



# DISTRICT DISTRICT NOVEMBER

# SIX SIX

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Box 459

News and notes from the General Service Office of AA  
Vol. 15 No. 6 Holiday Issue 1970

## Celebrating Holidays the A.A. Way

When Joe raised his hand at a discussion meeting last week, the leader called on him.

"I'm a new member," Joe said, "as you all know sober only a few months."

"Although I try to stick to the 24-hour plan, I keep wondering about my birthday, Thanksgiving, Christmas and New Year's Eve. In the past I always drank myself stupid. What do A.A.'s do about the holidays?"

A cheerful murmur of recognition arose in the room, and at least a dozen folks who had faced the very same problem raised their hands.

Joe made a list of all their suggestions and experience. He shared it with us so we can share it with you. Here 'tis:

1. Holiday Alkathons. Round the-clock sessions co-sponsored by several groups, alternating various kinds of A.A. meetings with refreshments and sometimes entertainment. Everybody welcome to drop in. Some groups keep a buffet loaded with holiday food.
2. Plan extra-meetings. Visit groups you've never seen.
3. Take someone newer than you are to each meeting you attend, and speak first to a stranger at each group.
4. Accept an extra A.A. chore or two telephone duty, dish-washing, leading or speaking at a meeting, or visiting alcoholics in a hospital or a jail.
5. Try to remember it is more important to give time, love and kind thoughts than it is to give lavish presents.
6. Twelfth Step work.
7. Don't work up holiday worries in advance. Remember: "One Day (or Hour) at a Time."
8. Don't get too tired or too hungry, and try not to be alone. Go where other A.A.'s are.
9. Carry the Grapevine and an A.A. pamphlet with you to read at odd moments.
10. Avoid any drinking occasions you are nervous about. (Use

some of those excuses you used to use, remember?) But if you have to go, eat first; arrive late; keep candy handy; drink a sweet soft drink; and make some excuse to leave early. If possible, take an A.A. member with you.

Dear AA's

To all our friends in every A.A. land, Lois and I send our warmest holiday greetings. At this time of year, each of us in A.A. feels a closer kinship, a special sense of gratitude for God's grace and blessings in our lives. In the year to come, let its be worthy of continuing to receive the incomparable gifts that have been ours.

Bill

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## Too busy, too important

When I sobered up in October of 1987, I heard the following many times, "meeting makers make it". While this is very true, there is another important aspect to AA that is just as important and that is the steps and a conscious contact with a higher power.

The first 15 years of my sobriety I had all three. Life got really good with a great marriage to a wonderful woman I met on the AA campus, two wonderful kids, a great career and consistently working on my program. At about 16 years, my meeting attendance started to slip, instead of 4 to 5 meetings a week I was down to 1 or 2 a week and eventually none a week. The gifts of my sobriety had come before my sobriety. This wasn't a conscious decision, I didn't wake up one day and say "Well, I have my disease licked, I can stop working on program and praying". I had become complacent and as fellow member Katie says, "I got too busy and important". Eventually the weeks turned into years, workaholicism had taken the place of my alcoholism.

As the years passed, I would run into some AA members from time to time and some would even stop by my house. "How you been doing" they would ask and my response was always "I am so busy!". Eventually I started becoming agitated at

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small things like standing in line at the grocery store, irritated with the person in front of me and a bevy of other things. To be honest, everything irritated me. I was restless, irritable and discontent. Anxiety was ruling my life and I didn't have a solution for it.

About 4 years ago I hit an emotional bottom that was worse than my drinking bottom. An AA friend has called me to come chair a meeting and while hesitant because of the shame and guilt of not having been to a meeting for so long I went and did it. The gift of desperation had worked again.

Since then I have become willing to go to any lengths again. I have a home group and have a job in that group, I have a sponsor who has worked the steps with me and I do my readings daily in Daily Reflections and As Bill Sees It. I pray each day morning and throughout the day and review my day at night. I practice praying when agitated now. I go to no less than 3 meetings a week and love to go on commitments and I am planning on going through the Big Book with my sponsor soon. By the grace of God I am "Back on the beam" living in the solution! God I am "Back on the beam" living in the solution!

John A

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Box 459

News and Notes from the General Service Office of A.A.

Vol. 65, No. 2 / Summer 2019

### **Sponsorship: "That Which We Give Away, We Keep"**

"Every sponsor is necessarily a leader," wrote Bill W. in *The Language of the Heart* (p. 292). "The stakes are huge," he continued. "A human life, and usually the happiness of a whole family, hangs in the balance. What the sponsor does and says, how well he estimates the reactions of his prospects, how well he times and makes his presentation, how well he handles criticisms, and how well he leads his prospect on by personal spiritual example — well, these attributes of leadership can make all the difference, often the difference between life and death."

The General Service Conference has focused on the timeless topic of sponsorship over the years, and the following excerpts from past Conference presentations provide a window into this enduring aspect of carrying the message from one alcoholic to another. Vera M. from southwest Ohio shared this about sponsorship: "When I came to A.A., nobody asked me to meet any specifications: they just accepted me as I was, with love. My first sponsor treated me with compassion, which, I believe, means with gratitude. She understood that sponsor and sponsee meet as equal people."

"Sponsorship is important to ensure that A.A. will continue," said Dorothy M. of southern Indiana. "My sponsor was there to suggest the things I needed to do to stay sober. She was there to answer the questions I had about the program. She was there to explain the Steps and to help me work through them. She was there when I had no mind to think with. She was there to think for me. She was there with the kind of quality sobriety that I wanted. She was there to show me how to

achieve quality sobriety. She was responsible."

Herb M., who served as A.A.W.S. board member in the 1960s, put it this way: "That which we give away we keep. That which we keep we lose. Such is the basis of our responsibility — to pass on to another alcoholic the message of love and understanding that made our own sobriety possible.... There has been unanimous agreement among us that the very substance of our sobriety lies in our willingness and our readiness to share this recovery experience with another." Describing the privilege and responsibility that goes along with sponsorship in A.A., Peter W., a past Eastern Canada regional trustee, highlighted the fundamental role sponsorship plays in the Fellowship: "A.A. had its origin in the principle of sponsorship — the need we have for one another."

Describing the privilege and responsibility that goes along with sponsorship in A.A., Peter W., a past Eastern Canada regional trustee, highlighted the fundamental role sponsorship plays in the Fellowship: "A.A. had its origin in the principle of sponsorship — the need we have for one another. This principle is equally as valid today as when Bill carried the message to Dr. Bob. The world of alcoholism has changed, will continue to change. But our need for one another remains as vital today as it was in Akron in 1935. The privilege of being a sponsor insures our sobriety. It also helps us function effectively in recovery by recognizing the needs of others. It enables us to find within ourselves a response to those needs.... Sponsorship is woven intricately through our Legacies. To deny it could weaken our Fellowship.... Bill calls it 'the language of the heart.' It transcends the appearance and the personality of the individual and goes directly to the soul. Sponsorship is the silent legacy of our Fellowship, given to us by those who went before us. It can spell the difference between survival and stagnation."

In closing, Peter noted, "To love the lovable requires very little effort, but you and I are called upon to love the unlovable, to help that person become lovable. Can you think of any greater responsibility? Can you think of any better way to do it than sponsorship?"

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### **What Is Step 4:**

"Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves."

### **What Is the Purpose of This Step:**

Begin to determine the cause of our drinking. We will examine our emotional problems in order to prepare ourselves for a life of sobriety. Be honest about our moral defects: They can give us insight into why we started drinking in the first place.

Accept that the problem is within ourselves and drop the word "blame" from our vocabulary:

We and we alone are responsible for our behaviors.

Work closely with our sponsor: They will share their defects with us, too, for comfort and security.

Examples of What Would Go on a Moral Inventory:

"We lie to the people we care about, and it's hurt them."

"We are power hungry, and boast about our achievements."

"We have alienated those around us by our selfishness."





The Emmet Fox Corner  
With Michael G

## PRAYER

*We are not cured of alcoholism. What we really have is a daily reprieve contingent on the maintenance of our spiritual condition." Big Book, page 85*

We noted last month that Emmet Fox's writings formed the basis for many of the ideas found in the Big Book, particularly with regard to the spiritual aspects of our program. This column provides brief excerpts from Emmet Fox's writings. We encourage questions and comments. This month's excerpt is from Emmet Fox's book "Sparks of Truth".

*"Prayer is the only real action in the full sense of the word, because prayer is the only thing that changes one's character. A change in character, or a change in soul, is a real change. When that kind of change takes place, you become a different person and, therefore, for the rest of your life you act in a different way from the way in which you have previously acted, and in which you would have continued to act had you not prayed. In other words, you become a different person. The amount of difference may be only very slight for each time that you pray: nevertheless it is there, for you cannot pray without making yourself different in some degree." Emmet Fox, Sparks of Truth*

Just how important is prayer for a program of recovery? Bill Wilson thought it was important enough to reference it over 300 times in the Big Book. He writes:

*"Step Eleven suggests prayer and meditation. We shouldn't be shy on this matter of prayer. Better men than we are using it constantly. It works, if we have the proper attitude and work at it. It would be easy to be vague about this matter." Big Book pgs. 85, 86*

I have had some AA's tell me that they prefer to substitute meditation for prayer. Note that Step 11 says prayer and meditation not prayer or meditation. There is no wiggle room, if you accept all of the suggestions offered in the Big Book that means that you are praying every day. Prayer is a cornerstone of our daily reprieve. A big stumbling block for some might be that they are confusing spirituality with religion. Some perspective can be found in the personal story: "A Drunk like You".

*"The last big hurdle was closing the meeting with the Lord's Prayer. As a Jew, I was uncomfortable with it and decided to talk to my sponsor about it. So I said, "The Lord's Prayer bothers me. I don't like closing with it." "Oh," he said, "what's the problem?" "Well, I'm Jewish and it's not a Jewish prayer." "Well then, he said "say it in Jewish." I said, "It would still be the Lord's Prayer." "Right," he said. "Then say something else that you like. Your Higher Power, whatever you call it, is helping you, and you need to say thank you."*

That was a big step for me; I finally began to separate the religious aspects of my life from A.A.'s spiritual program. Now the big difference to me is that religion is the ritual, and we all differ there, and spirituality is the way we feel about what we

do. It's about my personal contact with my personal Higher Power, as I understand Him.

Emmet Fox taught that prayer is the only thing that changes the quality of the soul. Any other activity may make a quantitative change in the soul by adding experience or by extending one's fund of knowledge; but it does not change the quality. Only prayer does that, and it is the quality of one's soul that determines his destiny.

No prayer is ever wasted.

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## MY GSR EXPERIENCE

I will preface this article by saying that my first thought is reluctance, just as it has been almost every time someone asks me to do something outside of my comfort zone, like speaking at a meeting. The initial feeling of self-centered fear is always so loud in my thoughts.

My name is Mike and I am an alcoholic. I am coming to the end of my term as the Bath Group General Service Representative, better known as GSR. Our group is served by District 6. This was my first experience in service above the group level since I put the drink down back in 1991. This has also been a very rewarding and gratifying experience.

My last drink was on December 1, 1991. My very first AA meeting was the Stratford Men's Group located in Stratford CT. I could never have predicted the life that I now have while riding in the back of that Guenster Rehabilitation van one night back in December of 1991. With God's grace, the friendships and the sponsors I have found in AA, I have not had to experience a life full of booze again.

In 2008, after the loss of a 25-year job and the end of 12-year relationship I decided that I would move to Maine. For many years I could only dream of living in a state that I loved more than my home state. I watched this dream disappear countless times as I drowned my sorrows in alcohol.

In 2017 my wife and I moved from Raymond to Woolwich due to a job change. I struggled for a few months with self-centered fear as I tried to take the suggestions from my friend and sponsor Ken O. that I get a new home group, a new sponsor and a job in the home group. I had my eye on this guy George B. to ask to be my sponsor. He was attending a lot of meetings that I was going to, and he always talked about service.

In May of 2017, I attend the Friday night Bath Group meeting for the first time, not only was George at this meeting but it was also business meeting night. I am sure it was a nudge from God that happened next, because as I heard the announcement that the Group was still looking for a GSR my hand shot right up.

I at first could not understand why I was being led in this direction. After all these years staying away from a drink by attending meetings, having a sponsor and friendships, living the steps in my life and my involvement in the home group was enough, so I thought. God has a bigger plan and I don't always get to see it before I try it!





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My journey at first as a GSR seemed intolerable. I found myself wanting to interject my opinion and sometimes disagreement at the monthly district meeting. I was truly humbled one day when George informed me that I was only a messenger. My job was only to bring the groups message to the District and Area meetings and to bring information from the District and Area back to the groups. Not only did I suffer ego-deflation at that moment but also felt a sense of relief.

At my very first Area 28 committee meeting as standing committee assignments were being announced and folks started going to the various committee meetings, I noticed Pete T. sitting alone. No one had gone over to his meeting. I had known Pete for a while as he was bringing the Area 28 Archives display around to our Home Group in Casco for several years while I attended meetings in District 17. I was not only fascinated with his knowledge of Maine AA, but the displays intrigued me. I have since been an active member of the Area 28 Archives committee and spent many hours helping down at the Portland Central Service office with the Archives collection. Service, the one word that holds the key to my continued contented sobriety.

I know that service is not always something that I want to do and often find myself reluctant. I do know that if I pause and invite God in, I will see parts of the bigger picture that God has already in place for me. I also know that my self-centered fear will hold me captive every time the thought even occurs to me that I might be of more service to more AA's outside of my home group (or interpreted as outside of my comfort zone).

I would be lying to you if I told you I love sitting in a gymnasium for 12 hours on a Saturday when I could be out enjoying this beautiful State of Maine. I have come to learn what the benefits of being involved in service outside of the home group have been and will continue to be to me in my life and sobriety.

I have met so many wonderful folks and continue to meet. I know that the Groups are the lifeblood of the Program and Fellowship, and that the General Service Office on down to the Districts are there to serve the Groups, not the other way around. The GSR is the conduit of all of that. This was an introduction into a side of AA I would have never seen otherwise, and all those folks that give so unselfishly of themselves to serve others in AA.

Personally, I have found that I have more patience and tolerance than I have ever had. I have learned what it is to love others despite my disagreements with them, as they are there, like me, to serve others. I have found that it is okay to disagree and get along with others at the same time. I have truly learned what the term Principles over Personalities really means.

Mike S

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### Step 10

As part of step 10, Alcoholics Anonymous suggests that we do daily and periodic reviews. The daily review means that we set

aside time each day to meditate or constructively review our day. Were we resentful, dishonest or afraid? Do we owe anyone an apology for something we've done or said that day? What could we do better tomorrow? While carrying out our daily review, be careful to avoid slipping into worry, remorse or fear. It is not about beating ourselves up. Step 10 is about being aware of our actions and their consequences.

The periodic review is basically taking stock of where we are and what we need to do to ensure we stay on the path to recovery. The periodic review is similar to the daily review in that you ask yourself the same questions, but rather than reflect on the previous 24 hours, we're looking back over a month or more.

Each year, take stock of promises made in previous steps. If there are any that we have not kept, then this is the time to rectify that wrong.

Step 10 keeps our house clean and is not about being perfect. Everyone makes mistakes, but owning up to them settles conflict before it can fester and become blown out of proportion. The tenth step of Alcoholics Anonymous is a natural progression from step 9, where we make amends. Step 10 helps you to keep our commitment to better behavior by serving as a motivator to act in a manner that doesn't require us to owe any apologies. Essentially, accomplishing step 10 means you've worked hard to be the person you want to be.

Alcoholics Anonymous is a program that helps alcoholics build a solid foundation for long term recovery from our disease. The 12 steps of the program each provide another brick in that foundation.

Anonymous



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"We bring down others with our self-loathing and shame"

"We are self-righteous and judgmental of others."

"We are ill-tempered, and we have taken our anger out on our family and friends."

### What Are Some Tips for Completing Step 4?

Don't hold back: We won't benefit from this step, or AA, if we don't own up to our shortcomings.

Trust ourselves and our sponsor remember, we are more than our mistakes.

### Be thorough and write down our inventory:

This will be the first tangible evidence of our recovery.

### What Are Some Myths About This Step?

This step is meant to tear you down: Members who complete this step say they feel a newfound confidence once they've finally faced themselves. They are ready to start the next chapter of their lives as sober and better versions of themselves.

(Remember in Step 3 we "Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood Him.")

Anonymous



pg 5 As of 10/11/19	Approved 2019 Budget	2019 YTD Actual
<b>District Income</b>		
Group Contributions	\$ 3,050.00	\$ 2,928.17
7th Tradition	\$ 300.00	\$ 209.25
Function Events	\$ 750.00	\$ 665.00
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>\$ 4,100.00</b>	<b>\$ 3,802.42</b>
<b>District Officer Expenses</b>		
Chair	\$ 600.00	\$ 12.94
NERASSA (Chair)		\$ 585.24
DCM-1 OPEN	\$ 400.00	\$ -
DCM-2 OPEN	\$ 350.00	\$ -
DCM-3 OPEN	\$ 350.00	\$ -
Treasurer	\$ 40.00	\$ -
PO Box	\$ 88.00	\$ -
Secretary		
Printing & Supplies	\$ 200.00	\$ -
Grapevine subscription SF		
Donation Bath United Methodist		
<b>Sub-Total</b>	<b>\$ 2,028.00</b>	<b>\$ 598.18</b>
<b>District Standing Committees</b>		
Archives OPEN	\$ 25.00	\$ -
Bridging the Gap	\$ 50.00	\$ -
Corrections OPEN	\$ 50.00	\$ -
CSO/Intergroup Liason OPEN	\$ 30.00	\$ -
Functions Committee	\$ 750.00	\$ 718.27
Grapevine OPEN	\$ 30.00	\$ -
Hotline	\$ 25.00	\$ -
Love and Service	\$ 25.00	\$ -
Meeting Lists	\$ 50.00	\$ -
PI/CPC	\$ 25.00	\$ -
Web Site	\$ 376.00	\$ 325.64
Newsletter	\$ -	\$ 13.78
<b>Sub-Total</b>	<b>\$ 1,436.00</b>	<b>\$ 1,057.69</b>
<b>Operating Expenses</b>		
Use of Space, fka Rent	\$ 120.00	\$ 120.00
Insurance	\$ 500.00	\$ 500.00
Literature		
Printing Costs		
<b>Sub-Total</b>	<b>\$ 620.00</b>	<b>\$ 620.00</b>
<b>Total Budgeted Expenses :</b>	<b>\$ 4,084.00</b>	<b>\$ 2,275.87</b>
<b>Surplus/(Shortfall)</b>	<b>\$ 16.00</b>	<b>\$ 1,526.55</b>

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District Six Business Meetings are the second Friday of the Month. Any financial questions can be asked by emailing: treasurer@aamainedistrict6.org

## Your D6 Elected Servants

Chair Katie  
DCM's (open)  
Treasurer (open)  
Secretary Crystal  
CSO Liaison- Jason  
Literature (open)  
Grapevine (open)  
Website-Deb  
Newsletter-George  
Archives- (open)  
Functions (open)  
Corrections (open)  
BTG- (open)

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## Your Area 28 Panel 70

Nikki Delegate D6  
Peter Alt Delegate D21  
Dan Chair District 17  
Forrest Alt Chair D24  
Dennis Secretary D14  
Rudy Alt Secretary D4  
John Treasurer D14  
Gene Alt Treasurer D12  
Allen Registrar D21

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## Functions Schedule D-6

Gratitude Day  
Nov 28, 2019  
UMC  
340 Oak Grove Ave  
Bath, ME  
Fellowship 1:00/1:30  
Dinner 1:30  
Meeting 3 to 4

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Christmas  
Potluck /Alcathon  
12/24/ 5pm - 12/25/5pm  
Bath Recreation Dept.

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New Year's Eve  
Potluck/Meeting /Dance  
12/ 31, 5 pm-1/1 12:30 am  
Topsham Fairground

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## Slogans

easy does it  
first things first  
live and let live  
but for the grace of god  
think.....think.....think  
one day at time  
let go and let God



## AA PREAMBLE

Alcoholics Anonymous is a fellowship of men and women who share their experience, strength and hope with each other that they may solve their common problem and help others to recover from alcoholism. The only requirement for membership is a desire to stop drinking. There are no dues or fees for A.A. membership; we are self-supporting through our own contributions. A.A. is not allied with any sect, denomination, politics, organization or institution; does not wish to engage in any controversy, neither endorses nor opposes any causes. Our primary purpose is to stay sober and help other alcoholics to achieve sobriety.

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That one liner 'I'm not drinking too much tonight' never goes as planned...

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## Cryptogram:

GYGJZN SYKJ AJ OJF Y  
DJGOCF XYUZ ASC SYO  
ESCGCLISZN XCZZCAJP CLG  
DYES. ESCOJ ASC PC FCE  
GJBCKJG YGJ DJCDZJ ASC  
BYFFCE CG AUZZ FCE BCR-  
DZJEJZN IUKJ ESJROJZKJO  
EC ESUO OURDZJ DGCIGYR

And here is your hint: N = Y

Last month's answer:  
It is a spiritual axiom that every time we are disturbed, no matter what the cause, there is something wrong with us

### 'Angel of mercy'

#### Sister Mary Ignatia helped pioneer treatment, care for alcoholics.

These days, any hospital admissions director caught admitting patients under false diagnoses, hiding them in odd corners and dosing them with fruit juice and dark Karo syrup would be let go, perhaps arrested and possibly even ushered to the psychiatric unit for observation.

But in the mid-1930s, Sister Mary Ignatia was doing what she felt she had to do for the alcoholics of Akron, Ohio. They were a vilified group. Alcoholism wasn't yet a recognized medical diagnosis, and those suffering from it were thought to lack morals or willpower. They were no more welcome in hospitals than anywhere else.

Sister Ignatia was one of the earliest to recognize that alcoholics needed a place to sober up and start to recover. Her illicit patients (whom she not only admitted but counseled and cared for, despite a lack of formal training in either nursing or counseling) were the first beneficiaries of a personal ministry that later became a specialty unit for treating alcoholism at St. Thomas Hospital in Akron, then operated by the Sisters of Charity of St. Augustine. It was the first such unit in the country, and the first recognition that alcoholics often needed hospital treatment for their illness.

For this pioneering work, Sister Ignatia is known as the "Angel of Alcoholics Anonymous" and has been admitted into the Health Care Hall of Fame.

Bridget Della Mary Gavin was born in Ireland in 1889 and came to the U.S. with her family when she was about 7 years old. As a small child, she had seen alcoholics in Ireland and had been afraid of them. "She always felt that drunkenness was an offense to God," says Amy Filiatreau, the archive director of Alcoholics Anonymous. "It had been so ingrained into her by her mother that she couldn't stand even the word 'drunk.' " But her mother also taught her to pray for alcoholics. In time, and despite her aversion, she would do much more than that.

She graduated from Notre Dame University with a degree in music, and entered the Sisters of Charity in 1914 as Sister Mary Ignatia. She taught music for many years, giving piano lessons and organizing a student band and orchestra.

It was strenuous work. Sister Ignatia was tiny—about 100 pounds—and physically frail despite the feistiness that later made her central life's work possible. She also had emotional problems and had suffered what was then called a "nervous breakdown." To protect her health, the order reassigned her to then-new St. Thomas Hospital in Akron in 1928, where she was in charge of admitting. Shortly after arriving, she struck up an acquaintance with physician Robert Smith, later one of the founders of Alcoholics Anonymous, and became a close friend.

She found an unmet need at St. Thomas. By 1934, in cahoots with emergency room intern Thomas Scuderi, she was moving ill alcoholics who came to the ER to an anteroom across from the hospital chapel, to let them sober up before putting them back on the street. To help them through delirium tremens (and to keep them from disturbing hospital patients and drawing attention to themselves), Scuderi would give them morphine. When they awoke, Sister Ignatia would ply them with black coffee and the juice-Karo concoction, which was thought at the time to be a calming mixture.

As the person in sole charge of assigning beds, Sister Ignatia was in a position to control who went where, and she soon took the next logical step: She admitted her first inpatient for alcoholism treatment with a diagnosis of "acute gastritis." One "gastritis" patient led to another. By admitting them between shifts, Sister Ignatia evaded the immediate objections of the nursing supervisor, but soon she was

making enemies among the nursing staff.

"No one wanted the alcoholic patients because they were noisy," says Sister Mary Patricia Barrett, assistant to the president and chief executive officer of the Sisters of Charity Health System, and the one who nominated Sister Ignatia for Hall of Fame recognition. "The nurses would complain to the sister in charge, but Sister Ignatia always seemed to win out."

By 1939, Smith and Sister Ignatia had persuaded the hospital's long-suffering management to establish an official ward for recovering alcoholics, where they would be introduced to the principles of the recently formed Alcoholics Anonymous. The ward was secluded from other patient-care areas so that the patients wouldn't disturb the rest of the hospital, and so that they could receive private counseling and support from AA volunteers. It was Sister Ignatia who introduced the custom of giving tokens to recovering alcoholics to mark their sobriety—she gave patients in the alcoholic ward a Sacred Heart medal to remind them of their commitment not to drink.

The ward lives on at St. Thomas (now owned by Summa Health) as Ignatia Hall, a six-bed inpatient detox unit supported by an intensive outpatient program. Scuderi went on to be medical director of Ignatia Hall for a number of years.

In 1952, Sister Ignatia was transferred to St. Vincent Charity Hospital in Cleveland, where she established an alcohol treatment unit that she called Rosary Hall Solarium, the initials of which were a tribute to Robert H. Smith. Even then, alcoholism wasn't a recognized disease—that shift wouldn't happen until the mid-1960s—and patients were admitted under the guise of "vitamin deficiency." They were treated with castor oil, vitamin injections and a membership to AA. The caseload quickly soared to more than 1,000 patients a year.

Sister Barrett was a social worker at St. Vincent's toward the end of Sister Ignatia's career there. She remembers an intrepid woman who was shy about public speaking but worked tirelessly not only with alcoholics but with their families, early in the development of Al-Anon. "She was wheelchair-bound right before her retirement, but she would still go over to the ward," Sister Barrett says.

Sister Ignatia retired in 1965 and passed away a year later at the age of 77.

Rosary Hall continues today as a substance-abuse treatment center, with a 16-bed inpatient unit and extensive outpatient services based on a 12-step philosophy of abstinence and recovery that treats drug addicts as well as alcoholics. Part of Cleveland's East 22nd Street, where St. Vincent's is located, bears the honorary designation "Sr. Ignatia Way."

According to her biographer, 15,000 alcoholics recovered under the direct care of Sister Ignatia, and she personally helped another 60,000 family members of alcoholics. Those helped indirectly by Sister Ignatia—by people she had helped or through programs inspired by her work—number in the millions.

But the need for her mission lives on as well, says Alexa Eggleston, director of public policy for the National Council for Community Behavioral Healthcare, which advocates for better treatment options for those addicted to alcohol and drugs.

"We're still fighting this battle how many years later?" she says. While 2.5 million people seek treatment for alcoholism every year, according to government statistics, an estimated 20 million more need treatment and don't get it.

"Alcohol is the drug of choice for so many," Eggleston says. "There's renewed interest in catching people before they move to the end stage of addiction, and in educating the primary-care physicians so that they're connecting people to the kind of care Sister Ignatia fought for."

Elizabeth G, MHC