

## the **GRAPESCINN**

**April 2023**

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### **ALL I CAN DO IS SURRENDER**

**I** am serving time in prison for DUI Vehicular Manslaughter. My second sobriety anniversary was March 1, 2023. These events are two things I thought could never happen. The first, because I thought I was God; the latter, because I turned my will and my life over to God, a God of my own understanding.

What do I mean when I say I thought I was God? Before I got sober, I thought I was invincible, that nothing bad could ever happen to me. I thought I was all-knowing of what the future had in store for me and had control over my life. Looking back, it's easy to see the insanity in this egocentric thinking. Bad things occurred in my life all the time, often as the result of my drinking. Humiliating blackouts, school suspensions, missed work deadlines, lost friendships and family relationships, physical and emotional harm – and none of it was my fault!

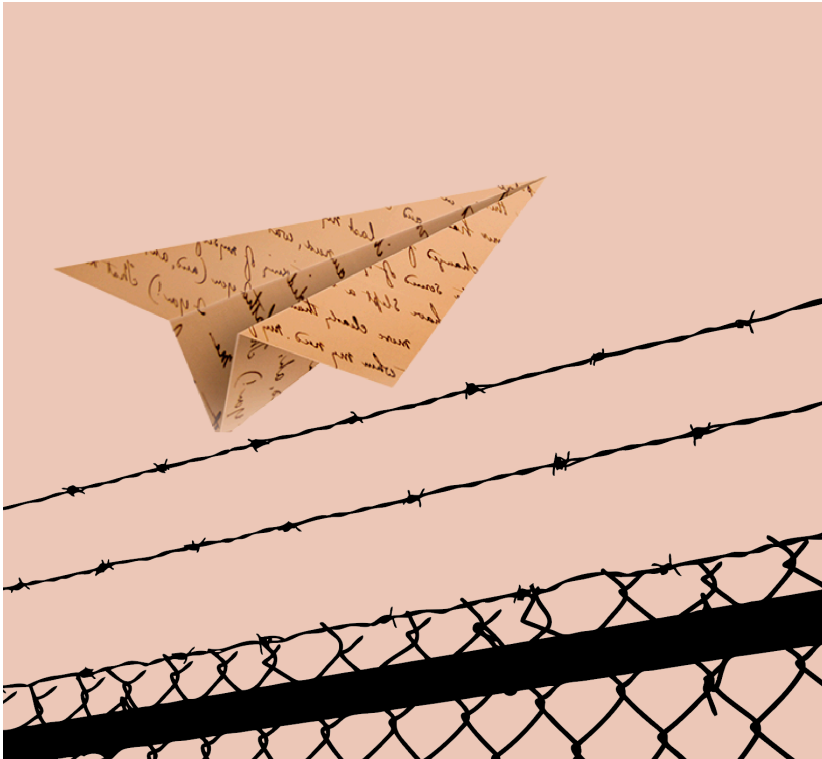
I truly believed the only person I could hurt was myself. Even with all the negative experiences, I was “absolutely unable to stop drinking on the basis of self knowledge,” like it says in the Big Book. I'd like to say I was in denial, but the truth was I didn't care I was an alcoholic; I took pride in being a “functional alcoholic.” I discovered the only “functional alcoholic” is a sober one in recovery who turns themselves over to a Higher Power of their own understanding.

When I first got sober after the fatal collision, I struggled with understanding God. How could a loving God allow such terrible things to happen to good people? I'm talking about my victims, not myself. As I came to know my Higher Power, as I worked the Twelve Steps and sought spiritual progress, I recognized that bad things happen to good people because things happen to people. All I can do is surrender.

As I look back through the frustration, the sadness, fear, impatience and loneliness in

**As I came to know my Higher Power, as I worked the Twelve Steps and sought spiritual progress, I recognized that bad things happen to good people because things happen to people. All I can do is surrender.**

*continued on p. 2*



my journal since this happened two years ago, the word that stands out on every page is surrender. I sit writing this in my cell, one of a number of cells I've had since I was sentenced five months ago, and I realize Step Three is something I must practice daily. I must surrender everything to my Higher Power. And through that surrender, I can find a little serenity every day. How? The classic prayer: "Thank you, help me to do your will."

I am grateful for the recovery I was able to experience in the Santa Cruz A.A. fellowship before I was sentenced. I built a solid foundation with my Higher Power and fellow alcoholics. I have two home groups: "Trans\* and Allies" and "Keep it Going." I held secretary positions in both. I have a sponsor who continued to work the Twelve Steps with me by mail after I was sent to state prison and lost access to email. I also had two sponsees that I am so blessed to have been able to work with and pass along the message that I "had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps." I de-centered myself and have turned my will and my life over to the care of God as I understand Him, as the Big Book suggests. I strive to be of service to my Higher Power, to other alcoholics, to everyone. I share my experience, strength and hope honestly. Perhaps I can help prevent the tragedy I caused

from happening to someone else - or at least help keep one person sober for one more day.

I can't say this recovery journey has been easy. I struggle with guilt, regret and shame. Prison has amplified these feelings. I haven't been to a meeting since October, when I was incarcerated, and I miss the support of my fellowship. I've been tempted and have had so many opportunities to drink and use. But I continue to surrender and act with humility - the desire to seek and do God's will. I turn my will and my life over to God every day and pray for humility and serenity.

*Liana, CCWF, Chowchilla, CA*

## SPONSOR ON THE OUTSIDE

**Do you like to write letters?  
Are you interested in being of service to sober people that are incarcerated?**

**"Sponsor on the Outside" is a program to connect sober people in Santa Cruz County with incarcerated men and women at Soledad and Central California Women's Facility State Prisons. We use a P.O. Box, and correspondence is conducted in English or Español.**

**To get connected to another sober person or find out more, write to**

**Sponsor on the Outside  
P.O. BOX 598  
Santa Cruz, CA  
95060**

# THE TURNING POINT



**M**ore than 33 years ago, I crossed the line from normal to alcoholic drinking. The only freedom from suffering at that point lay in surrendering without reservation. I became willing, open-minded and honest, trying to do whatever it took to get results. With help from a sponsor and my higher power, I worked the 12 Steps, used the 12 Traditions, and began to do service. The promises began to bloom with a life worth living.

Some 33 years of continuous sobriety later, my wife of 22 years filed for divorce. I wasn't prepared. I was bewildered, lost, and felt like my God had forgotten me. I had no hope, and no idea what to do. I cried myself to sleep and forced myself to make my bed in the morning. I stayed depressed for nine months.

My disease had been quiet, waiting patiently through all those years to awake again. The progression had grown from a taunting "Let's have a drink; it'll be different this time," to just "End your life. Stop the pain and loss." I stood at a turning point. And a thought came to mind: "We practice these principles in all our affairs."

I surrendered without reservation once more. I went to an A.A. meeting, sat down and instantly felt comfortable. A sense of relief washed over me as I listened to the chairperson. When it came time to share, I humbled myself. I stood and said, "My name is Matt. I've been sober 33 years and I feel like taking my own life. Please help me!"

I choke back tears sharing this now. I hope by talking about it, I can help other people who feel the way I felt. After that meeting, the secretary asked me to come back to chair the next meeting. Several men gave me their phone numbers, saying they'd been through

what I was experiencing. I decided to do whatever it took to get results, to feel better and build a relationship with my higher power so I could have a relationship with myself. It was time to work the 12 Steps again, as though my life depended on it. Over time, trying to do the next right thing, I've started to feel better.

I found a way to accept my life by staying in the present. Depression is living in the past, anxiety is living in the future and acceptance is living in the present. I've learned to feel what I'm going through, and allow time to process it, to work through it rather than get past it. I can't find the solution if I don't know what the problem is; I can't listen with empathy if I don't know how I feel. When we're young we're told, "Don't be a baby. Stop crying." That suppression of feeling is why I drank. Now, I'm not afraid to feel and as a result I'm available for other people. I must participate. I must live and practice the three legacies of Alcoholics Anonymous: Recovery, the 12 Steps; Unity, the 12 Traditions; and Service, the 12 Twelve Concepts of World Service.

And the gifts of the program are abundant. Once more, I've found hope and a life worth living. Action and daily conditioning have put me back on the beam, allowing the promises that A.A.'s suggestions offer.

I am at peace. I have love and forgiveness in my heart. I'm grateful for life. It's been almost a year since I hit that emotional bottom. I have faith this program works, if I work it.

If you think you've had too much and can't go on, hold on! Go to a meeting. Alcoholics Anonymous saved me twice because I never forgot what I originally asked for: God please help me stay sober today. Please help me!

*Matt S., Corralitos*

## CRAZY! IT WORKED!

**W**hen I was new in AA and had questions, people told me “more will be revealed.” I couldn’t believe they meant more would be revealed about me. I already knew all about me.

Then ... funny thing. Working the Fourth Step, I learned more about myself and my motives. I learned about the motives of fear and love. The book told me fear shot through the fabric of my existence.

Later, a speaker told how he used the tools of our program: When a situation made him anxious or fearful, he prayed, “God, take away my fear and direct my attention to what you would have me be” ... a rewording of the Fourth Step prayer on page 68 of the Big Book.

I tried it. Crazy! It worked! All I have to do is remember to use it. Sometimes many times per situation. But that’s how I drank – several per situation. So that’s how I stay sober. I give my higher power my attention to direct and wait for more to be revealed.

*Kara P.*

## A PRACTICAL GUIDE TO THE 4TH STEP

When I started my Fourth Step, my sponsor had me create five columns: who I resented; their relationship to me; what they did to me; what in me was threatened by their action; and my part in it. I started with the resentments that easily came to mind, working my way across the columns for each before going on to the next.

I soon stalled out because of the last three columns: I was painfully reliving the actions of others that had sparked the resentment; It was hard to admit I felt threatened by those actions; and I was ashamed, realizing I had played a part in building those resentments.

So instead of going across all five columns one person at a time, I decided to do one column at a time. I went through my whole life simply listing those people

who hurt me in column 1. Then I started back at the top of my list and filled out all of column 2 – my relationship to those people. Then I listed what they all had done to me. Then I looked at the patterns in column 3 and discovered the types of actions by others that trigger me. This made it easier to fill column 4 – what in me was threatened by the actions. This revealed the types of “threats” I am vulnerable to, and that made filling out column 5 easier. My part in forming each resentment was simply how I reacted to defend myself against the “threats.”

Now I understand why some people in recovery alternatively refer to their “character defects” as their “character defenses.”  
Who knew?

**STEP FOUR: Made a  
SEARCHING  
AND FEARLESS  
moral inventory of ourselves**

*– An Alcoholic Named Dave, Soquel*

# BITE SIZED PIECES

I watch my kitten Rocky chase her tail. I ponder whether she is showing signs of insanity or tenacity. I eventually conclude that she shows signs of both. Also important to note, Rocky is lucky. She has a favorite toy: her tail, which she uses frequently for entertainment, exercise, self-soothing, and warmth. A good game of tail chasing often ends with a bath and a nap, purring included. The luck part is, she carries her favorite toy with her wherever she goes. It's always at the ready.

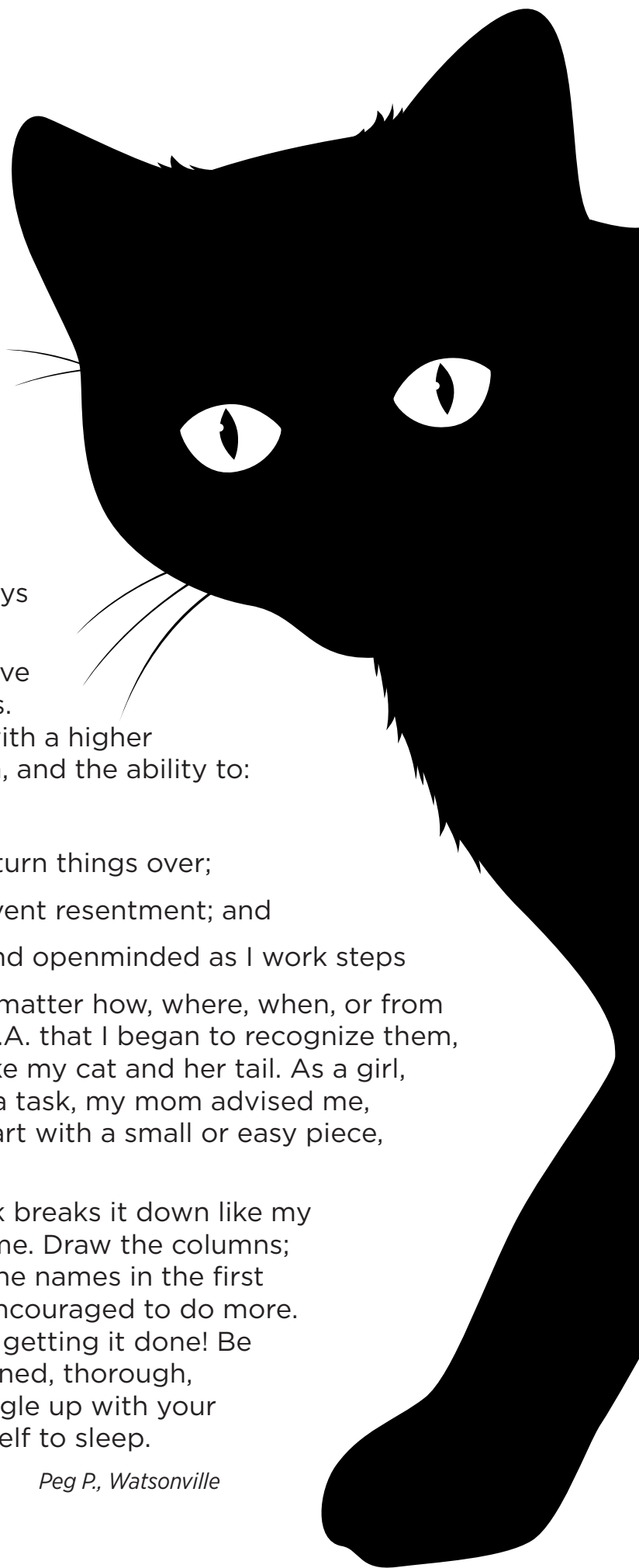
This makes me think about the tools I have acquired through Alcoholics Anonymous. First is cultivating a conscious contact with a higher power. Others include prayer, meditation, and the ability to:

- restart my day;
- use my god can as a tangible way to turn things over;
- remember that forgiveness helps prevent resentment; and
- maintain a willingness to be honest and openminded as I work steps

My tool box holds many other tools. No matter how, where, when, or from whom I acquired them, it was through A.A. that I began to recognize them, gather them, and carry them with me, like my cat and her tail. As a girl, when overwhelmed by the hugeness of a task, my mom advised me, "Break it down into bite sized pieces. Start with a small or easy piece, then do another, and another."

Regarding the Fourth Step, the Big Book breaks it down like my mom. Bite sized pieces. One step at a time. Draw the columns; write the headings on the columns; list the names in the first column. You will see progress and feel encouraged to do more. Soon you will find yourself in it, doing it, getting it done! Be like my cat Rocky. Be tenacious, determined, thorough, fearless. Then, give yourself a bath, snuggle up with your tail wrapped around you, and purr yourself to sleep.

*Peg P., Watsonville*





# WHY I STAY INVOLVED

**I**t is absolutely impossible that I have the life I do. I really mean it – it makes no sense. The path from where I was to where I am now, today, in this moment, defies explanation.

I walked in the doors of Alcoholics Anonymous in October 2016, about a week after my last drink. I was convinced it would not work for me. I had stopped drinking, but I thought that just meant I was going to be miserable. I was just going to be “sober.” I lasted only a week until I was miserable enough that when someone in my sober-living house said, in so many words, “What the heck else are you doing? Get in my car and let me take you to a meeting,” I said “Sure.”

I was introduced to the love and hope that so many of us experience at our first meeting, and I left with a glimmer of that hope. I became willing to read the book, to ask another member to sponsor me, to work the steps ... and though my life quickly got better, I couldn't shake the feeling that I didn't belong. I didn't quite fit. I went to meetings, I got there early and stayed late, I picked up chairs, I stayed off my phone ... but I felt separate. I was too young for the “normal” A.A.s, too old for the young people. I was too queer for men's meetings, but I didn't think I was queer enough for gay meetings. I was too high-bottom for the skid-row meetings, but not nearly

accomplished enough for what we called the “fashion-show” meetings.

I didn't relate to Bill's story when I first read the Big Book. I didn't relate to The Doctor's Opinion. I was left disappointed by There Is a Solution (What is the solution? Is it just God? Because I didn't believe in that), and I was REALLY disappointed by We Agnostics. I followed suggestions, read the book with a sponsor and when we got to a step, I took it. And my life got better. But I didn't see myself in the Big Book until I started reading the second section of stories in the back: They Stopped In Time. The story “Student of Life” on Page 319 of the 4th Edition stopped me cold. I wrote in huge capital letters at the top of the page, “THIS!” with about 20 exclamation points. That story made it absolutely clear that Alcoholics Anonymous can, was, and would continue to work for me if I kept doing the work. That I could be a part of this thing, and I could fit in.

I started to pick up some commitments, including the alternate GSR of a group my sponsor attended. I started attending district meetings, not fully understanding what we were really doing there. And then one day, I was at a recovery meeting, and our district's DCMC happened to be the speaker. Toward the end of his story, he said this: “On the day I was born, there were people in meetings of Alcoholics

*continued on p.6*

Anonymous, doing the work to make sure that, when I got here, the lights were on and the coffee was ready, and there was a Big Book to hand me. And there are people being born today who will need this thing in 15, 25, 45 years – and it’s our job to they get here.”

At the 10th General Service Conference, Bill read his proposal for the Twelve Concepts. In it, he notes “many of us said: This can’t be done. It’s all very well for Bill and Bob and a few friends to set up a Board of Trustees and to provide us with some literature, and look after our public relations, and do all of those chores for us we can’t do for ourselves. ... This is a job for our parents. ... And then we came to the day when it was seen that the parents were both fallible and perishable.”

A lot of people made me feel welcome in Alcoholics Anonymous, and encouraged me to keep coming back. But I saw myself in the literature because when I was still in middle school, years before I ever took my first drink, someone somewhere in a group like yours said, “We’re missing people. What can we do to help the people who aren’t here?” A motion was made, group consciences were taken, a call for stories was put out, and a whole new generation of alcoholics found a new version of the Big Book with a story they could relate to when they walked through our doors for the first time.

I love our literature today. I can see myself in Bill’s story, I can find the similarities in We Agnostics, and I understand our shared solution. But I first felt like I BELONGED when I read a story written by a woman who got sober in 1991, a story written in 1998, a story first published in 2001.

We cannot leave this work to our parents. It’s our turn. Our predecessors ensured A.A would be here for us when we were ready; but they were fallible and perishable. WE are the society of alcoholics in action today, and it’s up to us to ensure this thing is here, accessible and relatable when the alcoholics being born today walk through our doors. We encourage newcomers to look for the similarities, rather than the differences – but it’s a lot easier to see the similarities when you hear or read someone sharing your story.

I am a student of life today. As I said, the path from where I was to where I am now shouldn’t exist. I’ve gone back to school, earned a bachelor’s degree and I’m now a PhD student. I’ve had my first sober relationship, my first sober breakup. I’ve watched friends thrive, and friends have passed away. And on my second sobriety birthday, I got a text from my dad, who was back in the hospital. It read: “I’m an alcoholic and I can’t quit drinking on my own. When I get out of here, I’m going to start going to meetings, and I want to thank you for showing me that Alcoholics Anonymous works.” We still share the same sobriety date – September 28, 2016, for me and 2018 for him. I doubt any of the people who submitted stories to the Big Book’s 4th Edition would have predicted I’d be able to draw a line from their service to my dad getting sober. Just imagine the effects of what we do today.

I don’t always know what my action in A.A. is supposed to look like. But I know that when one alcoholic can relate to another, we can recover. And one of the most important things we can do as servants of Alcoholics Anonymous, I believe, is to ensure as many alcoholics as possible can relate to us. The ripples that spread from the service we do here are vast and unpredictable, and it’s such a privilege to participate.

Thank you for allowing me to be of service.

*Matt E*



Scott L	March 14, 1981
Kim H.	March 23, 1981
Don W.	March 3, 1983
Kathy A	March 13, 1984
Rick W	March 20, 1985
Margie W	March 21, 1987
Allison B.	March 30, 1990
Amy J.	March 31, 1991
Lynn N	March 21, 1992
Ben L	March 2, 1998
Mark G	March 23, 1998
Tim S	March 16, 2000
James C.	March 28, 2005
Dave S.	June 6, 2005
Fred R	March 18, 2006
Kerry G	March 3, 2008
Annie P.	March 2, 2009
Sandy R.	March 20, 2009
Jill S.	March 27, 2009
Michael S	March 17, 2011
Elaine R	March 19, 2012
Laura C	March 20, 2012
Leslie F	March 28, 2014
Davina S	March 19, 2015
Barbara S	March 11, 2018
Liana F	March 1, 2021
Annie M	March 15 2012
Morgan	March 15, ?

**IN MEMORIAM**

Tom H.	March 14, 1954
Gil W.	March 17, 1985
Mary Kay P. 18 yrs	March 10, 1997

Want to list your A.A. anniversary in the GrapeSCINN? Email your name and sobriety date to: [grapesccin@gmail.com](mailto:grapesccin@gmail.com)



**BIRTHDAY SPEAKER MEETING**

SANTA CRUZ COUNTY INTERGROUP PRESENTS:

**SATURDAY MAY 6**

**BIRTHDAY SPEAKER MEETING**

**MID-COUNTY SENIOR CENTER  
829 BAY AVE. CAPITOLA**

DOORS OPEN AT 5:30 | MEETING AT 7:00

**SPEAKER: JOELENE E. RODEO | APRIL 18 2014**

**HOSTED BY FRIDAY NITE LIVE**



# APRIL 2023 EVENTS

April 1 @ 7:00 pm - 8:15 pm  
**Birthday Speaker Meeting**  
Mid-County Senior Center  
829 Bay Ave., Capitola, CA

April 2 @ 1:00 pm - 3:00 pm  
**CRUZYPAA Monthly Meeting**  
Harvey West Park 326 Evergreen St  
Santa Cruz, CA

April 5 @ 7:30 pm - 9:30 pm  
**Intergroup Council Meeting**  
Meeting ID: 828 1508 0970  
Passcode: 588309

April 8 @ 10:00 am - 12:00 pm  
**4th Step Workshop**  
Ben Lomond Fellowship  
9496 Hwy 9, Ben Lomond

April 12 @ 7:30 pm - 9:30 pm  
**General Service District Meeting**  
Meeting ID: 857 1510 3072  
Passcode: 524168

April 16 @ 1:00 pm - 3:00 pm  
**CRUZYPAA Monthly Meeting**  
Harvey West Park  
326 Evergreen St, Santa Cruz

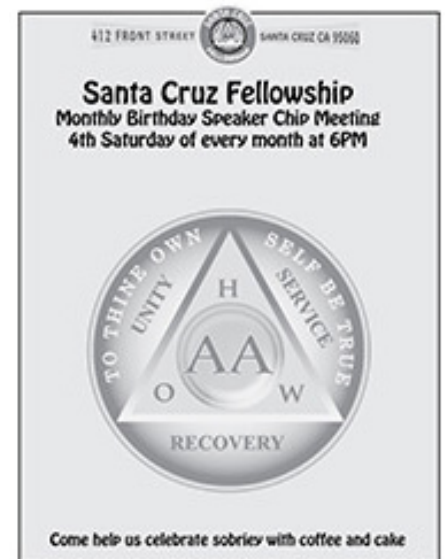
April 19 @ 7:30 pm - 9:30 pm  
**Intergroup Steering Committee Meeting**  
Meeting ID: 861 8723 8980  
Passcode: 723088

April 22 @ 6:00 pm - 8:00 pm  
**Santa Cruz Fellowship Birthday Speaker Meeting**  
412 Front Street, Santa Cruz

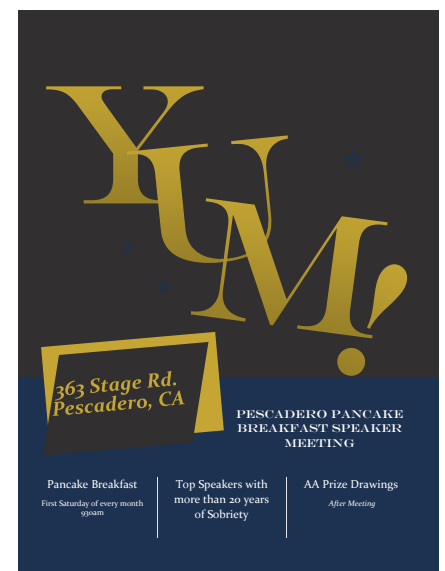
**FOR MORE INFORMATION  
ABOUT THIS MONTH'S EVENTS, VISIT  
AASANTACRUZ.ORG**



**BEN LOMOND FELLOWSHIP**  
*4th step workshop*  
10 a.m. to noon  
Second Saturday of every month  
2023 dates:  
Jan 14 • Feb 11 • Mar 11 • Apr 8 • May 13 • Jun 10 •  
Jul 8 • Aug 12 • Sep 9 • Oct 14 • Nov 11 • Dec 9  
Ben Lomond Fellowship • 9496 Highway 9  
Contact Steve D. for more information  
831-706-6520



412 FRONT STREET SANTA CRUZ CA 95060  
**Santa Cruz Fellowship**  
Monthly Birthday Speaker Chip Meeting  
4th Saturday of every month at 6PM  
TO THINE OWN UNITY SELF BE TRUE  
H  
AA  
O W  
RECOVERY  
Come help us celebrate sobriety with coffee and cake



**YUM!**  
363 Stage Rd.  
Pescadero, CA  
PESCADERO PANCAKE  
BREAKFAST SPEAKER  
MEETING  
Pancake Breakfast  
First Saturday of every month  
9:00am  
Top Speakers with  
more than 20 years  
of Sobriety  
AA Prize Drawings  
After Meeting

# Council Meeting 2023-02-01

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01 February 2023 / 7:35 PM / ON ZOOM

## ATTENDEES

- Chair - Murias
- Vice Chair - Christopher
- Office Manager - Kerri
- BSM Chair - Ed O.
- Activities Chair - Kimberlee
- Diverter Chair - Jack
- Newsletter Chair - Lucie
- Bylaws Chair - Sarah R.
- Website Chair - Grey
- Recording Secretary & Area 9 - John
- CRUZYPAA Liaison - Jesse C
- Area 3 - Kimberlee
- Area 4 - Darcy
- Area 6 - Mary K
- Area 7 - Dave H
- Area 8 - Erik B
  
- Deb A. DCMC Dist 03 Santa Cruz - facilitating elections

## Serenity Prayer

## Introductions

Christine W - Intergroup rep for Saved By Grace

Don H - rep for Men's Basic Step Study

Carla B - Spiritual Tools

Dario - rep Early Spiritual meeting Aptos Grange Sunday mornings

Julia M - observing

Lily P - 1 year

## Notes

Minutes from last month's Council Meeting were approved as written without any objections

## Reports

### Chair - Murias

At last month's Steering we had discussion about the budget and the proposed policies and procedures around finances. We are to put the policies and procedures onto a Google doc for Steering to go through and make comments; that doc has been put up. Due to illness, I did not put out any rules or guidelines as to methodology for commenting. Since Steering is going to shift, the commenting process can go forward with the new Steering committee.

### Office Manager - Kerri

January activity log:

- 97 callers
- 70 visitors
- 18 meeting inquiries
- 61 purchases
- 6 12-step callers
- 4 H&I visitors
- 40 office-related calls & visitors
- St Patrick's Day flier up on website - March 18 6-10 pm German Cultural Center; trying to raise \$ for central office so please stop by. Contact Kimberlee for more details
- Central Office still needs help; Tuesdays 9am-1pm, Saturdays 10am-2pm

## Elections

Deb A. DCMC Dist 03 Santa Cruz - facilitating elections

### **Intergroup Chair**

3 people volunteered to be Intergroup Chair: Murias, Christopher, and Grey

All 3 candidates presented their qualifications to the group

During his presentation, Grey withdrew from the election

Murias and Christopher went into a “breakout room”

Some discussion on candidates ensued

A ballot was called

22 votes -  $\frac{2}{3}$  necessary for elect was 15

Christopher got 20, Murias got 2

Christopher is the new Intergroup Chair

### **Vice Chair**

Grey volunteered to be Vice Chair

Grey presented his qualifications to the group

Grey went to a breakout room

A ballot was called

22 votes - 15 needed to elect

Grey had 9, Person X had 13

A second ballot was called

20 votes - 14 needed to elect, to stay on the ballot was 4

Grey had 1, Person X had 19

We will continue on to the next election; position of vice chair remains unfilled

### **Recording Secretary**

Nobody volunteered to be Recording Secretary

### **Treasurer**

Matthew W. volunteered to be Treasurer

Matthew presented his qualifications to the group

Matthew went to a breakout room

A ballot was called

25 votes - 17 needed to elect

Matthew got 25 and is the new Treasurer

### **Diverter Committee Chair**

Nobody volunteered to be Diverter Chair

### **Activities Committee Chair**

Kimberlee (current Activities Chair) volunteered to be Activities Chair

Kimberlee presented her qualifications

Kimberlee went to a breakout room

A ballot was called

26 votes - 18 needed - Kimberlee had 23 votes

Kimberlee is still the Activities Chair

### **Newsletter Committee Chair**

Lucie (current Newsletter Chair) volunteered to be Newsletter Chair

Lucie presented her qualifications

Lucie went to a breakout room

A ballot was called

26 votes - 18 needed - Lucie had 26 votes

Lucie is still the Newsletter Chair

**Website Committee Chair**

Mark B. (current webmaster) and Grey (current Website Chair) volunteered to be Website Chair

Mark B. asked whether or not it was allowed for him to be both webmaster and Website Chair; some discussion ensued, and Deb A. concluded that nothing in the position guidelines precluded that possibility

Grey and Mark presented their qualifications

A ballot was called

23 votes - 16 needed to elect; Mark B. got 23

Mark B. is the new Website Chair

**Bylaws Committee Chair**

Sarah R. (current Bylaws Chair) volunteered to be Bylaws Chair

Sarah R. presented her qualifications

Sarah R. went to a breakout room

A ballot was called

26 votes - 18 needed to elect; Sarah R. got 26

Sarah R. is still the Bylaws Chair

**Birthday Speaker Meeting (BSM) Committee Chair**

Ed O. (current BSM Chair) volunteered to be BSM Chair

Ed O. presented his qualifications

Ed O. went to a breakout room

A ballot was called

21 votes - 14 needed to elect; Ed O. got 20

Ed O. is still the BSM Chair

**Notes:**

Positions still open: Vice Chair, Diverter Chair, and Recording Secretary; Kimberlee volunteers to \*fill in\* as Recording Secretary (taking notes only) until a new Secretary is elected. Jack will continue to man the Diverter Chair duties until a new Diverter Chair is elected.

From Mark B: If anyone is interested in joining the Website Committee contact me at 831-566-5699. The committee will be responsible for adding additional features we'd like to add in order to serve our fellowship.

REMINDER: Area rep elections will be next month! March 1

**Christopher** took us out with the "we" version of the Serenity Prayer

*Meeting closed at 9:20pm*

Secretary's note: a transcript of the chat is to be shared by the Chair in a separate document.