

# Newsletter

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## What to Do With Your Summer Vacation: AA Events in the Pacific Northwest

In addition to Pacific Northwest Conference, June 26-28 in Rossland, British Columbia, and the Seniors in Sobriety Conference in Vancouver Washington, both of which are described separately, your local AAs have planned a variety of fellowship events that take advantage of our long gorgeous summer days. If you are new to sobriety, and are wondering how it is possible to camp, fish, paddle on the lake or otherwise enjoy nature without a cooler full of beer, there are plenty of sober people around who are eager to show you how.

Finding out about summer fellowship events can be a little tricky. Thanks to a dedicated team of web gurus, our Area Calendar has become more user-friendly, but meetings and Districts are still not routinely posting their fellowship events. As of May 4, the only summer events posted on the Area calendar were the ORCYPAA (Oregon Conference of Young People in AA) campout June 19-21 at the Valley of the Rogue Park near Roseburg and a District 13 Annual campout July 31-August 2 at Whistler's Bend.

The Portland Intergroup ([www.portland-aa.org](http://www.portland-aa.org)) lists the International Seniors in Sobriety Conference, a campout July 10-12 at Camp Wilkerson, Rainier, Oregon, AA in the Woods Campout, September 3 at Whitcomb Creek County Park, Foster, and the 13<sup>th</sup> Annual WACYPAA conference in Eugene, January 1-3, 2010. Emerald Valley Intergroup ([www.eviaa.org](http://www.eviaa.org)) lists a District 19 workshop on Relationships in Sobriety, May 23 at St. Mary's Episcopal Church, and Summerfest (which, since there is an admission fee, is not an official AA sponsored event) July 3-5. Central Oregon Intergroup ([www.coigaa.org](http://www.coigaa.org)) has the Ochoco Group Campout, June 12-14, the Hee Hee Long House Campout, July 10-12, and the Newberry Crater Campout, August 13-16. Willamette Valley Intergroup ([www.aa-salem.org](http://www.aa-salem.org)) has a sponsorship workshop May 23, and Jackson County ([www.medfordareaaa.org](http://www.medfordareaaa.org)) the MFG Willow Lake Campout July 9-12 and the Touville Park Picnic August 9. Not yet listed on the Emerald Valley Intergroup Site is the Founder's Days Barbecue Potluck on June 14 at Washington Park in Eugene. There will be presentations on AA history and a Big Book Trivia Game.

Many districts will be scheduling fellowship events (typically involving serious food) to coincide with the Delegate's post-conference report. The Summer 2009 schedule is not yet on the web - look for it on the GSO Delegate's page.

## **Fourth Annual Seniors in Sobriety Conference June 2, 3, 4 and 5 Vancouver. Washington**

<http://www.seniorsinsobriety.org>

This is not just a conference for seniors, but also a conference for individuals of all ages who have an interest in ensuring that the older community is adequately served by AA. As the conference website makes clear, this is a growing concern in AA. Several areas have their own committees specifically for this purpose, and their have been proposals (none so far approved) to have a committee at the national level as well.

From the website:

“This conference will focus on concerns and issues impacting seniors, their spouses and family with both short term and long term sobriety. It will provide an opportunity for alcoholics of all ages to discuss the effects of aging on sober alcoholics and how to help the still-suffering senior alcoholic.”

### **“The Hidden Epidemic”**

“Alcoholism is a progressive and lethal disease that affects up to 10% of people over the age of sixty. It has typically been under estimated, under identified, under diagnosed and under treated in our country and world wide.

Today, we are seeing an alarming increase in the number of seniors being recognized as alcoholic. This increase is in part attributable to our longer life expectancy, the aging of our population, and a greater recognition of alcoholism among our senior citizens.

Alcohol abuse in the elderly is an invisible or Hidden Epidemic. It is often mistaken for other conditions associated with the aging process, particularly depression. As part of routine care, it is recommended that health care providers discuss alcohol use with their older patients. Family members should become as familiar with the drinking habits of Uncle Harry or Grandma Jane as they are with their medical conditions. They need to be aware that over the counter drugs, prescription medications, and herbal remedies in seniors can be dangerous, or even fatal, when mixed with alcohol.

There are many elders that alcohol has robbed of hope, dignity, and the ability to cope. With treatment, the alcoholic has an opportunity to develop a satisfying way of life free from alcohol and become happily and usefully whole.”

## **Pacific Northwest Conference, June 26-28** **Rossland, British Columbia**

You may have heard some of the old-time “service junkies” rave about either the Pacific Northwest Conference (PNC) or the Pacific Regional AA Service Assembly (PRAASA). You may have wondered what, if anything, these conferences contributed to either sobriety or the AA service structure that was not already adequately addressed by Area assemblies and the General Service Conference.

The essential difference between an Area assembly and PNC or PRAASA is that the former is primarily for transacting the business of the Area while the latter provides opportunities for in-depth education in the workings of AA and for networking and discussing various issues in a context where no decisions need to be made.

PNC has been meeting annually since 1948. Bill Wilson had a hand in setting it up; it is actually older than the General Service Conference. A few years ago, due to declining interest, Western Washington and Idaho withdrew formal support, leaving Oregon and Eastern Washington as the only official participants. The conference has since experienced a revival and these other areas may rejoin it.

Because of its limited geographical scope PNC is a much smaller conference than PRAASA, which can be quite overwhelming. PNC provides most of the same content, in a more informal and less hectic setting, with more opportunities for interaction with presenters.

This year’s location in Canada presents difficulties for some people, especially as the US begins requiring passports for re-entering the US on June 1. Unless you have already made plans, it may well be too late for this year.

## **Area Service Committee Reports**

This May we will be having the second round of in-depth service committee reports, something the Oregon Area decided upon last year. Our Area Chair sent a reminder to Committee Chairs outlining what could be included in these reports to make them most useful to GSRs. As this information should also be helpful to GSRs and groups wanting to take advantage of the services of our Area Committees, a modified version is reproduced below.

The Area Service Committee Presentations are intended to give the Service Committee's of Oregon Area more visibility at Assemblies, and at the same time, offer the attending GSR's and DCM's a chance to get to know their trusted servants a bit better.

While the Committee reports, given orally during the Area Business Meetings, and recorded in the Assembly minutes, typically focus on each Committee’s recent activity, the Presentations give the Committee Chairs an opportunity to explain in detail, and even demonstrate, what their particular Committee has to offer the Groups and Districts of Oregon Area.

Each year, six of the twelve committees give a 10 minute Presentation at the May Assembly, probably on Saturday afternoon, just after the Delegate’s Post Conference Report. This allows each GSR and DCM to hear from all twelve of the Area Service Committees during the committee chair’s two year term.

At November Assemblies, these same Service Committee Chairs will facilitate Roundtable sessions, where GSR's and DCM's can interact more directly with the Service Committees.

Tomorrow's Service Committee Chairs will likely come from today's participating GSR's and DCM's. By keeping a continual connection between the Groups and the Service Committees, we are, in effect, helping to ensure that effective services will continue to grow and flourish in our Fellowship.

Here are areas of focus that may be included in the Presentations:

1. Would it be useful to the GSR's / DCM's, during my presentation, to learn about what the committee I serve does at the Area level? (Facilitate Roundtables in Nov, help Delegate with Agenda break-outs in Feb, duties, if any, at and/or between Assemblies, etc)
2. Would it be useful to the GSR's / DCM's, during my presentation, to learn about what the committee I serve can do to help out at the District and Group level? (Presentations, workshops, panels, etc)
3. If I am going to present information about my committee being available to visit Districts and Groups, should I discuss funding I may need in getting there? (Either from my budget, and/or help from the Districts/ Groups?)
4. Would it be useful to the DCM's to know that my committee may be available to be of service to District and/or Intergroup Service Committees (sharing sessions, workshops, phone calls, email correspondence, etc)?
5. Would it be useful to the committee I serve to let the GSRs / DCM's know that we work for them, we are directly responsible to them, and their input and guidance is valuable and indispensable in helping us do the work effectively? (Putting in a plug for the November Roundtables might be a good idea as well, especially if you foresee having any '2-way' communication occur during the roundtable session in November- a great time to hear from the GSR's and DCM's!!)

I can't wait to see everyone at the Assembly...Especially the Area Committee meeting at 7:30 on Friday night.- see you all there!

Chase B., Area Chair

## **New Mothers in Sobriety: One Woman Takes Action**

I've been talking with mothers in AA recently since the arrival of our daughter 9 months ago. I've talked with mothers who raised babies in recovery and new mothers, both with long-term sobriety and new sobriety. All of them shared that meetings can be hard with a new baby and most meetings don't have childcare. We also observed that new motherhood is a time when you most need meetings and support.

For myself, I am a mom of a nine month old and I found it to be very difficult in the first few months especially. Although I had many years of sobriety and a solid program, I found it difficult to stay connected and reluctant to bring the baby to meetings, even when it was the only way I would get a meeting. It was hard to get to a meeting on time, because it was always planning around naps, teething, feedings, etc. In the past if I showed up late to a meeting I wouldn't usually share.

The stress and the sleep deprivation made it hard to even think straight some days. Women's meetings were usually welcoming to me with the baby but some co-ed meetings, people would give me "the look" when Lily would start crying, as if to say, "take that baby out of here. Can't you see she's disrupting our meeting?" I felt self conscious about it and would often leave meetings early, after

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hardly being able to focus myself anyway. It started feeling like it just wasn't even worth it. Then someone told me a few months ago that an AA member had shared with him that Lily shouldn't be in that particular meeting because it was a closed meeting and she wasn't an alcoholic. I just said "the only requirement for membership is a desire to stop drinking and she has that desire so she's a member." I thought it was pretty stupid but I thought how off-putting this would feel to a newcomer to the program. She might not just leave that meeting but leave the program altogether.

For single moms, they often need to bring children with them or they can't have a meeting. Childcare and welcoming babies is part of carrying the message. It makes me think of how it looks at a pow wow I attended at LCC. There were toddlers and babies running all through it, not seen as an annoyance to be scooted away. But welcomed into the heart of the event when levity and warmth.

I remember mentioning to a woman how great it would be to be in a meeting where babies weren't just tolerated but were welcomed and expected. A meeting with other moms where we could talk about the struggles of sobriety and new motherhood and get support around it. The more we talked about it, the more I felt like we should try to make it happen.

I think for the school aged children, providing childcare makes more sense than attending the meeting. Many of the things discussed are not child appropriate and they are old enough to understand and even possibly be disturbed by some of the sharing. That will be a goal of this meeting, but initially it will be to support moms with babies. Please pass the word.

Maj H., Eugene

The meeting Maj organized is now in place; it's called The Family Afterwards and meets Fridays from 12-1 at St. Mary's Episcopal Church in Eugene.

On a related note, providing child care for older children can be a difficult proposition. The cost of hiring a sitter is a significant expense for a small meeting. Churches and community halls are increasingly reluctant to allow a meeting to provide official childcare unless the group carries its own liability insurance. State law in Oregon prohibits registered sex offenders defined as predatory from being in a building housing a school or day care center when children are present. Complying with this law is virtually impossible if anonymity is to be preserved. One large speaker meeting in Eugene that attracts many parents of school age children addressed this dilemma by announcing that the meeting does not provide child care but making available a side room and telling parents that they must supervise their children. If there are only a few children present and they are able to amuse themselves without continual adult supervision, this works fairly well, but if you have a child with behavioral problems, either one parent who really needs a meeting must forego participating, or the conflicts between the children spill over into the meeting and disrupt it.

## **Peanut Gallery May 2009**

(I had only one contributor – thanks to Anita B. –to this feature this quarter, so the offerings are mainly a compendium of things people said at the meetings your newsletter chair attends. We're a pretty articulate bunch in Eugene but I am sure there are clever people in other parts of the state who deserve exposure for their witticisms.)

In those last days of drinking I was sitting at home watching all those Hallmark movies – like about the woman who recovered from a fatal disease and spent the rest of her life being grateful for life. I wanted that – and I got it, with alcoholism, but it wasn't glamorous enough. *-Annie, Eugene*

We're the only people who run out of a burning building and expect to get an award for it.  
*Anonymous, Eugene*

It's not what we do that's wrong – it's what we become as a result of it. *Jerry, Eugene*, quoting Oscar Wilde.

It was a two-meeting day. It was one of those country-western days. Everything went wrong.  
*Hank A., Eugene*

My grief [for a recently deceased home group member] is very pure. I was never resentful or jealous of him. I never suspected him of depriving me of something I deserved. *Deborah, Eugene*

I tend to think of “self-supporting though our own contributions” as referring to our stories.  
*John, Eugene*

He was an equal opportunity guy. He loved everybody, even the people he couldn't stand.  
*Anonymous, Eugene*

I'm glad you don't have to lose your sobriety date for having an alcoholic mind. *Sam, Eugene*

I'm grateful for every day I'm not polluting my environment with the despair of alcoholism.  
*Lorinn, Eugene*

As soon as I got to that precipice of insanity or death, I stopped believing that **I** was my higher power.  
*Anonymous, Eugene*

My disease wasn't progressive – I hit fourth gear running. *Anonymous, Eugene*

People talk about their drinking as being “almost” a love affair. My relationship with alcohol was the real thing. It lasted longer than any relationship I've had with a human being, and even after the divorce we got back together again. *Georgene P, Eugene*

I cling onto things so tightly that when I pull away I leave claw marks. *Jerry, Eugene.*

Overheard at the Dwyer meeting in Milwaukie: "If you are all alone,with only your own brain for company, you're behind enemy lines." Mike C.

Overheard at another meeting in Milwaukie: "Sometimes I set my hair on fire so everyone knows I'm in crisis." Newcomer

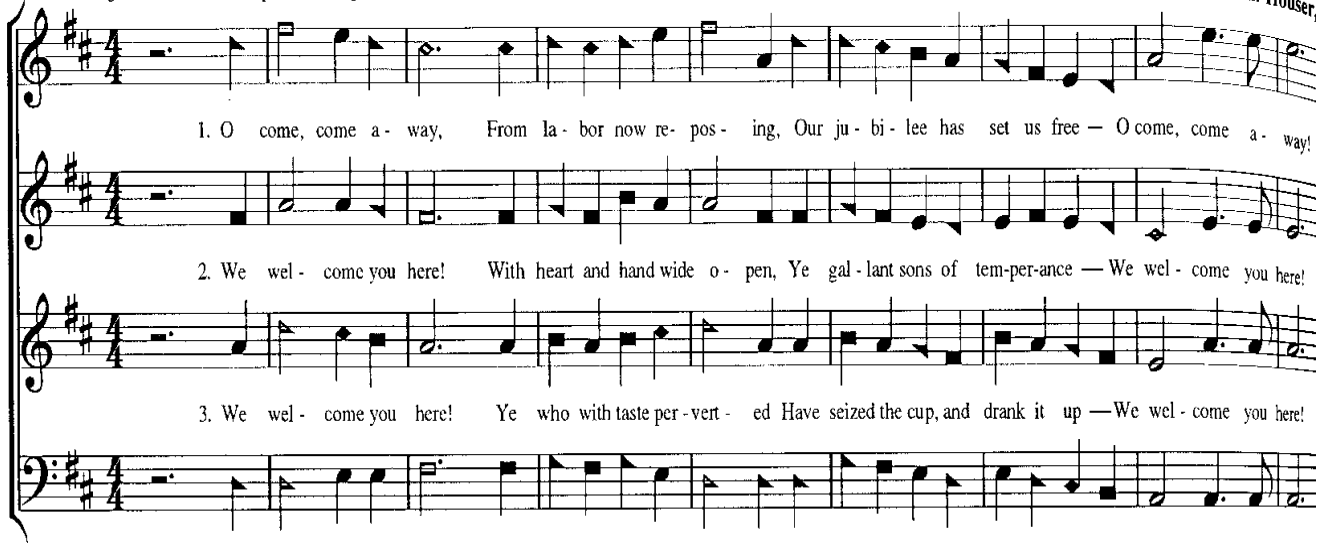
## IMAGES OF SOBRIETY

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## O COME AWAY. P.M.

*"And be not drunk with wine wherein is excess." -- Eph. 5:18.*D Major Hauser's *Hesperian Harp*, 1848.

Arr. - William Houser,



1. O come, come a-way, From la-bor now re-pos-ing, Our ju-bi-lee has set us free — O come, come a-way!

2. We wel-come you here! With heart and hand wide o-pen, Ye gal-lant sons of tem-per-ance — We wel-come you here!

3. We wel-come you here! Ye who with taste per-vert-ed Have seized the cup, and drank it up — We wel-come you here!

This good old Washingtonian temperance song comes from *The Sacred Harp*, a book of hymns and other songs written in shape-note notation to aid people who could not read music. The third verse, in full, reads “We welcome you here, Ye who with taste perverted, Have seized the cup and drunk it up — We welcome you here. Come join us in our holy aim, The poor besotted to reclaim, The broken heart to cheer again, O come, sign the pledge.”

Inspirational choral singing doesn't seem to be a part of AA, but there are groups in Portland and Eugene where the recovering besotted can enjoy this traditional activity. When I was new in sobriety eight years ago, I was socially isolated and had a lot of time on my hands. As part of recovery I resolved to get involved in any plausible social activity that didn't involve drinking, and one thing I did was join a church choir. I discovered I loved to sing with other people. About a year later I arrived at a church to attend an AA meeting and noticed there was a shape note concert upstairs. Curious, I checked it out. The intense a capella harmonies intrigued me, the prevalence of gloom and doom lyrics appealed to my inner pessimist, and when they handed out song sheets to the audience and invited us to join the hollow square, I was hooked.

There are several of us in recovery who sing with this group. Mostly we sing for pleasure, but we do perform occasionally, and we enjoy traveling to other communities for singing conventions. Steve, a sober member of AA, has attended the Fasola singing camp in Alabama, in the heart of traditional shape note singing country, and has started writing and arranging his own songs.

For musicians and songwriters, keeping talent fresh and active in sobriety can be a challenge, because so much of popular music culture is linked to alcohol and drugs. My home group numbers among its members a gifted and locally successful country-western songwriter and performer, who frequently shares about the effort needed to remain sober in a band that plays in bars, with band members who are not in recovery. By letting us know that it is possible, he inspires all of us who must deal with situations, like professional conferences and family reunions, where drinking is the norm and sobriety is not reinforced.

Martha S., Eugene