



The Eighty - Three

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Area 83 Archives Newsletter

AREA 83 ARCHIVES October 2022

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District 6 – Jill B.

In mid-March 2020, due to increasing number of Covid cases in the Regions that encompass District 6, each day we received notifications from group's that they were temporarily closing their in person meetings. By late March, all registered groups had closed their doors to in person meetings, and slowly most transitioned to a virtual platform. On March 17, 2020, the first group in District 6 to host a virtual meeting was New Life Group, using the Webex virtual meeting platform. Since then, approximately 90% of our groups have transitioned to virtual meetings using Zoom or other virtual platform

With the lifting of restrictions in late summer, a handful of groups reopened to in person meetings with strict guidelines and limited numbers enforced. One our groups, Open Hands was able to host a hybrid meeting. However, with the recent Stay at Home orders at the beginning of 2021, only 2 groups are known to have remained open to in person meetings.

There was an outdoor service meeting, called Anchor of Hope, that had been closed meetings in a park near Lake Ontario between the Mississauga/Etobicoke border. My understanding is that they continued to meet in person, outside during the pandemic and still continue to meet on Sundays

The District 6 meeting, held monthly, transitioned to monthly Zoom meeting starting on April 15, 2020. There was no negative impact felt during the transition, as our attendance numbers remained the same as those during in person District meetings.

Home Group - Erin Mills Group

On Feb 8th, my home group Erin Mills celebrated a 1 year medallion to what we affectionately called our first "zoom baby". This gentleman came out of treatment right when we all went into lock down. He attended a Monday night Erin Mills zoom meeting, and let us all know that he was new and needed a sponsor. One of our group's male sponsors answered the call and they've been working together ever since. The newcomer attended all our meetings, got connected with the group by engaging with the members during the "before" and "after" meetings. affectionately know and talk about.

He's of service on our Zoom meeting as one of our technicians. Of importance to note, this newcomer has never been to an "in person" AA meeting.

Confirms what I've experienced, where any two are gathered God is still there working miracles, whether that be in person or virtually.

He has never walked down the stairs into our Erin Mills meeting to see the "You Are No Longer Alone" sign that all of us affectionally know and talk about. Confirms what I've experienced, where any two are gathered God is still there working miracles, whethervthat be in person or virtually.

Bloordale and it's journey throughout the COVID-19 pandemic

By Justin F.

It was March 22, 2020 - we had spaced out the chairs in our large gymnasium so far apart with an overly cautious radius we could only fit 20 people in a space with a fire code capacity of 200. This was to be our last in person meeting for four months.

So we went on zoom and didn't see each other for what seemed like eternity. Members were relapsing, people were growing lonely, anxious, depressed. Something needed to change. Our Grapevine Rep mentioned he had a number of grapevine magazines to get rid of and given a slow summer of COVID-19 cases: we should meet outdoors, purchase some grapevines and have a meeting.

In the parking lot, 10-15 of us sat with our lawn chairs, saying the serenity prayer, meeting together in person once again. This is what we needed. Us alcoholics who's recovery was dependent on human connection: we needed human connection once again.

At our online business meeting in late July 2020 a motion passed to reopen our Sunday night open meeting in August. We reopened once again with social distancing and masks. Chairs were spaced out, masks were put on, people brought their own beverages and the group was reopened, in person. The mood changed. Various diasporas from other groups which had remained online joined our ranks and we soon had a regular and irregular group of alcoholics attending our meetings. We soon

people brought their own beverages and the group was reopened, in person. The mood changed. Various diasporas from other groups which had remained online joined our ranks and we soon had a regular and irregular group of alcoholics attending our meetings.

We soon added our Wednesday night closed discussion meeting and later our Monday night closed meeting as well. We reluctantly collected contact tracing sheets despite our worries about anonymity with first names only. Only once were these consulted out of fear of exposure - and in the year and seven months we've been open I'm happy to report that due to our diligent COVID-19 measures we have had zero cases and zero community spread of the virus that the world was so greatly afflicted by. Now we run an open meeting with more attendance than pre-pandemic, and two lively discussion meetings that are sometimes so large we split into two groups. I have seen many people from their first day to their 1 year medallion - even though it feels like yesterday that we reopened.

COVID-19 was and is a public health crisis - but so is addiction. It was never the case that these two things had to be mutually exclusive. By reopening and running in person meetings with COVID safety in mind Bloordale set the stage for the benefit of the fellowship and a stepping stone for recovery from newcomers to old-timers.

District 48—Sharon B

When Covid hit, Linda McQ purchased a Zoom subscription for the Thursday Women's Group in late March 2020. Initial assistance on the use of Zoom and Zoom room safety was provided by the Area83 training sessions. Within a week, the Tuesday Elephant Room Hospital meetings jumped on board, quickly followed by the Sunday Morning Discussion group. The initial three meetings were run off Linda's iPad, with the three groups splitting the cost. The Vanier group provided further training on what could be done with Zoom such as breakout rooms, and once Linda's workstation was replaced the meetings were switched off the iPad. The district meeting was also added, but due to prior constraints with the Tuesday Elephant Meeting on the same night as the Tuesday district meeting, the district meeting was changed to Wednesdays. Training was provided to all that requested on how to access and use Zoom, and over time service roles for the zoom meetings were developed and trained. Other groups in District 48 started up on zoom—The Sunday One Day At a Time, Wednesday Kemptville Gratitude Group, the Morrisburg 12 and 12, the Friday Morrisburg Discussion Meeting, and the Saturday North Gower Fourth Dimension Group.

In addition as weather permitted we also had outdoor/backyard meetings. Johanna C., Vernon offered a 7:30 pm Step meeting with an average of 10 members attending, that ran for 16 weeks completed all 12 steps.

Other outdoor/campfire meetings included: Sandy S (past delegate) ran one Thursday night; Kevin M (past GSR) Chesterville ran one Thursday nights, Sharon B (our alt DCM) Oxford Mills, Friday night; Perry M (past GSR for Wednesday, Tuesday nights and John B. The Meeting on the Pond Discussion Group.

With Covid restrictions on and off the zoom meetings continued, Meetings opened following provincial, and building guidelines In order to keep our members as safe as possible, ie. South Mountain, Kemptville Sunday Morning Discussion group, Kemptville Monday Friday. Some new service positions were required for the in person meetings, for example to verify vaccine certificates, take down contact information, and cleaning.

As of March 2022 most of the meetings are back in person. The Sunday morning discussion group has continued with both an in person and a separate zoom meeting running in parallel. The Tuesday elephant room meeting previously located in the Kemptville hospital will remain on zoom. As will the Women's Freedom and Growth on Thursdays. The Winchester hospital meeting has been indefinitely canceled. At this point in time the district meeting is still on zoom. Not all trusted servants are comfortable with going back in person.

DISTRICT 70 - AA MEETINGS IN THE TIME OF COVID

Introduction: Early in 2020 there were rumblings of a deadly virus that might make its way to Canada. Little did we know that by March all our lives would be changed. When the virus hit, we were being mandated to stay home. Our normal face-to face meetings were closed. Members scrambled to stay connected and to stay sober. We were faced with a question "how to follow a government mandate and still carry the message to each other and to the still suffering alcoholic?". The following is a short history of how the groups in District 70 managed just that during the first year of COVID.

Jack B from the Renfrew Wednesday night meeting was instrumental in setting up Zoom for most of the District 70 meetings. He had a Zoom account and set all the groups up that wanted a virtual meeting. He gave us tutorials on how to host a meeting and what to do in case of a Zoom Bomber. He sat in on a lot of the meetings early on so that there were no hiccups. During the early days of the pandemic, he also hosted daily Zoom meetings at 9:30. He did this so members would have access to meetings outside their normal meeting times and if anyone wasn't a Zoom aficionado he helped them become one. Once members got the hang of the Zoom meetings Jack discontinued his coffee meetings. Jack paid for this Zoom account that was used by most of the meetings in District 70 and considered it his 7th Tradition donation to District 70. He still does this today and District 70 and its members are very grateful to him.

Other members that used their own accounts to set up virtual meetings were John L. Wednesday Noon meeting Arnprior and Joe L. – Stone Road meeting on Sunday nights.

Monday Noon Meeting Arnprior – A Step Ahead - Closed with the first lock down. Did not switch to Zoom or reopen.

Monday Night Renfrew – Keep It Simple, Graham S. – Meeting closed with the first. At the beginning of Sept (2020) the church administrator gave the Group the option to meet again but COVID protocols were to be followed: sanitizing, screening at the door and limiting the number at the meeting to 10. Well needless to say NOBODY was interested in that offer. Especially considering that the attendance for speaker was quite large 20 - 25 people on average, and no one wanted the dubious responsibility of 'turning people' away at the door. Hence the meeting remained closed and did not switch to Zoom.

Monday Night – Shawville, John L. – With the first lockdown the meeting closed. During the Summer months, the meeting was held in the local park. Then in September the meeting was able to open up using the large hall next door to the church. The minister felt that AA was an essential service and should be running as usual. COVID precautions were followed as per the church and government guidelines. The Group hopes to reopen again with the same protocols in place once the second lockdown is lifted.

Monday Night – Eganville – The Gold Bond Group, Barry B. - No meetings since COVID restrictions applied. Some members attend Zoom but very minimally. We had six members celebrate birthdays over the past months and had a dinner at a local restaurant to present medallions. The meeting opened briefly at Fairfields Retirement Residence but was unable to continue at that location. They are keeping in touch with some members with e mail but are just in a holding pattern for now. We are happy to reactivate our group and are operating under COVID 19 restrictions (masks, no contact etc.).

Tuesday – White Lake – Mary Anne H.

Early in 2020 one of our members mentioned that there was a serious virus in China that might make its way to Canada. He asked what we could do to keep people safe in the meeting. We thought if we stopped holding hands at the end of the meeting that would be enough. At this point, we started having hand sanitizer on the table for people to use. How naive we were. When the pandemic hit full force in March and with the first lockdown we closed in-person meetings. Around mid-March there were emails between all members about going the Zoom route. There seemed to be some resistance to the thought of going virtual but eventually the Zoom meeting was accepted and has continued. Jack B was instrumental in getting a Zoom account for District 70 and that's where our White Lake account resided.

Our first Zoom meeting was held on March 23rd. The meeting was very well attended in the beginning, sometimes with over 20 people but attendance eventually fell off. In June, it was suggested that switching from Closed Discussion for the entire month to having a Speaker Meeting the last Tuesday night meeting. This meeting had to close as the next lockdown was implemented.

of the month might help attendance. Business meetings were being held via emails, a vote was taken it was decided to give it a try. Our first speaker meeting was on July 28. Attendance has improved on those nights. It has also allowed members to celebrate an anniversary with an open meeting, where they can invite family and friends. For our first few speaker meetings with used the keynote speakers that had been lined up for the St. Patty's Day Round Up that was cancelled. Eventually members came forward with other speaker suggestions.

We've had newcomers joining the meeting that never knew the face-to-face meetings. Kudos to them. During summer months one of the Group members held meetings at his house on another day of the week. Meetings started out in his yard and with the cooler temperatures the meeting eventually moved in to his garage. COVID protocols were always maintained at this meeting. The church gave us the opportunity to open in September of 2020 but members felt it would be too hard to: maintain the 6' distance, ensure tables, chairs and bathrooms were disinfected properly, and what would we do if more than 10 people showed up to attend a meeting. The Group Conscience was to remain closed and to continue meeting via Zoom. We also continue to pay the Church a nominal rent since they are still storing all our supplies and this keeps the

Wednesday Noon – Arnprior – As Bill See's It – John L. On Monday, March 23, 2020 Ontario Premier Ford extended an earlier closing of schools to include all non-essential services (this extended to church buildings). Our regular, weekly Wednesday noon meeting immediately went on line. Our first Zoom meeting was Wednesday, March 25, 2020. At that time, we were not aware of other locally based on line meetings, so we decided to increase to three meetings per week, on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays at noon. There were two changes over the summer. First, a number of members of this group and other groups began meeting outdoors, in Robert Simpson Park on Fridays at noon. We discussed closing our Friday noon meeting. Some members were reluctant or unable to attend these in person meetings due to poor health or limited mobility, and so the group decided to maintain our Friday on line meetings. The outdoor meeting soon became a women's group, and in the fall, it moved on line where it continues to meet. With two locally-based noon meetings, one reserved for women, our Friday attendance has trailed off. We briefly cancelled the Friday meetings, but members missed them and they were quickly re-established. Second, in lieu of our in-person birthday celebrations with cakes and cards, we began to hold monthly open-speaker meetings in August and increased their frequency to twice per month in January 2021. Attendance has been fairly steady—seldom below 8 and seldom above 20 for the Monday and Wednesday meetings—usually with roughly equal numbers of men and women. The Friday meeting is smaller, and often all men. Despite being on line, we have seen some new arrivals to AA. At this time three attendees at our meetings are new to AA and have known only on line meetings.

Wednesday Noon – Renfrew – Lunch Bunch – Closed with first lockdown. Did not switch to zoom or reopen.

Wednesday Night - Arnprior – Steps and Traditions - Closed with first lockdown. Did not switch to Zoom or reopen.

Wednesday Night – Fitzroy Harbour - Harbour Group – Closed with first lockdown. Did not switch to Zoom or reopen.

Wednesday Night – Renfrew Group, Jack B. – Having had created and managed Pembrokeaa.org before, been in AA and at district table many years and been playing with computers since 1976, our group needed a way to have meetings. I knew about Zoom and other virtual platforms. I created a meeting for our group (Renfrew group). After talking to many AA members I soon realized that most groups had no virtual meetings, so I upgraded my account to Pro and offered to create zoom meeting for any groups in district 70. Only request I asked from the groups was they needed to provide 2 members to run the zoom meeting for their group. I would train them. It worked as I suspected. One Zoom bomb, overall it went well and is going well. It is here to stay, as hybrid.

Thursday Night – Arnprior – Turning Point – Closed with first lockdown. Held meetings in Robert Simpson Park during the summer months – weather permitting. Did not switch to Zoom or reopen.

Thursday Night – Cobden – Way of Life, Ken G. – This Group closed with first Lockdown and then reopened August 4th when it was safe to do so. Both COVID regulations and the churches guidelines were followed during this opening. In the Fall, there was a huge breakout of COVID in a local Mennonite Community close to Cobden. Since several of the group members were immune compromised it was decided to close the meeting on 10 Dec 2020. It has not opened since.

Friday Night – Arnprior - Big Book Study, Jodi H. Switched to a Zoom meeting but it could not be maintained. Eventually it closed. There was only one Zoom account for Friday night some meetings that ran parallel had to be staggered. The Arnprior meeting ran from 7-8, which meant the Douglas Group would have to start at 8:30 PM. With the closing of the Friday night Arnprior meeting the Douglas Group could go back to its regular time slot of 8 PM.

Friday Night – Douglas – Cathy D. On Friday March 6, 2020 the Douglas Group held their monthly Business Meeting. There was some discussion regarding the “virus” that everyone was talking about. It was decided to announce that we will not be holding hands at the end of our meetings, as well as some members were not comfortable shaking hands. We were going to provide hand sanitizer (which was sold out in most stores) at the hall. Friday

March 13, 2020 we had a member celebrate 1 year of sobriety. Little did we know that would be the last time we would gather at the Hall on Friday nights, for many, many months to come.

The pandemic forced the closure of AA meetings. Some groups were holding their meetings online by Zoom. The Douglas Group decided we would give it a try. Lisa C. agreed to be the host, and our first meeting was held on Friday, April 17, 2020.

From April 24 - July 31 our Friday meetings were Open Speaker, with members taking turns chairing and getting speakers. We were averaging 20 members at these meetings. During the month of July attendance started to fall. With the difficulty of finding speakers, it was decided at a Business Meeting that we would change to Closed Discussion Meetings and have an Open Speaker Meeting the last Friday of every month. This began in August 2020 and continues.

Attendance at our Closed Discussion Meetings average around 10-12 members. Open Speaker Meetings average 20 -30 members.

We have held several business meetings during this time. These are always well attended and we meet by Zoom a half hour before the regular meeting starts.

We had our zoom meeting on Christmas Day and New Years Day.

The Douglas Group is very grateful to Lisa C., who continues to host the zoom meetings every Friday night and to the members who take part in chairing the meetings and to all who attend.

At this time, we have no idea when we will be back in our Hall for our Friday night meetings, so we will continue to see each other on zoom.

Friday Night – Renfrew – Our Common Welfare – Closed permanently.

Saturday Morning – Renfrew – Living in the Solution – Thanks to Jack B. this group was set up with a Zoom account shortly after the first lockdown. It became a regular meeting for a few

dedicated members who started coming when the meeting originated in the little Library in Trinity St. Andrews Church. So as one month passed into the next, now almost a year later “Living in the Solution” has become a nice little morning meeting, with regular attendance from the residents living at McKay Manor, as well as others who like getting their AA fix in the morning rather than at night. Graham S.

Saturday Night Group– Arnprior – Closed with first lockdown. Did not switch to Zoom or reopen.

Saturday Night – Calabogie, Tom C. –The group ceased face to face meetings effective March 14,2020. With the help of Jack B. we switched to Zoom meetings effective March 21,2020. We have been meeting via Zoom every Saturday night at 7 p.m. We found it easier to have discussion rather than speaker meetings and that has proven very effective. Attendance is small, however, we have a loyal following who support us regularly. Although nothing can replace the face to face meetings, Zoom has certainly filled a void. We have a good relationship with the church we deal with and they are very understanding. Hope to see everyone soon up in Calabogie.