

Queens Intergroup of Alcoholics Anonymous Newsletter

2nd Quarter 2021

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How The AA Groups in Queens Withstood Covid-19

AA groups throughout Queens deployed several tactics to overcome the closure of most meetings. Two of the most common ways were to go virtual via Zoom or to go outside for in-person meetings. The following two articles depict in detail the various methods employed. The first article shows how the virtual method was used while the second article shows a more traditional approach utilized.

Zoom Babies

As a result of the Pandemic, a new trend has developed in AA. We have seen the emergence of "Zoom Babies." You might be asking yourself, "What in tarnation is a Zoom Baby?" Well, I thought you would never ask! I would categorize a "Zoom Baby" as an AA member whose first introduction to AA came via Zoom and who got sober despite never attending an in-person meeting. Take for example a member in my homegroup named Damon who was kind enough to submit the following article:

Hello, my name is Damon and I am an alcoholic. For many years I drank as a so called "functioning alcoholic," but as we in AA already know, alcoholism is a progressive disease. Over the past five years, my drinking became completely unmanageable until I finally hit my rock bottom. Through the Grace of God, my Higher Power, I had an epiphany. I realized that I needed help stopping my downward spiral of alcohol abuse before I lost my job, my family, and ultimately my life to this disease. I already knew of AA to some degree because I had a few friends and family members who got sober and stayed sober in the rooms.

My decision to get sober came during very trying times. COVID-19 was still in full swing and there was no vaccine. Everything was shut down, including all in-person

meetings. I frantically looked for meetings on Zoom in my area and was unable to find anything. I was becoming very discouraged but my need to stop drinking drove me to keep searching. Finally, I got a number to SENY. At least I think that's what it was called, and my life changed right then and there. I spoke with a man who also tried looking in my area (Westchester, NY) for active Zoom meetings. He too was unsuccessful, like me. But as Providence would have it, he sent me an email containing a list of Zoom meetings in Queens, NY. I started jumping into meetings right away and every day. I went to a dozen different meetings with different groups, listening and identifying with multitudes of people from all walks of life and backgrounds. All of us the same in our disease! On January 3rd of 2021, I found my homegroup and by then I already had my sponsor. I was able to get sober and stay sober thanks to AA, my sponsor, and a great homegroup, all because of Zoom. My sober date is December 12, 2020. As I write this, I have 147 days sober. (This was written on May 8, 2021)

Damon's case is not a unique one. I have encountered many other Zoom Babies while attending virtual meetings during the pandemic. It demonstrates the power of the AA message, which can be transmitted traditionally in-person or by means of digital platforms. Not only have Zoom Babies gotten sober, but AA members who were sober before the shutdown have been able to maintain their sobriety. I wouldn't have believed it to be this effective unless I had seen it with my own eyes.

Resiliency of In-Person A.A. Groups

In addition to many groups going virtual during the pandemic to survive, some groups stayed open. Among those that come to mind would be the "Come As You Are" Group, aka "The Alley Pond Park" Group, the "Here's How" Group in Elmhurst, the "Astoria Park Meeting," the "Astoria Rain or Shine" Group, and the "Flushing Bowne Park" Group. Many of these groups employed creative strategies in order to keep the doors of AA open during the Pandemic.

Take for instance, the "Come As You Are" Group aka "Alley Pond Park" Group. By meeting at the Douglaston Plaza under the parking garage in front of the old Movie World they were able to evade the elements while keeping the doors open during the height of the pandemic. This also allowed them to maintain social distancing rules. I found out about this serendipitously, after chatting with Deborah, the Treasurer of QIAA, and Darren, the Institutions Literature Coordinator of QIAA. According to these members of the QIAA Steering Committee, the group met 7 days a week at 6 pm starting on March 4, 2020 through November 1, 2020. From November 2, 2020 through January 1, 2021, they met 4 days a week and from January 2021 through March 2021, they met 6 days a week. Since March 2021 they have been meeting 7 days a week. The 8 original members came to be known as "The Crazy Eight," and some of the members referred the meeting's during the rain location as "Bobby's Batcave." The meeting really took off when Darren started having BBQ's in May 2020 which

spawned into potluck BBQ's.

Other groups that come to mind would be the "Bowne Park" Group which has met every day at 11 am beginning in April 2020 and has continued to meet every day. The "Here's How" Group is another group that continued to meet throughout the crisis on Sunday evenings at 6:30 pm. The "Little Neck Douglaston" Group began having meetings in the parking lot starting July 2020 through October 2020 on Wednesdays & Saturdays at 7:45 pm. Other outside groups that have reopened are the "Astoria Park" Group meeting on Saturday mornings at 9 am (Ditmars & 19th Street under the Hellgate Bridge.) The "Astoria Rain or Shine" Group meets every Sunday at 2 pm for an open format round robin discussion meeting (beside the Astoria Park Track, 14th Place & Astoria Park South.)

How AA Survived & Thrived During the Pandemic

With the closure of in-person meetings worldwide due to COVID-19, AA has been compelled to move into the digital world via Zoom, along with other platforms. However, as evidenced by AA history, the message has not always been transmitted face to face. The following article will clearly illustrate this.

Physically Distanced but Digitally Connected

The Alcoholics Anonymous Message Carries On Amid Coronavirus (COVID-19)

May 11, 2020

Contact: pressinfo@aa.org

A.A. in the digital age has certainly taken on a new meaning in these challenging times. Alcoholics Anonymous is not a place or an event; it exists in the hearts, minds and help freely offered by its members.

Most recently, Coronavirus (COVID-19) has affected many A.A. groups that normally would meet in- person. The General Service Office (G.S.O.) of Alcoholics Anonymous U.S./Canada, which functions as a repository for A.A. members and groups who are looking for shared experience from the A.A. Fellowship, has some general experience to share regarding this issue.

Some A.A. members have shared that meeting online has been an adjustment and has at times had its challenges. Adhering to state/provincial and federal guidelines, many A.A. members have switched from "in person" meetings to digital meetings, on platforms such as *Zoom, Google Hangouts, Conference Calls, GoToMeeting and WhatsApp*, allowing the group to continue to focus on A.A.'s primary purpose: to carry its message of recovery to the alcoholic who still suffers.

In a sense, however, this current experience is not necessarily new for A.A. From its earliest beginnings, the A.A. founders recognized the need to reach beyond the face-to-

face transmission of the A.A. message, giving rise to the development of A.A.'s basic text, the book *Alcoholics Anonymous*. This book and other A.A. materials which are widely available on multiple platforms – digital, audio and video – has literally circled the globe and opened the door to recovery for thousands of alcoholics looking for help. Even prior to this pandemic many A.A. members around the world – whether homebound, living in remote areas, or service members stationed in far-flung places – have counted on participating in A.A. remotely through [A.A. literature](#), phone calls with other members, correspondence by letter or email and meetings online.

While many A.A. members are for the first time reporting the shift from in-person meetings to digital platforms, for many alcoholics around the world, remote connections and digital platforms are how they initially encountered and maintain their recovery in A.A. even prior to the pandemic.

Many A.A. groups have shared with G.S.O. that they are now finding great connection in digital meetings and want to offer that same experience to anyone who has yet to attend their first meeting.

There are a number of other A.A. resources as well and those seeking help with a drinking problem can get local A.A. information through G.S.O.'s website https://www.aa.org/pages/en_US/find-aa-resources or download G.S.O.'s free of charge A.A.W.S. [Meeting Guide App](#).

Another resource is AA Grapevine, the publisher of the International Journal of Alcoholics Anonymous. Its purpose is to provide A.A. member sharing through its magazines (in English and Spanish), websites, audios, and e-books. Members share on topics related to recovery, including recovery on digital platforms. Often referred to as A.A.'s "meeting in print," AA Grapevine communicates the experience, strength and hope of its contributors and reflects a broad geographic spectrum of current A.A. experience. *For more information visit:* <https://www.aagrapevine.org/we-are-here-to-help>

For information on the A.A. Online Intergroup <https://www.aa-intergroup.org/>

Queens Groups who have contributed to Queens Intergroup - 2020

One would think that during the global pandemic that QIAA would be hard-pressed economically. However, the reverse has happened due to the generosity of many groups throughout Queens. The General Fund for QIAA has stayed in the “black” due to the influx of contributions, thanks in part to the following Queens groups:

319 and Tom Marsh50 Group
46th St Group - Sunnyside
A Day at A Time

A Fresh Way to Start the Day
Alley Pond "Come As You Are"
Astoria Group

Back to Basics - Jamaica
Bayside Daytime Recovery
Belle Harbor Group
Bellerose Hope
Best of Times Group
Better Way Group
Bowne Park Bocce Court Group
Catch the Spirit
Church on the Hill
Clearview Group
College Point - Malba
Dumping Grounds
Elm Heights
Flushing Group
Forest Hills Big Book
Forest Hills Workshop
Fresh Way to Start a day
Gift of Desperation - Astoria
Glendale Group
Group 1480
Hardheads
Helping Hand Group
HOW Group - Flushing
It's a New Day
It's the First One
Journey Begins Group
Just Stay Group - Jamaica
Ladies Love and Sharing
Linden - St. Albans
Little Neck - Douglaston
Message on Metro
Middle Village
Midwood Group - Rockaway
Morning on Metro
New Freedom - LIC
New Start
North Queens
Oakland Gardens
Open Mind

Progress Group
Queens Village Group
Rego Park Group
Rich haven Splinter
Ridgewood
Rockaway Beach Group
Rockaway Big Book
Rockaway Clean and Dry
Rosedale Sobriety with Love
Rosedale - Springfield
Roxbury Men's
Serenity Sisters
Singleness of Purpose - Whitestone
Sobriety on 111th Ave
South Ozone Park
Spruce Group - St. Albans
St. Albans Group
Stick with the Winners
St. Mel's
Sunday 11am
Third Step Good Orderly Direction
Today Group
Tradition Group
Uniforms Near the Bay
Unity at 7
Unity at 7 - St. Albans Naval
We Group of Rockaway
Whitestone
Why Not Group
Women in Recovery - Maspeth
Women Living in the Solution (WLITS)
Woodhaven Group
Woodside Keep it Green
Woodside Show Up for Life

Several individuals also sent one-time or recurring contributions. In the spirit of anonymity, they are not identified in this list, but QIAA thanks them as well.

Contributions were also made in honor of deceased individual members and deceased group members.

QIAA also received contributions for which we could not identify the donating individual or group, so if your group is missing from this list, that may be the reason.

Groups are identified by the title provided on the check, money order, or accompanying note.

TOTAL \$25,634

Special thanks to Chelsea M., John Francis B., my sponsee Atif C., and the entire QIAA Steering Committee. If you have any articles that you would like to submit, you may email me at sharseddie@gmail.com Please limit to 1-2 pages and maximum of 2,000 words.