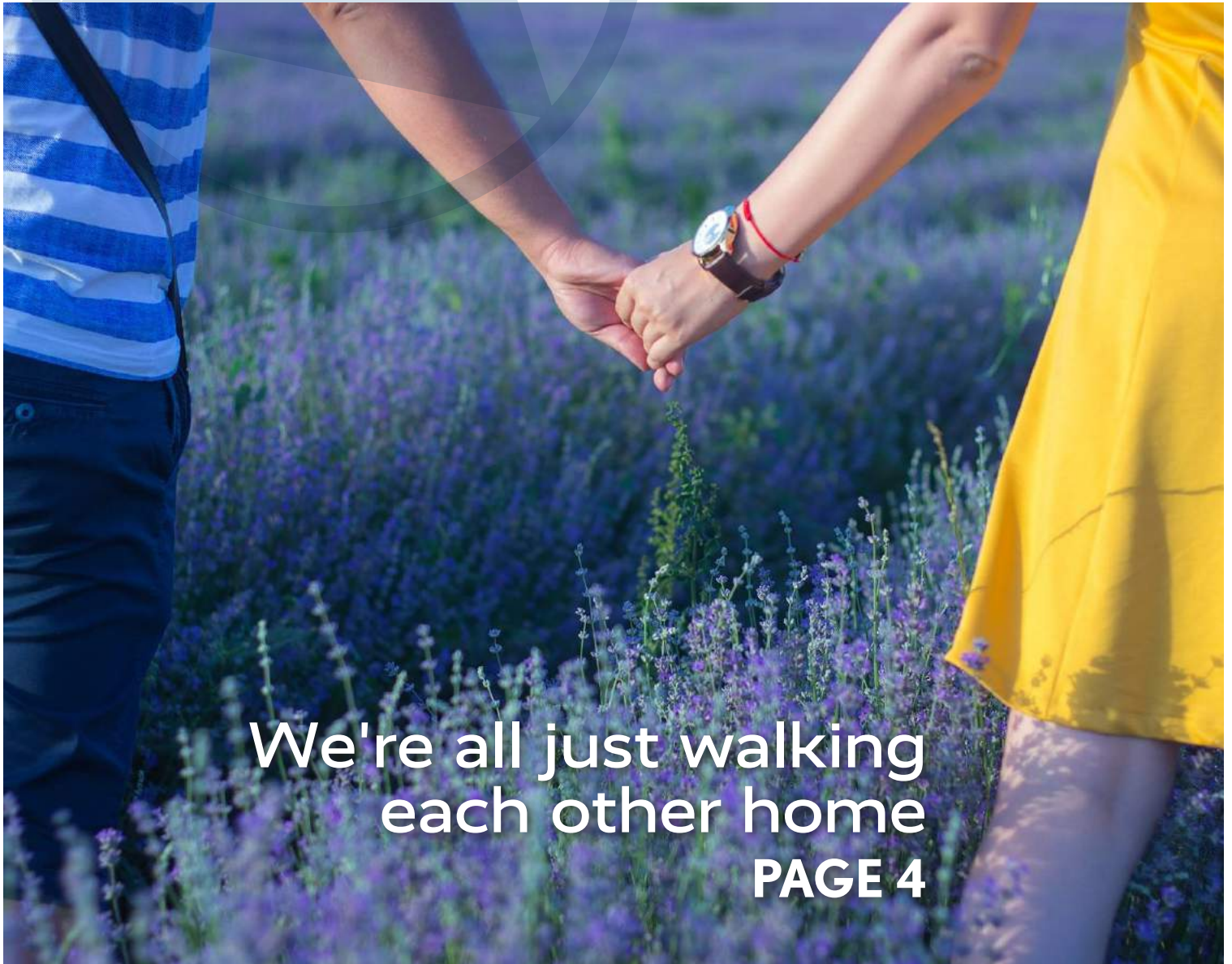


# OUR PRIMARY PURPOSE

STORIES, NEWS AND INFORMATION FROM OUR FELLOWSHIP IN THE NATIONAL CAPITAL REGION



We're all just walking  
each other home  
**PAGE 4**



**FALL  
CONFERENCE  
IS COMING  
PAGE 12**



**CAREFUL WITH  
THAT ADVICE  
PAGE 6**

**OTTAWA INTERGROUP OFFICE**

211 Bronson Avenue, Suite 108

Ottawa, Ontario, K1R 6H5

Open for Literature Sales

Mon - Fri 10:00 am - 4:00 pm

(Subject to volunteer availability—

Call in advance)



**GENERAL INFORMATION**

Telephone: 613.237.6000

10 am - 10 pm, 7 days a week

Email: info@ottawaaa.org

**NEWSLETTER EDITOR**

newsletter@ottawaaa.org

Article submission deadline is

last day of previous month

for following month

**INSIDE** ▶

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- Corrections Facilities and Treatment (Kevin A) ▶ cft@ottawaaa.org
- Archives (Bruce C) ▶ archives@ottawaaa.org

# SERVICE CALENDAR

No matter how much sobriety you have, find out how you can help and be a part of the greater whole. All AA members are welcome to attend any of the following committees:

OTTAWA INTERGROUP MONTHLY MEETING ..... Second Wednesday (7:00 pm)  
(Bronson Centre, 211 Bronson Avenue - Mac Hall)

DISTRICT 54 MEETING ..... First Thursday (7:30 pm)  
(Overbrook Community Centre, 33 Quill Street)

DISTRICT 58 MEETING ..... Second Monday (7:00 pm)  
(Bronson Centre, 211 Bronson Avenue - Room 106)

DISTRICT 62 MEETING ..... Second Monday (7:30 pm)  
(All Saints Church, 347 Richmond Road - rear entrance)

CORRECTIONS FACILITIES AND TREATMENT ..... Fourth Tuesday (6:30 pm)  
(Bronson Centre, 211 Bronson Avenue - Room 106)

PUBLIC INFORMATION (SEPTEMBER MEETING WAS SEP 13) ..... Third Monday (6:30 pm)  
(Bronson Centre, 211 Bronson Avenue - Room 108)

COOPERATION WITH PROFESSIONALS ..... Third Monday (6:30 pm)  
(Bronson Centre, 211 Bronson Avenue - Room 108)

OTTAWA ARCHIVES ..... Third Wednesday (7:00 pm)  
(Bronson Centre, 211 Bronson Avenue - Room 108)

CANADATHON COMMITTEE ..... Specific Sundays (1:00 pm)  
(Bronson Centre, 211 Bronson Avenue - Check whiteboard for room location)

May 21, June 11, June 25

## EDITOR'S STATEMENT

"Our Primary Purpose" publishes articles that reflect the full diversity of experience and opinion found within the Fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous. In determining content, the editor relies on the principles of the Twelve Traditions. "Our Primary Purpose" values the shared experience of individual AA members working the AA program and applying the principles of the Twelve Steps. Seeking neither to gloss over difficult issues nor to present such issues in a harmful or contentious manner, "Our Primary Purpose" tries to embody the widest possible view of the AA Fellowship.

The editor of "Our Primary Purpose" reserves the right to accept or reject material for publication, based on the AA traditions. (We note that this policy is consistent with that of the AA Grapevine.)

Articles are not intended to be statements of AA policy, nor does publication of any article constitute endorsement by either Alcoholics Anonymous or Ottawa Area Intergroup. Submissions are always welcome.

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# "WE'RE ALL JUST WALKING EACH OTHER HOME"

## BY THE EDITOR

Ernest Hemingway was once challenged to write a short story in 10 words or less. If there were ever a contest to describe the program of Alcoholics Anonymous in 10 words or less, I think I might go with the above quote from Ram Dass, a philosopher and spiritual teacher. (If I were in a bad mood, I might go with "uncomfortable chairs in church basements, damned smokers outside the door".) I think Dass's quote captures one of the most fundamental ideas of our program. It is certainly true that we all work to keep each other sober. This idea is best expressed in our first tradition, and we all have seen examples of extraordinary efforts by members to help a fellow member who is struggling or has already relapsed.

But I think the above expresses more than that. We are all a part of each other's life experiences. We stand with our AA friends

through their most significant and intense times, both good and bad. We are by their sides for their weddings, births of children as well as illnesses and deaths. We listen when they're happy and when they're despairing and we share those feelings with them. Sometimes the bad can be mental health issues. It is well-known that alcoholic drinking can mask symptoms of other mental illness and once the drinking stops, those symptoms can return with a vengeance. Of course, one can develop mental health problems over the course of one's sober life as well.

Our relationships with our AA friends are so close and intense that it is almost impossible to describe them without talking about family. I know that there are several members of my homegroup who I think of as family without hesitation, and there is nothing more painful than watching a family member suffer from mental illness. This issue is offered as a source of comfort and strength for the suffering and their loved ones. I hope the photos and quotes chosen help those of you dealing with these problems get through the day. I hope they remind you that we're all just walking each other home. It's just that sometimes that journey can be a difficult one.



May you dream you are dreaming in a warm soft bed  
And may the voices inside you that fill you with dread  
Make the sounds of thousands of angels instead  
Tonight where you might be laying your head

- Patty Griffin

But in this issue I also want to address an ongoing problem in the rooms of AA related to mental health issues. It is addressed in detail in the article entitled *Careful With That Advice*. The program of Alcoholics Anonymous is offered as a treatment for the disease of alcoholism and was never intended as a cure for all forms of mental illness, nor was it ever intended to be the only possible treatment of alcoholism. Yet one can still hear members offering advice to newcomers such as:

- If you were working the steps well enough, you wouldn't need that depression medication, anxiety medication or any of a host of other psychotropic medications.
- If you are taking those medications, you aren't really sober.
- If you were working a good program, you wouldn't need that therapy.
- You shouldn't share about your struggles with mental health issues.

Not only is this terrible advice, it is very much against the written opinion of Alcoholics Anonymous. In addition to the article, we quote extensively from the AA literature on this issue. I urge all members to read the article and these quotes. For further information, consult the AA approved pamphlet *The A.A. Member—Medications and Other Drugs*, which can be found at the website [www.aa.org](http://www.aa.org).

This pamphlet is incredibly valuable to both members and homegroups and I urge groups to have this pamphlet at its meetings. It was put together by a group of medical doctors who are either members or friends of AA. They begin by offering the following advice to all members:

- No A.A. member should "play doctor"; all medical advice and treatment should come from a qualified physician.
- Explain to your doctor that you no longer drink alcohol and you are trying a new way of life in recovery.
- Be completely honest with your doctor and yourself about the way you take your medicine. Let your doctor know if you skip doses or take more medicine than prescribed.
- Let your doctor know at once if you have a desire to take more medicine or if you have side effects that make you feel worse.
- Be sensitive to warnings about changes in your behavior when you start a new medication or when your dose is changed.
- If you feel that your doctor does not understand your problems, consider making an appointment with a physician who has experience in the treatment of alcoholism.

You will find further quotes from the AA literature on p. 7.

This is the most profound spiritual truth I know: that even when we're most sure that love can't conquer all, it seems to anyway. It goes down into the rat hole with us, in the guise of our friends, and there it swells and comforts. It gives us second winds, third winds, hundredth winds.

-Anne Lamott



# CAREFUL WITH THAT ADVICE

BY ANONYMOUS

Something happened to me at a meeting this week that upset me and reminded me of the few other times it has happened to me, or I overheard it happening to others.

The discussion topic at the meeting was loss. I shared that I have for many, many years had great difficulty talking and feeling about my greatest personal loss. I said I was seeing a therapist the following week to start the process of working through the most difficult issue I have, and that I had not done this before and had long just been pushing it down and trying not to think about it and I was hopeful that this could help me to start to deal with it.

Immediately after the meeting a member asked if I wanted some advice. I said "sure". He said I should save \$125 for the therapist and do a 4th and 5th with a sponsor. I sarcastically thanked him for his advice, which I quickly apologized to him for being flip with him.

I have had different things like this happen in the past, suggestions that I should not take medications for my mental illness, or should not talk about being bipolar during meetings. It actually is a relatively rare occurrence but it has happened to me and I have overheard it happen to others. It really upsets me because sometimes really poor advice given to a member, especially a new one, might really damage them, make them quit AA or quit their medication and not follow their doctor's advice.

I am sure all this advice is well intentioned and those that make it believe they are helping and maybe they personally did get sober in AA and were able to stop taking an anti-depressant after being sober. Maybe they never got better until they did a thorough working of the steps with a sponsor. I am sure they do not realize they are making such dangerous suggestions.

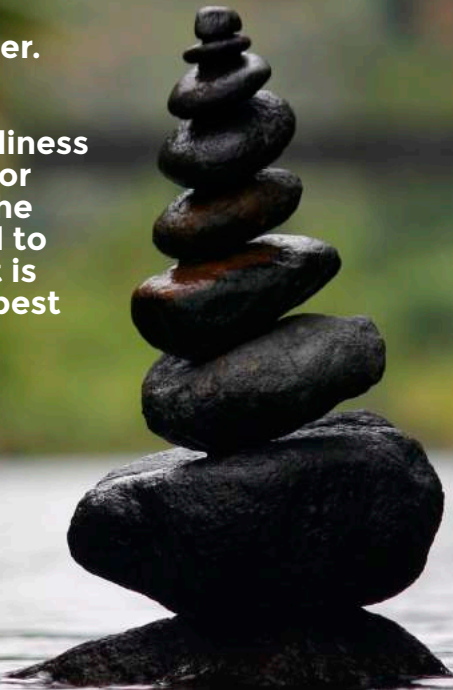
Suggesting to other members that you do not know very well that they should not go to therapy, or to rehab, or take psychiatric medications is terrible advice the vast majority of the time. Trying to convince an atheist or agnostic person you do not know well that their beliefs are not right for their recovery is a terrible idea the vast majority of the time. Telling a distraught person that discussing drugs or a mental disorder or abuse in a meeting is an "outside issue", is also almost always a bad idea.

Ask yourself if what you are saying is really helpful. Are you really an expert at everything? The man who gave me the advice could have asked me if I had a sponsor and if I was working the steps and that a 4th and 5th step might be helpful to me about dealing with my traumatic issue. That would have been sound advice. But then adding that I was essentially wasting \$125 to see a therapist really poisoned his advice entirely. I am sure he didn't realize what he said was such poor advice for me, and he had good intentions. Just because AA might have worked for many people to resolve most of their issues and problems, many people need "outside help" in addition to AA and dissuading them from seeking it is potentially disastrous.

**If you know someone who's depressed, please resolve never to ask them why. Depression isn't a straightforward response to a bad situation; depression just is, like the weather.**

**Try to understand the blackness, lethargy, hopelessness, and loneliness they're going through. Be there for them when they come through the other side. It's hard to be a friend to someone who's depressed, but it is one of the kindest, noblest, and best things you will ever do.**

**-Stephen Fry**



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# AA's Writing on Mental Health

[Note From Editor: All of the quotes below are taken from AA approved literature]

**Tradition 3:** The only requirement for A.A. membership is a desire to stop drinking. For A.A. is really saying to every serious drinker: "You are an A.A. member if you say so ... No matter who you are, ... no matter how grave your emotional complications ... we ... don't want to keep you out. We just want to be sure that you get the same great chance for sobriety that we've had."

-Twelve & Twelve, Tradition Three, p. 139

Some of us have had to cope with depressions that can be suicidal; schizophrenia that sometimes requires hospitalization; bipolar disorder; and other mental and biological illnesses. ... some members have taken the position that no one in A.A. should take any medication. While this position has undoubtedly prevented relapses for some, it has meant disaster for others. ... A.A. members and many of their physicians have described situations in which depressed patients have been told by A.A.s to throw away the pills, only to have depression return with all its difficulties, sometimes resulting in suicide. ... Unfortunately, by following a layperson's advice, the sufferers find that their conditions can return with all their previous intensity. On top of that, they feel guilty because they are convinced that "A.A. is against pills". It becomes clear that just as it is wrong to enable or support any alcoholic to become readdicted to any drug, it's equally wrong to deprive any alcoholic of medication which can alleviate or control other disabling physical and/or emotional problems.

-Medications & Other Drugs (pamphlet)

One's need for a helping hand is no sign of weakness and no cause for shame. .... In some instances, the conflicting opinions and recommendations of other recovering alcoholics can make it hard for a newcomer seeking good professional help.

-Living Sober, chapter 23, Seeking professional help

Some drugs ... are beneficial when administered by knowledgeable physicians if used solely as directed. ... As A.A. members – not physicians – we are certainly not qualified to ... advise anyone not to take a prescribed medication.

-Living Sober, chapter 21, Avoiding dangerous drugs and medications



*When it was dark, you  
always carried the sun  
in your hand for me.*

*-Sean O'Casey*



## BY THE ARCHIVES COMMITTEE

*"Do good and talk about it."*

Archives Ottawa is working hard and anxious for members to see Ottawa AA's history via the changing presentation board we present at the various annual local functions. For another, this Archives Corner, will be presenting the histories of local groups over the next few months. The recent July entry was about the Vanier Roundup and in this August OPP issue the Orleans Hub group is featured. August being the Hub's anniversary month.

### ***Here then is a brief history of the first A.A. meeting in Orleans.***

The "Hub" Group initially started August 2, 1979. The name "Orleans HUB" was chosen, because all the members came from various parts of Orleans to meet at this "HUB". At the August 9th meeting, approximately 65 people attended; Father Tom M. gave his message and the Orleans Hub Group was officially born.

In 1980 the first of many moves began, from the Old Fire hall, to

a School Library, to the land-mark Church on St Joseph Boulevard, to a School Gymnasium, to the Queenswood Heights CC, and finally to its current location, the Roy Hobbs Community Centre.

The Group came close to folding four times. Up until the mid 90's, founding members Gwen B. and John L. along with Dave F., Doug M., Teresa and Owen (the big "O") kept the HUB meeting alive. During the 90's and into the 2000's there were many, in fact far too many, challenges to conquer. Members like Terry B., Doug M., John L., Neil MacD., Bill U., Randy M., Peter F., Don S., Bob G., Grant H., Lucille G., Joe DK., among others, steadied the group. "Longtimers" showing the power of example attracted many newcomers, young and old, including other longtimers.

Today the Orleans Hub Group is strong and growing. Service work has always been a commitment for the HUB Group and over the years service work included such areas as: the Detox centre, the Royal Ottawa Hospital, the jails in Ottawa, Brockville and Gatineau, Grapevine Promotion, District 54 GS committees, TAS duties and active involvement at the Intergroup level.

Of the 9 founding members, two have moved to Vancouver Island, one to Nova Scotia, one, sadly has passed on, 3 are still active in Ottawa and we've lost track of 2.

Vibrant speaker meetings, a solid AA message, monthly AA anniversaries, in addition of newcomers makes this AA Group a "must place to be" on Thursday nights.

The HUB is celebrating its 38 year anniversary the last Thursday of August, 2017.

## THOUGHTS ON AN INTERGROUP EMPLOYEE FOR OTTAWA

### BY JEAN F., INTERGROUP CHAIR

This fall, the Intergroup Board will present an Intergroup employee options paper to Intergroup Reps for their consideration. In an increasingly complex world with higher expectations than ever before, having an employee would address several challenges currently facing Ottawa's ability to carry the message.

There is currently no way of knowing if a volunteer does not show up during the day. An employee would know when this happens and would have a list of people they could call to help out either at the office or remotely. Literature would continue to be sold, and a friendly face would be there to greet any newcomers or family members who visit the AA office for the first time.

It appears that the Intergroup printers are being used for non-AA purposes. Toners cost over a hundred dollars and we replace them

every month. A printer is required to print out literature orders, but the toners should not be drained so quickly.

The treasurer's job is substantial between monitoring literature sales and inventory, depositing checks, reviewing and paying bills (rent, Bell, McNabb rent, literature, office supplies, cleaning, insurance and so on), preparing financial statements, reconciling the bank account, working the the spring and fall conference treasurers, submitting HST, preparing documents for a non-profit corporation income tax submission, responding to questions by an auditor, filing financial records, having a backup of online financial transactions, analyzing statements to identify items of concern – this is a significant amount of work for one volunteer.

We do not have a consistent corporate memory of what has happened in the past at Intergroup. Often the same issues come up every couple of years because no one person has all the knowledge. It is unrealistic to expect an intergroup board to read all Intergroup minutes going back many years. An employee would have the experience and be able to advise new board members.

These problems would not be perfectly solved by an employee, but they would be reduced significantly. I believe we owe it to the still suffering alcoholic to have an employee on a trial basis at least.



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# GROUP ANNOUNCEMENTS

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- The Stepping Ahead Group, which meets Tuesday night at 8:30 will be having our meeting at another location for July and August due to renovations at its regular site.

Temporary location is 1485 Duford Street, Queenswood Heights Community Hall, Ottawa.

- The Hub Group will temporarily be meeting at a new location. For the period July 6 2017 to August 24 2017.

The new location is Aquaview Community Hall, 318 Aquaview Drive, Orleans.

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## Starting August 4th, 2017



**At 7pm**

**Westboro Step Sisters Meeting  
All Saints Church, 347 Richmond Rd  
Entrance off Madison Rd**

**WOMEN'S CLOSED DISCUSSION  
STEP MEETING**

Ottawa Area Intergroup of  
Alcoholics Anonymous 

## “GREETING CARD CONTEST”

Deadline: October 6, 2017

Some ~~Rules~~ Suggestions ~~May~~ Will Apply

CONGRATULATIONS !!!



THINK, THINK, THINK

### OTTAWA AREA INTERGROUP “GREETING CARD CONTEST” SUGGESTIONS AND REGULATIONS

The “Greeting Card Contest” is sponsored by the Ottawa Area Intergroup of Alcoholics Anonymous, and is in no way sponsored by, endorsed by, administered by, or associated with the General Service Office of Alcoholics Anonymous (GSO).

#### WHO CAN PARTICIPATE

The “Greeting Card Contest” is open to all members of Alcoholics Anonymous. Ottawa Area Intergroup Board Members, employees, as well as the immediate family (spouse, parents, siblings, and children) of board members or employees, are not eligible to enter.

#### WHAT TO ENTER

Pick a theme below, create a greeting card that speaks to that theme and submit it. You can submit as many cards as you like, but each card can only be submitted against one theme:

1. Birthday (AA)
2. Steps & Traditions
3. Slogans
4. Sympathy
5. Prayer & Meditation
6. Thank You

Entries may originate in any format – including, but not limited to digital files, – so long as they are submitted electronically in .pdf format.

Entries may include captions as well, and not contain any copyright materials.

### *HOW TO ENTER*

All entries must be submitted to Intergroup in .pdf format to [info@ottawaaa.org](mailto:info@ottawaaa.org) and include the name and email address of the person and/or group submitting the entry and clearly state the category, or categories, for which each entry is being submitted.

### *VOTING*

All entries will be displayed for viewing in the hospitality suite at the 2017 Eastern-Ontario Regional Fall Conference. Ballots will be made available for voting at the conference and must be dropped in the ballot box provided, no later than 3:00 pm. Saturday, October 21st, 2017.

Voting will be open to all AA Members attending the conference. When voting, members will be asked to consider the overall impact and relevance of each card to carry the spirit of AA's 12-Step message of recovery, under the category for which it was submitted.

### *WINNERS*

Winners will be announced at the Eastern-Ontario Regional Fall Conference on Sunday October 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2017.

First Place winners will be given a full set of the 2017 Eastern-Ontario Regional Fall Conference event CD's.

Second and Third Place winners will be given two of the latest publications from *The Grapevine*.

### *ENTRY PERIOD*

Entries must be received no later than October 6<sup>th</sup>, 2017 11:59 p.m. EST.

### *ELIGIBILITY*

By submitting an entry, entrants certify that their participation in this "*Greeting Card Contest*" is not illegal, or in violation of any law, regulation, treaty or administrative act, and that the laws of their governing jurisdiction of residence at the time of entry, do not prohibit or restrict the receipt of any gift(s) of thanks under this "*Greeting Card Contest*".

### *YOUR RIGHTS*

If you submit an entry to the "*Greeting Card Contest*" you grant the Ottawa Area Intergroup of Alcoholics Anonymous a royalty-free, non-exclusive right for the express purpose of raising money to help carry the AA message.

Last names will be held in strictest of confidence in accordance with AA's tradition of anonymity.



Ottawa Area Intergroup of  
Alcoholics Anonymous

Save this date!

66<sup>th</sup> Eastern Ontario  
Fall Conference

October 20<sup>th</sup> – 22<sup>nd</sup> ,  
2017

at

Hellenic Meeting & Reception  
Centre,

1315 Prince of Wales Drive, Ottawa,  
ON K2C 1N2



All we need is the key

Discussion meetings, panels, banquet and dance

Info: [fall@ottawaaa.org](mailto:fall@ottawaaa.org)