

JULY

OUTSIDE THE

2025

BOTTLE

There's Always Hope-- Wendy Z's story
From Darkness to Light -Dave W.'s Story

District 16 Newsletter

WENDY Z.

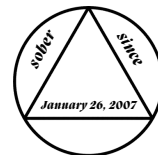
THERE IS HOPE

Alcohol addiction put me in prison, but that's not where my story started. As a teen, I drank on weekends and experimented with many drugs. It was the 70s, so I dabbled with anything available. I got married at 18 to my first husband, my party partner and had a family. Feeling entitled, we started partying on weekends. This drinking and drugging quickly progressed to weekdays. My husband and I got sober in 1999. We both went to rehab together. We attended some meetings, but didn't do the things suggested to us. Really, we were white knuckling it. Shortly after we started the program, I had bariatric surgery, and I broke my leg in three places. Suddenly prescription medication was easily available. So, like many others, we went back out partying and started drinking again. Soon we were back at full alcoholism.

In two short years my world came crashing down when my husband died of an overdose. I found him on the kitchen floor at 3 am in the morning. The only thing I knew how to do was to get drunk, and I stayed drunk. In three short months I was totally out of control. One February night I left my house. I was told that I didn't have my lights on. I drove into another car, head on and killed the driver. I was sentenced to prison. I thought my life was over and I wanted to die. Fortunately, that wasn't God's plan. I got involved in a prison program that reintroduced me to AA. It laid the foundation for my program outside of prison. When I left prison 2 ½ years later, I went straight to a meeting that night. At that meeting, I wasn't judged. I was loved and accepted for me.

I learned to lean on the fellowship for support. I learned to make sober friends. People graciously gave me rides to meetings since I lost my license and didn't drive to meetings. I made friends who accepted me. Early on, I found myself doing service work. I had the key to the church and opened meetings. Imagine trusting me with a key to the church!! I found working with others was big for me. It was not long before someone introduced me to going to the jails. Ultimately, I found my service niche. Using my experience in the jails, I was able to carry the message to other incarcerated women who had experiences like mine. I was able to carry hope into these jails.

It was 2010 and still today, I go to the jails, coordinating meetings at the Oakland County for 35 women. We carry our experience, strength, and hope to these women with the promise that life can get better if you work a program. One of the first service positions I did was to write letters to women in prison. One particular lady had a story very similar to mine. We both helped each other by sharing what we had gone through and done. I was able to give her hope. We kept this relationship throughout the years, and finally in March, after sixteen years, we were able to meet face-to-face. She graciously hosted us for three days. That's what happens in our program. We become a lifelong family.



My service work has only continued to blossom. I now serve in the Area 33 Corrections Committee and its treasurer, working to carry the message to even more women and men in the jails and prisons. When Covid hit, access to the jails closed and I had to find an alternative way to do service work. I started working at the AA Hotline and connecting people with meetings.

Today, my life is completely different. I have a relationship with a Higher Power, and I rely on my relationship with my HP to get me through life. I have been married for 16 years to my husband, also a member of AA. I have a sponsor who I am in consistent contact with, and I sponsor other women-further giving away what was given to me. The steps are my guide to living life on life's terms.

I'll end with this. I am not unique. What happened to me could have happened to any of us alcoholics. We have all done things we shouldn't have. Many of us simply didn't get caught. But the ladies and gentlemen did get caught and they deserve to receive the AA message. When an alcoholic is in need, I want the hand of AA to be available, and that I am responsible for.





PATRICK N.

GRATITUDE FOR THE THIRD TRADITION OF ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS: HOW IT SAVED MY LIFE

The Third Tradition of Alcoholics Anonymous states, "The only requirement for A.A. membership is a desire to stop drinking." This simple, inclusive principle quite literally saved my life. It gave me permission to come as I was—to show up broken, confused, and still clinging to some of my old ways—and yet still find a place of belonging, hope, and, eventually, transformation. Through this tradition, I was granted the freedom to find my way to complete sobriety from all mind- and mood-altering substances. Today, I am not only clean and sober, but I experience something I never thought possible: emotional sobriety—most of the time.

When I first came to Alcoholics Anonymous meetings in 2016, I was not new to addiction. I had been using alcohol and drugs since I was around 12 years old. From 2005 to 2015, opioid painkillers ruled my life. I was hopelessly addicted—overdosing multiple times, spending all of my money on drugs, and feeling powerless to escape. Alongside the opioids, I was also using alcohol and marijuana daily. But it was the opioids that brought me to my knees.

Raised in poverty by a single mother with an absent father who remains an active addict to this day, I didn't have many healthy role models. In 2013, my wife—a fellow alcoholic—and I welcomed our first child. I managed to keep using while holding down a low-paying job. But in 2015, when our second child was born, it became painfully clear that I couldn't keep living this way. I gave up painkillers in July of that year and began using Suboxone to taper off, stopping completely by September. Shortly after, I had two binge-drinking episodes that left me wracked with shame and on the brink of relapse. I took my last drink in October 2015.

Even though I was now clean from alcohol and opioids, I was still using marijuana daily. Desperate to stay off the hard drugs, I turned to Narcotics Anonymous and tried to find a sponsor. But my ongoing marijuana use made that nearly impossible. I ran into the same message over and over: "Come back when you're completely clean." I thought I could get sober on "The Patrick Program"—my own set of rules. I believed I was smarter than everyone else. Unsurprisingly, this approach didn't work.

One day, while talking to my cousin who was active in AA, we discussed the Third Tradition. That conversation

was a turning point. It dawned on me that, because marijuana use was considered an "outside issue" in AA, I could still attend meetings and participate. I would be welcomed as long as I had a desire to stop drinking. That was the loophole—and the lifeline—I needed.

My grandfather had been sober in AA for 42 years before he passed away in 2007. He was my father figure growing up, and when I attended my first AA meeting, I felt his presence in the room. That meeting felt like coming home. I finally felt like I belonged. I began attending about one meeting a week and managed to stay clean from alcohol and opioids for nearly five years, though I never got past the Third Step and was still smoking weed daily.

During those five years, I experienced material success—I moved forward in my career, expanded my family, and pursued further education. But something still felt off. I hadn't truly surrendered. When the COVID-19 pandemic hit in 2020 and in-person meetings shut down, I drifted away from the program. I thought to myself, "Well, that was a good run. Thanks, Bill W. and Dr. Bob."

Then tragedy struck. In August 2020, my wife and I experienced the stillbirth of our fourth daughter. Holding her lifeless body, which looked just like our other children, shattered us. I spiraled into a deep depression. I didn't want to return to drugs or alcohol because I understood by then that would be suicide on a slow plan. But I was broken and suicidal. Then, by grace, an AA member reached out and told me I needed to get back to the herd.

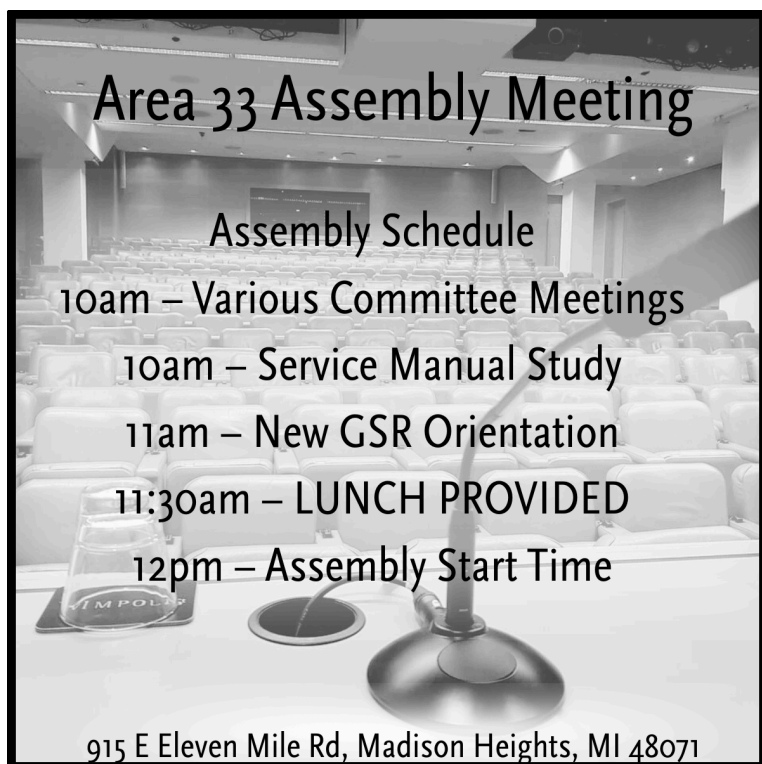
I returned to AA with a new desperation. I found a strong men's group on Zoom that met daily and was filled with solid, long-term sobriety. I began attending every day and openly shared about my ongoing marijuana use. I must have been insufferable at times, but no one ever asked me to leave. No one ever said I didn't belong. That's the power of the Third Tradition.

Over time, I began to notice something: the peace and serenity that these men had completely eluded me. One day, while on the phone with the man who would become my sponsor, I was venting about yet another emotional crisis. He challenged me to stop using marijuana for 30 days. I scoffed. I thought it was pointless—just a way to prove how different I was. But I accepted the challenge. (Continued on page 4)

(Patrick N's story continued)

What happened next changed my life. As those 30 days passed, I began to see that marijuana wasn't helping me with my depression, anxiety, or ADHD—it was actually making everything worse. That experiment marked the beginning of my complete abstinence from all mind- and mood-altering substances. For the first time, I began truly working the Steps and experiencing the promises of the program.

When I reflect on this journey, I am humbled and awed by the foresight embedded in the Third Tradition. If my home group and the men around me had not adhered to the spirit of this tradition, I may have missed my chance to recover. Because of it, I now have the privilege of being useful—to my family, my community, and other still-suffering alcoholics. Most importantly, I have a relationship with a Higher Power, and I strive to be an agent of God's will. I am profoundly grateful for Alcoholics Anonymous, for its Traditions, and especially for the Third Tradition. It welcomed me when I was still figuring things out. It gave me space to grow. It allowed me to stay long enough to change.



Area 33 Assembly Meeting

Assembly Schedule

10am – Various Committee Meetings


10am – Service Manual Study

11am – New GSR Orientation

11:30am – LUNCH PROVIDED

12pm – Assembly Start Time

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Outside the Bottle is the newsletter of District 16.

The newsletter contains announcements, meeting changes, events, news & information around the district, and stories about sobriety and recovery.

Any A.A. member is invited to submit material to the newsletter.

Please send questions/comments/contributions to: district16news@gmail.com

**DISTRICT 16 MEETS AT
7:00 P.M. ON THE 4TH
THURSDAY OF EVERY
MONTH AT:**

1st United Methodist Church
of Madison Heights - 246 E. 11
Mile Road,
Madison Heights, MI 48071

If groups would like to contribute to District 16, please mail a check or money order:

Payable to: District 16 of Area 33 A.A.,
PO Box: 725362, Berkley, MI 48072