

The OA

STEPPINGSTONE

HAPPY NEW YEAR!!!

JANUARY

Volume 28, No. 1

INTERGROUP 2004—WAS A GOOD YEAR,
2005 WILL BE EVEN BETTER

This past year has been a growing year for the **Baltimore Area Intergroup of Overeaters Anonymous**. We have grown in the numbers of meetings represented each month. We have grown in the services we provide to our meetings. We have grown in our outlook and goals to serve our meetings.

We have a **dedicated group** of 10-13 recovering compulsive overeaters contributing time and talent through the tool of service as Intergroup reps. Compare this to just three or four members attending Intergroup meetings in our recent past. Almost half of the Baltimore Area meetings are now represented.

Our Intergroup has entrusted our officers for another year of service. I have been honored with the position of Chair, and our other officers: Vice-Chair Terri B., Secretary Carol S., and our Treasurer Larry A. will serve again in 2005. Joe Y. and Carol S. will continue to serve as Region Seven Representatives, and Wynne B. has just been elected to join them at the next Region Assembly in April. We will have lots of openings for committee persons, but more on that later.

The Intergroup's purpose, like our meetings and each of us, is to **carry the message of recovery to those in and out of the rooms**. We have been doing that by hosting marathons like "Call Five to Keep 'Em Alive" last May, and "IDEA Day" in November. We print this quarterly newsletter, which begins its 28th year this year. We have expanded our website at www.oabaltimore.org. Did you know you can print meeting lists directly from the website? Check it out!

The Intergroup will expand its services in 2005. We'd also like to expand the Intergroup itself. **Goal #1 is to have each local meeting send an Intergroup rep to Intergroup meetings.**

Are you not sure you can do it or know how? **Take a chance and join in!** The only requirements for an Intergroup rep are open-mindedness, willingness, and a couple hours per month. You'll learn how to be an Intergroup rep by representing a meeting and coming to the Intergroup meetings. We help each other learn these skills and get to practice the spiritual principles embodied in the Twelve Traditions. **Service is slimming in both attitude and body.**

We have other goals:

* **Host** an annual retreat

* **Expand our Sponsor, Speaker, and Night Owl list.** These are lists of people who are willing to sponsor, speak at meetings, and take calls from OA members late at night, respectively.

* **Host Unity Day on February 26**, "Call Five to Keep 'Em Alive" in May, and IDEA Day in November.

* **Start a 12th Step Within committee** that helps members in relapse or who need an extra boost in their recovery

* **Have "Back to Basics"** workshops, a concentrated program where members can work all Twelve Steps in a five-week session.

* **To reach those still suffering** outside of our rooms, we want to expand Public Information and "HIPM" services where we let the public, hospitals, health professionals, institutions, prisons, and the military know about OA.

We can carry the message to so many people who still suffer from compulsive eating, bulimia, anorexia, and other eating disorders!

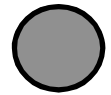
Look for details on these services throughout the year. You can join a special e-mail list to receive e-mails about Intergroup happenings. To join this list, e-mail Intergroup Secretary **Carol S.** at joetztwin@comcast.net.

Come join your friends at the Intergroup meetings and be a part of these very important services that help you, me, and others. **We meet on the third Sunday of each month from 3:30-5:00 p.m. in the Studio room of the Sheppard Pratt Conference Center, 6501 North Charles Street.** Many of us find that our recovery really takes off when we **take a risk** to do something, even a little something for others that we thought we could never do. Intergroup is a perfect opportunity! **Come join us!** Do you have questions? Contact any of the officers, whose e-mail and telephone info are on the back of this newsletter.

Thank you for considering joining our Intergroup. You, we, our fellowship will be all the better because you're a part of it.

—Mike B., Intergroup Chair

WHAT IS BAIG?



My name is Kathy M., and I am a compulsive overeater. I was taught by my first sponsors early in my program years that service is a key that helps unlock the door to recovery in OA. As a result, I have been doing service at the group level and beyond for a long time. At meetings I have done service by chairing a meeting, sharing, being a sponsor, having a sponsor, being abstinent, and working the 12 Steps and 12 Traditions to the best of my ability. I have also served as secretary, treasurer, and contact person for the World Service Office

I have found out by serving in these positions that I am a very capable human being with many gifts and abilities that I didn't know I had or was too afraid to use before program. Working the 12 Steps in my life gave me the confidence to try my hand at these jobs, thus gained self esteem I never had before.

A higher level of service that is vitally important to every OA member in Baltimore and everywhere in the world is that of service at the Inter-

group level. Baltimore Area Intergroup (BAIG) of Overeaters Anonymous provides many services to all local members of which many individuals are possibly unaware. BAIG is the liaison between all the meetings that it serves, and between the meetings and OA World Services in New Mexico. It maintains the list of local meetings (Where And When), the telephone hotline, the internet website, the Steppingstone newsletter, a Speakers list, and a "Night Owls" list.

BAIG provides seed money for new groups to help them with start-up and supports meetings that are struggling or have questions about the Steps and Traditions. It sponsors marathons, retreats, and other special events such as Unity Day in February, and Idea Day in November. It provides public information to the community at large in the form of health care professional mailings, media announcements, staffs community health fairs, and provides speakers whenever requested by businesses and other organizations.

Representatives from BAIG

travel to regional meetings where much recovery is shared along with ideas to make the groups stronger. Service at the Intergroup level has always made my recovery much richer. I have met people from all over the greater Baltimore and Washington area. There are plans to hold a retreat sometime in the next year. It is hoped that fundraising will provide the money necessary to send a delegate to the World Service Business Conference held each May.

BAIG always needs interested members to come and offer service. Each group is entitled to one voting representative at the once-a-month meetings. All members are invited to attend, whether they are a representative or not. The meetings are held on the third Sunday of the month at 3:30 P.M. at The Sheppard Pratt Health Conference Center.

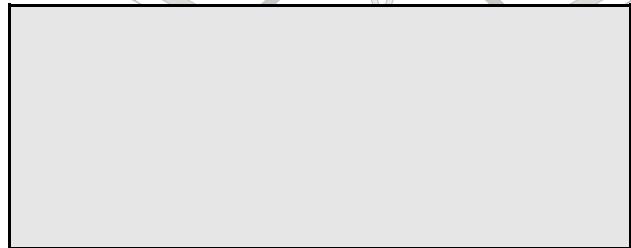
I am always glad I attended each Intergroup meeting as I come away with my program energized and revitalized by the enthusiasm I find in the other attendees. Come and see for yourself!

Greetings fellow compulsive overeaters! Wishing you all an abstinent, healthy, and serene 2005. Thanks for responding to my requests for articles. This is a great issue, filled with great articles as well as exciting events our wonderful Intergroup has in store for us.

Best Regards,
your editor,



The **Baltimore Area Intergroup** hopes your reading this newsletter will strengthen your recovery and allow you to maintain or attain your abstinence from compulsive eating. Please **share by writing** about your experience, strength, and hope for the next issue. Contributions for the next issue are due **APRIL 1st, 2005**.



Heaven & Hell Exists within our Five Foot Bodies

In a letter to a disciple the Buddha said "Heaven and Hell exist within our five foot bodies". For me, the hell which is my food addiction is all about love. I know this because sometimes, in a reverie, I find myself standing at the refrigerator with the door open looking inside and wondering how I got there and for what I am looking.

Its that last question that is so important because the answer invariably is "I'm looking for love". Now I know that love can't be found in the refrigerator hiding behind the mayonnaise. Still I look for it there because the nasty step-child of love, food, can be found there.

You see, what I am really looking for is comfort. I want to feel better about myself as a person. I want to feel better about situations. I want to feel better about problems. When I talk about love, I'm really talking about comfort. [I think that Sarah McLachlan song "Angel", 'In the arms of an angel; may you find some comfort here' is about refrigerators].

Receiving Love

That I look for love/comfort in the refrigerator makes sense in that I always received love through my mouth. As a baby,

when I cried, my mother comforted me with a bottle. When I came to visit Grandma, she made Kool-Aid and cake for me. When I played little league baseball I got a scoop of ice cream for every home-run I hit. [I once hit two homeruns

game for five straight games].

My friend thinks I'm having a love affair with my dentist [the Roses and Candy I bring to each appointment for Dr. Karen has made her a little suspicious. But anyone who gives me the kind of comfort and pleasure I get from her when she scrapes my teeth and massages and flosses my

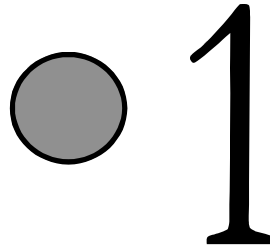
gums, deserves flowers and candy].

Looking For Love in All The Wrong Places

Of course, in the immortal words of Mickey Gilley "I'm looking for love in all the wrong places". Armed with that knowledge, I considered Oliver Twist's question "Where is love? Does it fall from stars above? Is it underneath the willow tree, that I've been thinking of? Will I ever find that someone who, I can mean something to?" Ultimately, I asked myself how can I stop the suffering I'm doing looking for love and eating over the fact that I haven't found it?

The Promises

As I read the promises I came to realize that they all revolved around my making changes in my own life. If I'm going to find love, I will find it when I love myself. When I follow the 12 steps out of love and respect for myself I will find the love I seek and I will end my own suffering.



STEP ONE

We admitted we were powerless over food—that our lives had become unmanageable.

STEP ONE REFLECTIONS

I am a gratefully recovering compulsive overeater in Baltimore, and have been blessed with 15 years of recovery, in which I have been granted the gift of imperfect but consistent abstinence and a new way of life for just about that whole time.

I have been in the program over one-third of my life, and the blessings that I have been given are just astounding. One of those gifts is the reminder that even today, I am still powerless over food, that it can make my life unmanageable.

A Step One prayer I have seen

is: "Today, I ask for help with my addiction. Denial has kept me from seeing how powerless I am and how my life is unmanageable. I need to learn and remember that I have an incurable illness and that abstinence is the only way to deal with it."

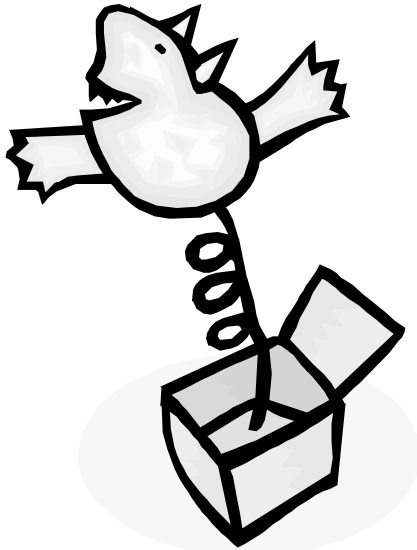
I was, am, and will always be a compulsive overeater. Even after 15 years, occasional thoughts and compulsions about food will surface inside me. I don't berate myself for these thoughts, I simply accept that these thoughts are a part of the disease I have. The more I

accept my disease, the more willing I am to do the things to stay in the present moment and not eat compulsively. I can make a phone call, say a prayer, do a little service, write, read literature, or go to a meeting. These are all simple things that I can do that give me so much more serenity and life than eating extra food that I simply don't need.

I am grateful to all of you, who remind me to do these things when I feel compulsive or less than serene. I will always be a part of this OA program, which first saved

During the advertising blitz of the holidays, it is easy to forget that the real gifts from God are the intangible ones – gratitude, courage, faith, hope, love, and of course, abstinence one day at a time. For me, gratitude has been the most important gift of my recovery. The following is an email from an AA friend on the day of his 21st anniversary of sobriety. I was so moved by his enormous heartfelt message of gratitude that I asked him if I could share it with all of you. Thankfully, he agreed!
—Anne, Lutherville

a gift of gratitude



I drove into work this morning at 7 am. The only thing on my mind was to get cranking on it...then I checked my emails...13 - many from AAs and my daily reading that just happened to be from "A Vision for you"... no coincidences . . .

ing support, friendship, guidance, example and nudges by some -the miracles keep coming! I am so grateful. There is a God and I love Him. He comes through You to me - You don't even know it.

After a good grateful cry for understanding that I'm in His Hands – I realized I had nothing to do with it - it's you all - all I do is show up. So I want to take a moment of Your time to thank You!

This morning I received emails from 4 different countries wishing me congratulations -when in fact I'm not the one to be celebrated - it's the magic of recovery, it's the blessings bestowed upon us in spite of ourselves, even with calamity in my face! It's the gift of seeing the glass half full, it's the gift to know when to let go and trust the loving process, it's the gift to laugh at oneself when our nutty heads take back our pride and control...just laugh - dummy...let go and live. What a gift sobriety has been! I could have never bargained for what I have received!

I want to thank you all for letting the God of your understanding carry me yet another day - another year - 21 today. From my newest sponsee and his struggles, to my other sponsees experiencing God's Grace in their lives as they "trudge their roads to happy destiny," to my friends with over 30 yrs of sobriety, to my dear normy friends and so many others, and of course to my dear brother, my God-loving son and his lovely new wife and my daughter, son-in-law and granddaughter (she doesn't even know she's doing it!!) Through your lov-

...and it's all because of you—the people in my life who make a difference - the ones I love with all my heart. Sometimes, it's just been a smile or a hug that has carried me through a tough spot. Thank

you for being there & walking
y o u r w a l k !
Thanks be to God for putting you in
m y l i f e !
God Bless YOU!!



"Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood Him."

The trick-or-treater's have been coming in waves, it's a great holiday for little ones and if you are not a compulsive overeater. My son is out there giving out the treats. I surrender, that chore is not for me. It is a reminder of many Halloween's past, when I binged in pain on my children's candy, totally powerless and trapped in my illness.

of what the disease had taken from me, knowing OA could easily give me my life back if I wanted it to. The pain of the disease had become so crippling, that I was willing to risk the uncertainty of life without the excess food and begin this awesome journey of recovery and freedom. This freedom however is not like the image of a child running through a meadow.

place much of the time. And when the world seems to be against me, I know that the Steps will help to guide me through the rocky seas of being a victim & frozen with fear.

I knew about OA, I had experienced many 24 hour periods of abstinence but somewhere along the line I forgot I had lost the luxury of an occasional overindulgence, because once started, I lost sanity and had to repeat the overeating even when I was ready to stop.

This kind of freedom comes from the self-discipline of working the program, not perfectly but consistently, whether I feel like it or not.

The Steps are showing me the joy of a life lived in the spiritual axiom; when I am troubled, I need only look within for change, and stop trying to control and change the world around me. This doesn't mean I roll over and play dead. I have value, I matter, I can be myself, make a difference and most of all, make mistakes.

It took several years more of this tragic and life robbing reality, before I came back to OA a humbled person. I had become truly aware

Today, over six years later I have remained abstinent placing OA and it's principals first. I have learned first to practice the loving touch of OA on myself, not requiring perfection, just progress. The world is looking like a different

There is only one way to avoid making mistakes, staying inside and not trying. I pray for the courage to be my best, and really live. I can only do this through abstinence, Tools and Steps. Deep breath, let go, let God, I don't have to do it alone. I only have to do 24

Poem by: Susie, Freder-

'Twas the night before Thanksgiv-
ing
And all through the day
I planned to attend my meeting
And what I would say

I pulled up to the building
And to my dismay
'Closed for the holiday'
The sign, it did say

What to do now?
No place to meet!
When a fellow OA
To me, came to greet

"Let's find an alternate
Place for our meeting
We'll need it for tomorrow
When we're all eating."

We posted our own sign
And went on our way
To McDonalds because
We deserve a break today

We seated ourselves
In a secluded spot
No food, just fellowship
And decaf — piping hot

Fifteen OAs
Had the courage to join us
We sat down and chose
a topic to discuss

As we shared 'round the room
Of how grateful we were
The time passed by
Quick as a blur

My Sponsor celebrated
11 years in OA
I gave her the token
So glad she could stay

In spite of the smells
Of grease and fried food
The fellowship of OA
Never felt so good

Many members felt uneasy
In this restaurant of excess
Reminding us of how the disease
Created such a mess

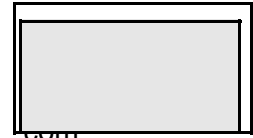
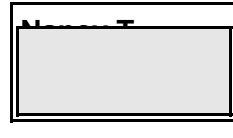
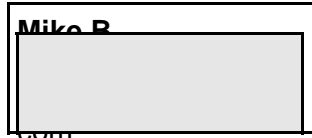
Of the binges and secret eating,
The guilt and the shame
Our poor choices in food
Too many to name

But the recovery we found
As we met at this spot
Filled us with the joy
In the food we had sought

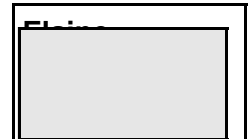
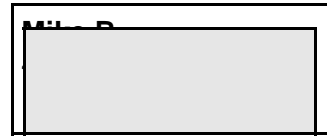
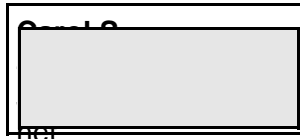
What we could never do alone
Together we can
We thought we were hopeless
But came up with a plan

So if you need a meeting
And you find the doors locked
Remember we have choices
Our recovery can't be stopped

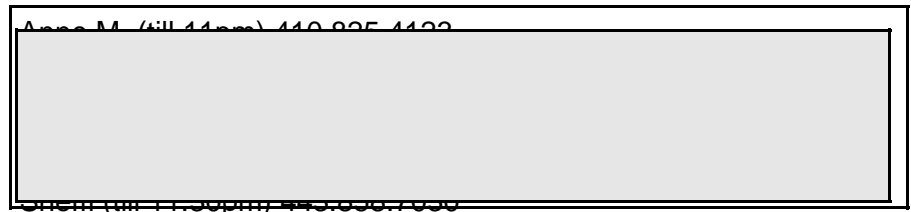
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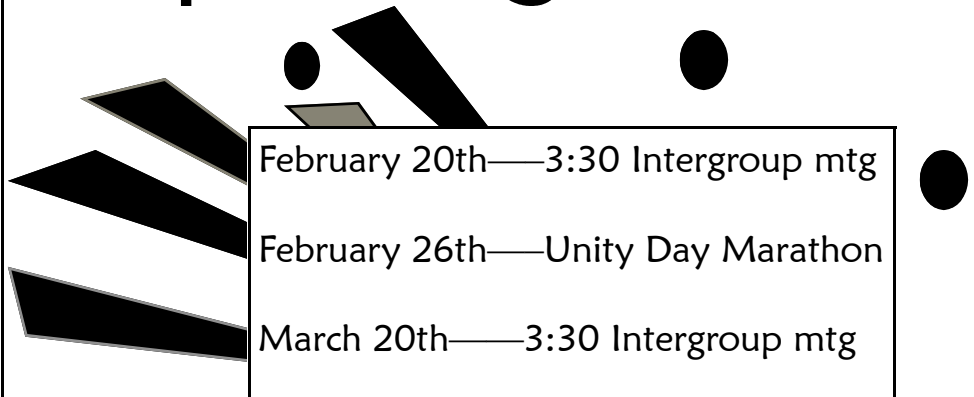
Speakers:



Night Owls:



Upcoming Events:



Can we guarantee you this recovery?

"The answer is simple. If you will honestly face the truth about yourself and the illness; if you keep coming back to meetings to talk and to listen to other recovering compulsive overeaters; if you will read our literature and that of Alcoholics Anonymous with an open mind and most important, if you are willing to rely on a power greater than yourself for direction in your life, and to take the Twelve Steps to the best of your ability, we believe you can indeed join the ranks of those who recover." —from "Our Invitation to You" P.2 OA Brown Book

The Baltimore Area Intergroup of Overeaters Anonymous

P. O. Box 20013

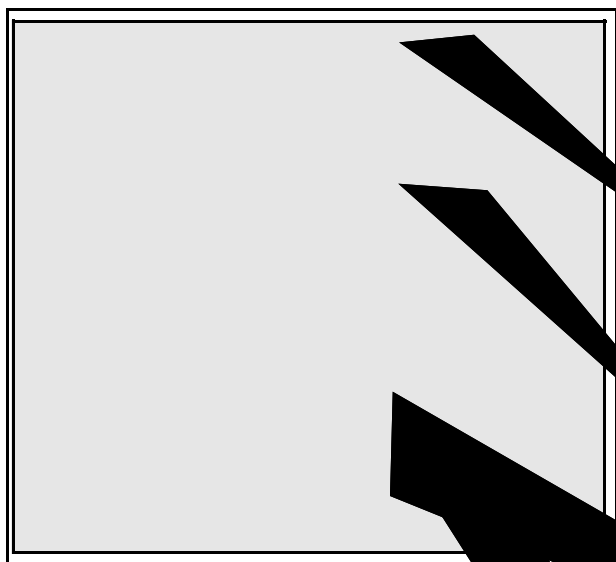
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Your Trusted Servants:



7th Tradition Contributions:

60% Baltimore Area Intergroup,
Box 20013, Baltimore MD
21284

30% OA World Service Office
Box 44020, Rio Rancho NM
87174

10% OA Region 7
3500 S. DuPont Highway, Dover DE
19901

The Steppingstone is the quarterly newsletter of the Baltimore area Intergroup of Overeaters Anonymous.

Editorial Policy: This is your newsletter.

Your contributions, comments, and experience in the OA way of life are needed and appreciated.

We also would like to print news about your area or meeting. Publication of any contributions or editorial opinions expressed herein does not imply endorsement by OA as a whole, but only by the individuals who wrote them. Material submitted cannot be returned. We reserve the right to edit, and it is understood that other OA groups may reprint all items without permission. Deadline for submitting contributions is two weeks before publication: January 1, **April 1**, July 1, and October 1. Submit your contributions by mail to BAIG, P. O. Box 20013, Baltimore MD 21284.

Other Internet Sources:

Region Seven: <http://www.oaregion7.org>
World Service: <http://www.oa.org>

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