Jane scolded and petted her some more, and proceeded to tell me Sassy's story.

She told me that this skinny little cat was over 15 years old and had a sister, with whom she shared a relationship of mutual disdain. She told me how she had come by her limp, in a "tangle" with a van on a busy street, and that nearly every bone in her body had been broken. Miraculously someone had picked her up and taken her to the emergency vet where Jane finally located her. She had a lengthy convalescence, but came through well (the vet said, "Cats are great. You just put all their bones in the same room and they'll find each other.")

Sassy had been away from home all summer. She was unhappy, Jane thought, because two dogs had joined the household. Jane's theory was that Sassy had spent the summer conducting a tour of the neighborhood. She considered moving in with Monty, the gardener on the block, who gave her organic whole milk in the morning. Then she met Joe, whom she would have like to live with, but who already had eight cats. She visited Phyllis once in a while and Phyllis gave her kibble. Then she found her way to my door.

All the while that Jane was talking, she was looking around at my apartment and assessing the situation. I don't know what she saw, but I'm sure she noticed how quiet and lonely it was. I was never much good at decorating. I have no paintings or photos on the walls, and very little furniture. I like it, but it's definitely austere. Even though I've lived here several

years, most people, when they walk in, say, "When did you move in?" and peer around hoping to spot the telltale cardboard boxes. I tell myself that it is urban and modern. Sophisticated, like the bottle of wine that was always on the table.

So sophisticated that a cat was my only companion. I dreaded the end of my interview with Jane (for that's what it was) because I was sure she would bundle up Sassy and take her away. But that's not how it went. After a little while, when Jane ran out of questions to ask me and stories to tell about Sassy, she sighed and said, "Well, she seems very happy here. You're taking good care of her. Why don't you keep her?"

After Jane left I sat in stunned amazement. I had done nothing to deserve such kindness. But I knew that Jane had not relinquished Sassy for my sake. She had seen that Sassy had found what she wanted, and she had respected that despite the pain it caused her. She had cared dearly for that cat for 15 years, and spent enormous amounts of money on it, and yet she had the courage and the strength to make a difficult decision and to do it with incredible grace. I could not believe my good fortune, but mostly, I was struck with admiration for Jane. The words that I said to myself were, "When I grow up I want to be like her." I wanted what she had.

Well, you can guess how the story ends. When I finally made it to AA a year later, I found Jane at the meetings. She had forgotten how we met, and I saw the pain flash across her face again as I reminded her of the little cat we shared. As I have grown to know her I have seen how she is valued and cherished in the AA community and I am sure in every community she is a part of. She is a true matriarch in our group, an old-timer, full of stories and wisdom. If I can ever achieve a small measure of the serenity she has it will be a miracle. I have become one of what I am sure is a large brood of hatchlings that she watches over.

I had to make a difficult phone call not long ago, to tell Jane that Sassy, now 17, was failing and the chance of recovery was slim. There was a late March snowstorm that day, and Jane was

suffering from pneumonia, but she insisted on seeing her cat. Jane, her son and myself all accompanied Sassy to the vet and said goodbye to her. Then I listened to Jane's advice, and instead of going home and crying I kept dinner plans with a friend, who hugged me and consoled me. And then I went home. And I didn't drink. And I thought about the miracle that had led me to Jane and AA, and I wondered what the next miracle to arrive on my doorstep would look like.

Anonymous

Our Responsibility Declaration

The 1965 International Convention of Alcoholics Anonymous saw the birth of our familiar Responsibility Declaration: "I am responsible. When anyone, anywhere, reaches out for help, I want the hand of AA always to be there. And for that: I am responsible." Those who were there recall with emotion the meeting at which 10,000 attendees made the mass declaration.

There is no population more in need of our commitment to this responsibility statement than the people in our correctional institutions. When I was in jail for what I hope is the last

time, people carried the message of Alcoholics Anonymous to me. In fact, one of those people became my first sponsor. She started me in corrections work immediately and I have continued that service commitment throughout my sobriety. It is infinitely rewarding.

A recent Grapevine article related that there are over 650,000 people locked up in our prisons, and a similar number in our jails. Anywhere from 75 to 85 percent of those are either alcoholics or addicts, and that percentage has not changed in the last twenty years. Those numbers indicate that we need to be more effective in carrying the A.A. message into these facilities, both in person and through our corrections correspondence program. We must convey with enthusiasm the same hope we received when the message was first shared with us.

So let us rededicate ourselves in our corrections work to the spiritual principles embodied in our Responsibility Declaration. This responsibility is not limited to our comfortable home groups and local meeting places. We must be truly willing to carry our life-saving message to *anyone, anywhere* God leads us.

Nancy G.

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

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

Upcoming Events

September 5th – 7th – 18th Annual Bridging the Gap Temporary Contact Workshop Weekend, Howard Johnson Plaza Hotel, 7301 NW Tiffany Springs Road, Kansas City, MO. Registration forms available at MAICO.

September 13th – Dist. 31 Seminar – Carrying the Message, DeKorra Lutheran Ch., Hwy CS & Smith Rd., Poynette, 9am to 3pm, Topics – “Bridge” group at Treatment Center, AA Telephone Hotline, Jail & Prison Meetings and more. Contact: 608-516-8049 or 608-697-1206 for directions or info.

September 20th – Greater Milwaukee Central Office 38th Annual City Wide Jamboree, Milwaukee County Zoo—Peck Welcome Center, 10001 W. Bluemound Road. Hospitality 5:00 pm, Dinner at 6:00 pm, Speaker: Bob B. at 7:00 pm. Dance to follow. Cost: \$23.00.

October 3rd – 5th – 57th Annual Area 75 Fall Conference, Holiday Inn, 625 West Rolling Meadows Dr., Fond du Lac, WI. Registration forms at www.area75.org

October 11th – 1st Annual “AA at the VA” Mini-Conference with Al-Anon participation, 9am to 5pm, Coffee House entertainment at 7pm. Clement J. Zablocki VA Medical Center, 5000 W. National Ave., Milwaukee, WI. 53295 Registration Fee is “A Buck and A Big Book” Start up fund donations are needed, mail to AA at the VA c/o Dist. 29, 6229 W. Forest Home Ave., Milwaukee, WI. 53220. Contact for Mini-Conference: Tom M. 414-807-0829 or bojo1361@yahoo.com

November 1st – MAICO Reps 12th Annual Youngtimers/Oldtimers Workshop, 10am to 3pm, Trinity Lutheran Ch., 1904 Winnebago St., Madison.

Jan 30th to Feb 1st – WICYPAA XVI, Wisconsin Conference of Young People of AA, Olympia Resort and Conference Center, 1350 Royale Mile Rd., Oconomowoc, WI.

Thank You's
June 27th to August 22nd -- 2008

General Fund

207 Grp
Berlin Sun. Night Grp
Easy Breathers Grp
Caring & Sharing Grp
Columbus AA Grp
Daily Reflections Grp
Early Risers Grp
Expect a Miracle Grp
Experience, Strength & Hope Grp
Foxhall Recovery Grp
Friendship Back to Basics Grp
Good Fellowship Grp
Grace Lunch Grp
Marshall 449 Grp
Mauston Wed. Afternoon Grp
Mon. Night Rock River Grp
Monona Serenity Grp
Morning After Grp
New Glarus Sobrietyfest Grp
Not a Glum Lot Grp
Redgranite AA Grp
Sat. Morning Promises Grp
Sat. Night Live Grp

Sauk Prairie AA Grp
Slip Nots Grp
Sun. Night Mineral Pt. Open Discussion Grp
Sunlight of the Spirit (SOTS) Grp
Sunshine Grps
Thurs. Women's Atwood Grp
Waupun Tues. Night Grp
Wed. Night Big Book Grp

Individual Donations

Al Z.

Prudent Reserve

Larry L.
Sunlight of the Spirit (SOTS) Grp

Answering Service

Anonymous
Easy Breathers Grp
Marshall 449 Grp

Faithful Fivers

Gratitude Month

Changes to “2008-2009 Meeting Directory” (As of August 22nd)

<u>Date</u>	<u>Action</u>	<u>City</u>	<u>Day</u>	<u>Time</u>	<u>Type</u>	<u>Change, Addition or Deletion</u>
7/08	Delete	Boscobel	All	7:30pm		Boscobel Hosp., Mental Health Unit
8/08	Add	Stoughton	Mon	Noon	O,H,NS	Alano Club, 900 Giles
8/08	Add	Stoughton	Tues	Noon	O,H,NS	Alano Club, 900 Giles
8/08	Add	Stoughton	Wed	Noon	O,H,NS	Alano Club, 900 Giles
8/08	Add	Stoughton	Fri	Noon	O,H,NS	Alano Club, 900 Giles
8/08	Add	Stoughton	Sat	Noon	O,H,NS	Alano Club, 900 Giles
8/08	Change	Stoughton	All			Alano Club, 900 Giles, Smoking upstairs only effective 7/1/08

**For This,
We Are Responsible**

We need your help and cooperation if we are to keep up to date about meetings and groups in the area we serve. Please let us know of any changes to the meetings you attend or to your group so we can pass the information along to our readers. Call MAICO with any changes that you know of or fill out this form and send it to MAICO, 6033 Monona Drive, Suite 204, Madison, WI 53716-3963.

Provide as much of the following information as is possible

New___ Change___ Help___ Discontinued___

Group name (if any)_____ Open___ Closed___

Smoking___ Non-smoking___ Signed___ Accessible___

Day and time of meeting _____

Location_____

Type of meeting_____

Group contact person_____

Contact's phone number_____

Also, let us know of any changes in your group's contact person(s):

Name_____

Position _____

Phone number_____

Group name (if any)_____

Day and time of meeting_____

Location_____

MAICO

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