

HAPPY!
FREE!
JOYOUS!



August 2024 Issue
KCCO Newsletter

Kent County Central Office

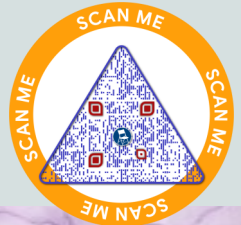
4920 Plainfield Ave. NE, Ste. 19, Grand Rapids, MI 49525
Office Phone (616) 913-9216 Hours: M-F, 10:00am-2:00pm
Website: www.grandrapidsaa.org

AA 24-hour Hotline (616) 913-9149



NEED TO FIND A MEETING?

Scan the QR Code at right, or go
to the AA meetings listing at:
www.grandrapidsaa.org/meetings



Upcoming Events

Friday Evening Speaker Meetings

August 2, 9, 16, 23, 30

7 p.m., North Alano Club

(See attached flyer for details.)

District 7 Business Meeting

Saturday, August 3

Host: Spiritual Awakenings Group

Emmanuel Episcopal Church

315 W. Center St., Hastings

KCCO Business Meeting

Thursday, August 15

6pm, KCCO/ZOOM

(For ZOOM sign-in, contact KCCO.)

Area 34 Assembly

Sunday, August 18

10:30am

North Lake Park

(Grand Mere)

Stevensville, MI

(See attached flyer for details, or visit

www.area34aa.org.)

AUGUST: HAPPINESS HAPPENS MONTH!

"We are not a glum lot." (Big Book, page 132)

The month of August might help us AAs to remember this.

*Take stock of your life and figure out which things make you truly happy.
Focus on them, and find new ways to fill your life with as much joy as possible.*

What makes you happy? *Happiness Happens Month* is dedicated to celebrating what makes you happy. The annual observation is based on the premise that happiness is unlimited and contagious, and that sharing one's happiness can bring a lot of joy into other people's lives.

Even though *Happiness Happens Month* sounds silly, it does have a very important purpose. "The month reminds us that happiness happens one small moment at a time and it's our job to recognize those moments when they happen. It reminds us that sometimes small actions can boost our happiness. It reminds us that happiness is a personal experience, and it's also contagious!"

The History of Happiness Happens Month

Pamela Gail Johnson is the founder of *The Secret Society of Happy People* (SOHP) and is quoted as saying "I started *The Secret Society of Happy People* in 1998 to provide a missing voice for those who are happy and want to express it without having other people rain on their parade. (Boo, Hiss!)"

The Secret Society of Happy People began celebrating happiness with *Admit You're Happy Day* on August 8, 1999. But their members wanted to let the happy feeling linger a little longer, so in 2000 they expanded the celebration to the entire month of August. Eventually the observation was renamed *Happiness Happens Day and Month*.

Continued on page 2

It's simple, not necessarily easy
but, the rewards are endless.

Alcoholics Anonymous

Happiness Happens When...

You get to fill in the blank. We want you to think about the moments you feel happy or good so you can keep doing more of that, and share your happiness with others.

How to Celebrate Happiness Happens Month

Here are some ways to celebrate this happy month:

- ◆ Do something nice for yourself – after all, happiness starts from within.
- ◆ Help someone else be happy by doing something nice for them. It can be something as simple as giving up your seat on the bus to someone else, or a more elaborate gesture like volunteering your time and money to a charity of your choice. Studies have found that volunteering not only brings joy into our lives, but can also help us live longer.
- ◆ Don a pair of silver shades (because happy people always see the silver lining).
- ◆ Laugh more (laughter is still the best medicine).
- ◆ Smile more (and the world smiles with you).

Excerpts from: <https://sohp.com/happiness-happens-month-2024/>
<https://www.daysoftheyear.com/days/happiness-happens-month/>

**HAPPINESS IS NOT
SOMETHING READY MADE.
IT COMES FROM YOUR
OWN ACTIONS.**
- DALAI LAMA



**meeting
spotlight**

What is "Meeting Spotlight"?

Is your group looking to increase participation? Looking to get the word out of the availability of its meeting? KCCO can help! If you would like your group featured in "Meeting Spotlight", please submit your group's meeting details and any information you would like us to share, to: newsletter@grandrapidsaa.org.

Can you help support these groups?

Easy Does It

**Open Meeting on Wednesdays at 8:00 p.m.
Home Acres Reformed Church
21 Murray St., SE, Kentwood**

Back to Basics Beginners Meeting

**A 4-week crash course into the 12 Steps
Wednesdays @ 6:45 p.m.
Alano Club South, Unity Room
256 Celia St., SW, Grand Rapids**

If you are a newcomer, or simply someone looking for a focused refresher on the 12 Steps of AA, this meeting may be just for you!
This local group meeting is classified as "open" (available to anyone), English language, and is wheelchair accessible.

Why We Are Happy, Joyous, & Free in AA: The Transformative Power of Recovery

In today's digital era, where information and experiences are a mere click away, individuals across the globe are perpetually seeking happiness and freedom. Amidst this quest, Alcoholics Anonymous stands as a beacon, guiding countless individuals towards a life of joy, freedom, and purpose. But what is the secret behind AA's transformative power? Why are its members often radiating happiness, joy, and freedom? This article delves deep into the heart of AA, unraveling the reasons behind the profound contentment its members often experience.

1. The Power of Community and Belonging

In a world where many feel isolated and disconnected, AA offers a haven of community and belonging. Members share their experiences, strengths, and hopes, creating an environment where one never feels alone in their journey. This collective experience, bound by mutual understanding and compassion, forms the foundation for happiness and joy. When individuals feel heard, understood, and supported, they are more likely to experience inner contentment.

2. Embracing a Higher Power

Central to AA's philosophy is the concept of surrendering to a Higher Power. This spiritual connection transcends religious boundaries and offers members a sense of purpose and direction. By placing faith in something greater than oneself, many find solace and meaning, freeing them from the shackles of their past and the uncertainty of the future.

3. The Therapeutic Power of the Twelve Steps

The Twelve Steps, foundational to AA, are more than just guidelines—they are catalysts for personal growth and transformation. As members work through these steps, they embark on a journey of self-awareness, making amends, and seeking a purposeful life. This systematic approach facilitates healing, fostering happiness and joy from within.

4. The Gift of Giving Back

AA places a strong emphasis on service and giving back. Many members become sponsors, guiding newcomers through their recovery journey. This act of altruism not only aids the newcomer but also reinforces the sponsor's own commitment to sobriety. There's an undeniable joy in witnessing another person's growth and knowing you played a part in it.

5. Breaking Free from the Chains of Addiction

Overcoming addiction is akin to breaking free from chains that have bound one for years. Sobriety offers a fresh start—a life unencumbered by the weight of addiction. This newfound freedom, coupled with the tools AA provides, paves the way for a life of joy and purpose.

6. Emotional Honesty and Growth

AA encourages emotional honesty. By confronting and expressing their feelings, members cultivate emotional intelligence. This vulnerability, far from being a weakness, becomes a strength, enabling members to navigate life's challenges with grace and resilience.

7. Celebrating Milestones Together

In AA, every day of sobriety is a milestone. Whether it's a 24-hour chip or a 30-year medallion, these achievements are celebrated with fervor. These moments of collective joy serve as reminders of the progress made and the journey ahead.

24/7 SUPPORT HOTLINE

616-913-9149 - We're here to help.

We can show you how taking some simple steps can help loosen the grip that alcohol has on your life. The first step is to reach out and ask for help. This can be done by attending an AA meeting. If you are unsure or have questions, call the 24 hour hotline. Making that call will put you in touch with an AA member that can answer your questions and point you in the right direction.

Help us continue to carry the message to those suffering from the disease of alcoholism.

Volunteer for our 24-hour AA Hotline. A one-month commitment of 4 hours per week is needed. Morning and afternoon shifts are available.

Do you know that you can help service our after-hours Hotline REMOTELY?

If you can help, please do not hesitate to call our office at 616-913-9216, and speak with Steve, our Office Manager.

12 x 12 x 12

A.A.'s Twelve Steps are principles for personal recovery. The Twelve Traditions ensure the Unity of the Fellowship. Written by co-founder Bill W. in 1962, the Twelve Concepts for World Service provide a group of related principles to help ensure that various elements of A.A.'s service structure remain responsive and responsible to those they serve.

STEP EIGHT

Made a list of all persons we had harmed, and become willing to make amends to them all.

TRADITION EIGHT

Alcoholics Anonymous should remain forever nonprofessional, but our service centers may employ special workers.

CONCEPT EIGHT

The trustees are the principal planners and administrators of over-all policy and finance. They have custodial oversight of the separately incorporated and constantly active services, exercising this through their ability to elect all the directors of these entities.

Essays on the 12 Steps can be read in the book, "Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions", available for purchase at the Kent County Central Office.

To read the Long Version of the 12 Traditions and 12 Concepts, go to the Area 34 website at:
www.area34aa.org

Happy, Joyous, Free in AA, continued from page 2

8. Building a Life Beyond Sobriety

AA is not just about abstaining from alcohol—it's about building a fulfilling life. The program equips its members with life skills, promoting holistic growth. As members rebuild their lives, they often rediscover passions, form meaningful relationships, and establish fulfilling careers, contributing to their overall happiness.

9. Embracing the Present Moment

AA teaches its members to live in the present, to embrace each moment with gratitude. This mindfulness, a form of meditation, has been scientifically linked to happiness. By anchoring themselves in the present, members often find contentment, appreciating the simple joys of life.

10. A Journey of Continuous Growth

Recovery in AA is a lifelong journey—one of continuous growth and exploration. The program instills a mindset of perpetual personal development, ensuring that members are always evolving, learning, and striving for better.

The Magic Behind AA's Joy and Freedom

AA's approach to recovery, deeply rooted in community, spirituality, and personal growth, offers its members more than just sobriety. It offers a blueprint for a life of happiness, joy, and freedom. In the supportive embrace of AA, individuals not only overcome addiction but also rediscover themselves, finding purpose, passion, and profound contentment.

As society continues its relentless pursuit of happiness, AA stands as a testament to the fact that joy and freedom often lie in introspection, community, and a deep-seated connection with a Higher Power. It's a reminder that, even in the darkest times, there's a path to light, happiness, and freedom.

<https://newcomerskeepcoming.org/blog-%26-socials/f/why-we-are-happy-joyous-and-free-in-aa?blogcategory=NKC>

happiness is an inside job.
-WILLIAM ARTHUR WARD



**Meetings here,
Meetings there,
Meetings EVERYWHERE!**

You can access and download MEETING GUIDE app using the QR Code on page one of this newsletter.

To add new local group meeting locations and schedules, or to update existing meeting information, please contact Steve at the Kent County Central Office.

In addition, new local groups can contact the Registrar in their appropriate district if they would like to officially list their group with the General Service Office in New York, and to be assigned a group number.



Like many alcoholics, I was selfish, self-centered, and self-seeking to the core. When I got sober, the only thing I could think about was what I was going to get out of it. I never did anything my entire life unless I could get something out of the deal, which is exactly what self-seeking is. Luckily, Alcoholics Anonymous had these “promises” everyone kept talking about, and I thought this was about as real as Santa providing me with the Christmas presents I wanted.

The promises didn’t offer anything materialistic either. I had a sponsor who constantly reminded me that I only *think* I know what I need. What’s that mean? I thought the nice job, money, car, house or relationship was what I needed to be happy, but I never was. So these promises offered things like comprehension of the word “serenity” and knowing peace. They told me that I’d know a new freedom and a new happiness. Fear of people and economic insecurity would leave me? Sounds like a pretty good deal to me.

There was one promise that sounded completely insane though, and I never thought I’d see the day where it came true: “No matter how far down the scale we have gone, we will see how our experience can benefit others.” (Alcoholics Anonymous pg. 84) This sounded like a tall order that no amount of sobriety, step work, or meetings could fulfill. But, much like the other promises, I was amazed to see this one happening right in front of my eyes early on in my sobriety.

If you’re like me, you felt (or feel) very lost and alone in active alcoholism. My whole life it felt like nobody understood who I was, what I was dealing with or where I came from. I kept isolated from the world and leaned towards my active alcoholism because my head told me that I was the only one on earth who felt the way I did, but that all changed once I actually decided to give AA a shot. You see, whether you have faith in 12-step programs or not, Alcoholics Anonymous struck gold with their philosophy: “*But the ex-problem drinker who has found this solution, who is properly armed with fact about himself, can generally win the entire confidence of another alcoholic in a few hours.*” (Alcoholics Anonymous pg. 19)

Sure, I may have told a few people what was really going on with me, but nobody quite got it. Why couldn’t I just stop? Everyone has suffered from tragedy, some depression and anxiety. Why can’t I just man up and get over it without trying to cover it up with alcohol or drugs? Eventually, I just stopped even wanting to try to explain my troubles to anyone else.

The first time I went to AA, all I heard was how much different I was than everyone else in those rooms. A little over four years ago, something incredible happened. I was sitting in AA meetings in another state with complete strangers, completely hopeless about life with my head down, staring at the floor, and I began hearing my story from others. Although some minor details were different, the men and women in these rooms were describing exactly how I felt. It was like they’d been spying on me my whole life.

Maybe I wasn’t so different. Maybe the men and women in these 12-step meetings did understand me. Not only did they understand what I was going through, but they had a solution. It’s here that I found hope, and hope is something that I hadn’t had for years. They opened up and freely spoke about where they’ve been and how far down the scale *they* had gone, which benefited me. So the promises were being fulfilled for them in that moment whether they realized it or not.

I used to have social anxiety like you wouldn’t believe when I got sober. At the meetings in California where I began my journey of sobriety, you signed in at the beginning of the meeting. Every now and then by chance, they’d call my name, and I had no clue what to say. I just shared what was on my mind, and after each time I shared, I would just think about how stupid I sounded. Almost 100% of the time, a man or a woman would come up to me after the meeting and thank me for sharing. They’d tell me how I shared something that they needed to hear. Sometimes they even hugged me...*What?*

It was then and there when I had a moment of clarity that by not sharing, I was being selfish. While I may not have all the answers and have no delusion in my mind that what I say is going to save everyone’s life, there might be someone in there who needs to hear something I’m going to share. If I’m too afraid to share, I might be depriving someone of hearing some hope that they need in order to stay sober that day.

Like I said, the philosophy of Alcoholics Anonymous is pure genius. Why do I say this? Because I’ve seen the philosophy work an endless amount of times even in scenarios that have nothing to do with alcoholism. I’ve had many people in my life discuss life issues with me such as the loss of a loved one, loss of a job, financial troubles, and every other type of problem you can imagine. Without even mentioning my alcohol addiction, sharing my experience, strength and hope about the situation often allows us to connect on the subject.

When any of us are struggling, all we’re really looking for is hope. You can have 1,000 people telling you that it’s going to be alright, but we don’t truly believe it until we hear an example of it. Us humans are skeptical, and we want proof that someone else has been able to make it to the other side of their struggle successfully. Whether you’re in recovery or not, never be afraid or ashamed to share your experience, strength, and hope with someone because it just might give them hope and potentially change their life.

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Chris B.

What’s Your Story? We’d love to hear it! It just might be what another alcoholic needs to jump on the recovery bandwagon, or what encourages another to stay the recovery course. We all have a story. Will you share yours? Stories can be submitted to our Newsletter Editor through email at: newsletter@grandrapidsaa.org.

Excerpts from:
<https://medium.com/@chrisboutte/the-power-of-sharing-your-story-51cba5a4738a>

THANK YOU TO THESE GROUPS THAT RECENTLY DONATED TO THE KENT COUNTY CENTRAL OFFICE:

Breton Road Early Birds	Grant AA
Holy Cross Saturday AM	AA On The Hill
Cedar Springs AA	Third Tradition
AA In The Country	12 Steps To Freedom
Room 5	Oakview
Rockford Monday Night	Search For Serenity
Coopersville AA	SJF Big Book Study

- and to individuals who donated via PayPal



KENT COUNTY CENTRAL OFFICE (KCCO) Office Staff and Committee/Service Volunteers

Steve. C. - Office Manager

Peggy H. - Office Aide

Susan J. - Committee Chairperson

David P. - Committee Vice-Chairperson

Emily B. - Committee Secretary

Shelly W. - Committee Treasurer/Trustee 1

Mike W. - Committee Trustee 2

Volunteer Needed - Committee Trustee 3

Jeff O. - Webmaster

Toni M. - Newsletter Editor



Our Trusted Servants: Why serve?

HELLO!

I'm Susan J., YOUR KCCO Committee Chairperson!

Currently, this is my second 2-year term as Chairperson for the Kent County Central Office Committee (KCCC). Prior to this I served for 2 years as Co-Chairperson. Before joining the KCCO team, my service work included chairing jail meetings, sponsorship of fellow AA's and, in the more distant past, I served with the Young People of AA.

As KCCC Chairperson, I organize the committee meetings and help with day-to-day operations and issues in the office when our Office Manager, Steve, needs help.

My WHY (Why do I do what I do?): I love Spring Round Up. It has always been my favorite local AA event. I was asked to fill in at the registration desk one year. That experience led me to serve a few more years in that capacity, which then led to my decision to go to the committee meeting after the event to find out how the event did. Before long I began serving the central office by arranging for weekly speakers, which the KCCO sponsors on Friday nights at the North Alamo Club. Our Speaker Meetings were my first introduction to AA. My mother took me to my first one when I was 17.

I also want to do what I can to ensure that if someone reaches out via the phone/HOTLINE for help, that each and every call is answered.

We welcome your suggestions!

If you have an idea for our newsletter, or would like to request specific information be published, please let us know!

Contact our Newsletter Editor, Toni M., at:
newsletter@grandrapidsaa.org.

KCCO NEWSLETTER MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of the Kent County Central Office newsletter is to serve Kent County and the surrounding A.A. community in four ways:

1. To carry the A.A. message
2. To inform our readers.
3. To provide a forum for discussion of A.A. principles
4. To provide service work opportunities for A.A. members.

If you would like our newsletter sent to you through email, please send an email request to: newsletter@grandrapidsaa.org.

PLEASE NOTE:

Inclusion of articles and announcements in *Happy! Joyous! Free!* does not constitute A.A. or KCCO endorsement. Rather, members of the fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous are encouraged to share their experience, strength and hope through this humble publication. Opinions expressed are those of the writer unless otherwise noted. The Kent County Central Office makes these announcements solely as a service to the reader, not as an endorsement.

FRIDAY NIGHT SPEAKER MEETING

AUGUST 2024

LOCATION: THE NORTH ALANO CLUB
1020 College Ave, NE, Grand Rapids, MI (Lower Level Balcony)
Phone 616-456-5709

Friday, August 2, 2024, 7:00 pm
Speaker: Tom D.
Home Group: Bond Street

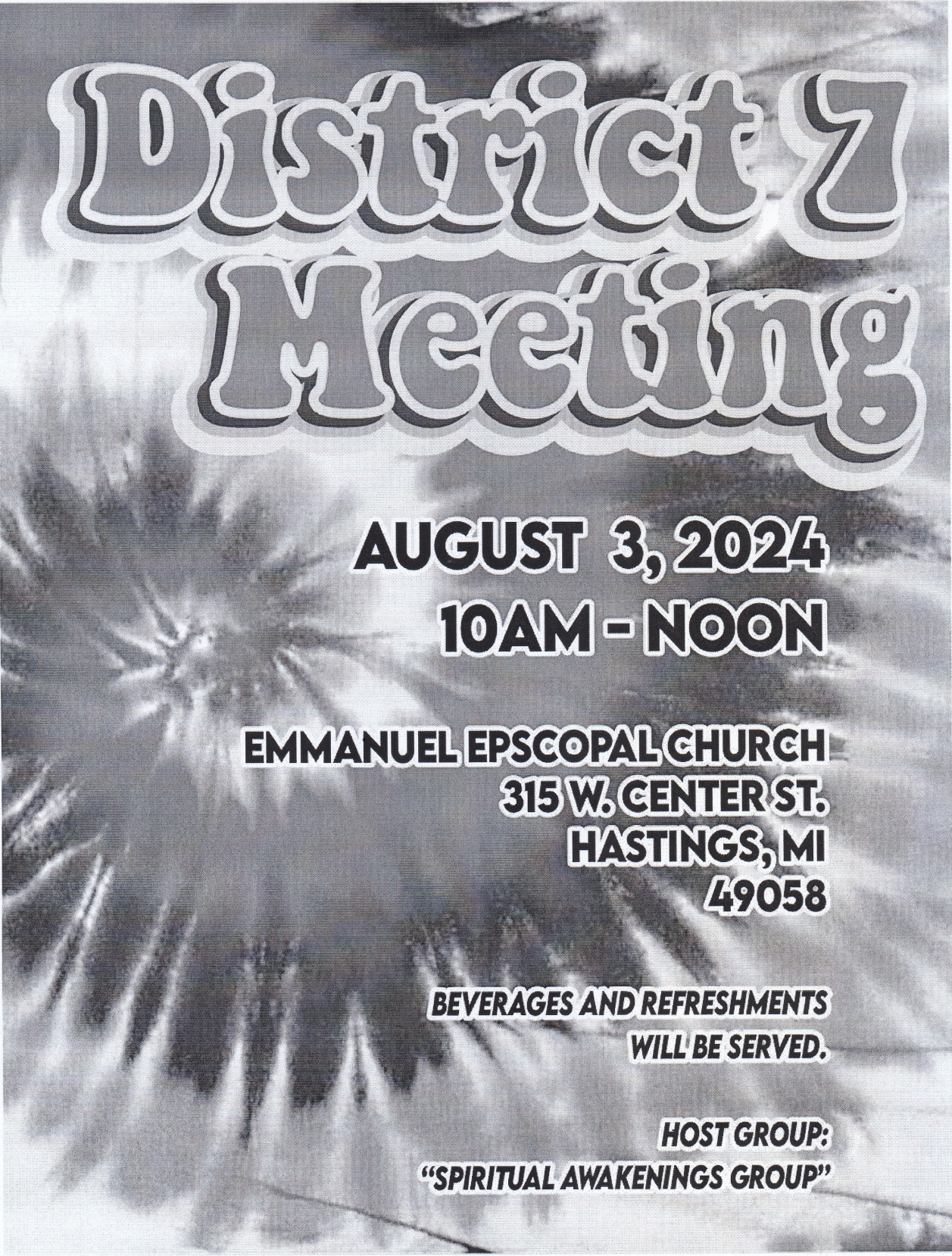
Friday, August 9, 2024, 7:00 pm
Speaker: Ben W.
Home Group: Bond Street

Friday, August 16, 2024, 7:00 pm
Speaker: Nate S.
Home Group: Bond Street

Friday, August 23, 2024, 7:00 pm
Speaker: Christian M.
Home Group: Bond Street

Friday, August 30, 2024, 7:00 pm
Speaker: Kurt T.
Home Group: Bond Street

Sponsored by Kent County Central Committee
4920 Plainfield NE, Suite 19, Grand Rapids, MI 49525
For any information call: **616-913-9216**



District 7 Meeting

**AUGUST 3, 2024
10AM - NOON**

**EMMANUEL EPSCOPAL CHURCH
315 W. CENTER ST.
HASTINGS, MI
49058**

**BEVERAGES AND REFRESHMENTS
WILL BE SERVED.**

**HOST GROUP:
"SPIRITUAL AWAKENINGS GROUP"**

AREA 34 ASSEMBLY

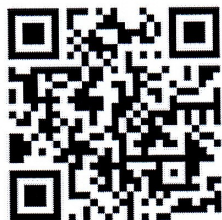
Sunday, **AUGUST** 18, 2024 @10:30



alternate
month

DISTRICT 1 is HOSTING

Potluch Lunch around noon please bring a dish to share - This Assembly is in a sheltered park picnic pavillion
Hot Dogs & Hamburgers grilled for Lunch



Google Maps

Assembly location:

North Lake Park (Grand Mere)
3600 Grand Mere Road
Stevensville, MI 40127

*There is no wifi at this location -
Hot Spot will be utilized if available
(Virtual attendance may not be available)*

Area 34 Assembly
offers virtual
attendance
ID: 521-659-0401
no password



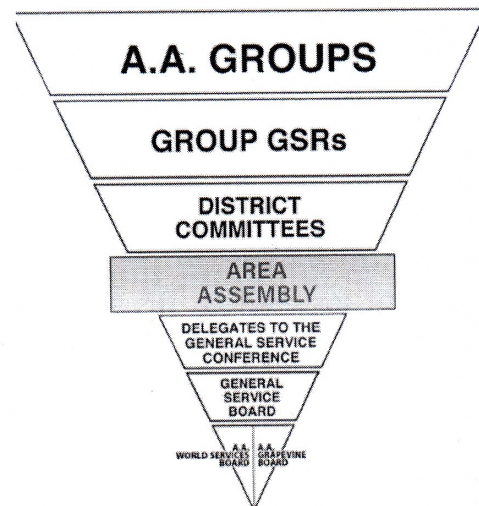
Zoom QR Link



area34aa.org

SUBSCRIBE TO OUR EVENTS CALENDAR

Please
visit
our
WESTERN
MICHIGAN
AREA 34
ALCOHOLICS
ANONYMOUS
website



GSR'S and DCM'S
are highly encouraged to
attend and
PARTICIPATE
ALL A.A. MEMBERS
ARE WELCOME

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...

Area 34

Treatment Committee

Virtual Scheduled Meetings



Bridging the Gap



Join us on the 2nd and 4th Tuesday at 5:00 pm. as we discuss **Bridging the Gap Program** that helps inform us how to connect Alcoholics who are just coming out of treatment, correctional, or other institutions, with a Temporary Contact to help introduce them to the **A.A. Program**. All district and group committee chairs are encouraged to attend and collaborate on your experiences and interest in reaching out to the alcoholics that still suffer.

2nd Tuesday 5:00 – 6:00pm

Join Zoom Meeting

Meeting ID: 521-659-0401



4th Tuesday 5:00 – 6:00pm

Join Zoom Meeting

Meeting ID: 521-659-0401



area34aa.org

treatment@area34aa.org

bridgingthegap@area34aa.org

I am responsible... 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...

I am responsible... 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...