

The Freedom Flyer

NFF's Monthly Newsletter ~ Keeping the Community Connected

June 2015

80 Years of Alcoholics Anonymous

How Did it all Begin: Providence or Coincidence?



Dr. Bob and Bill W., Founders of AA

On June 10th, 1935, known today as Founder's Day, Dr. Robert Smith, a hopeless alcoholic from Akron, Ohio, took his last drink. That moment marked the birth of AA. It was at that moment that he committed to joining forces with Bill W., another alcoholic with whom he'd had several conversations. Together the two men would create and share their solution to the disease of alcoholism. But what led up to this momentous day that would change the lives of millions of hopeless alcoholics? There were many events that seemed to fall perfectly into place to allow this to happen.

Years before Dr. Bob and Bill Wilson came together to form AA, Rowland Hazard, a man from a wealthy New England industrialist family, was drinking himself crazy.

Though he was at one time in line to take over the family empire, Rowland's inability to control his drinking landed him in one asylum after another. Rowland spared no expense, and saw all the best doctors in the U.S., but these visits were to no avail. Around 1931, desperate for a solution, Rowland sought the help of the world-renowned psychologist Dr. Carl Jung in Switzerland.

After one year of treatment with Dr. Jung, Rowland felt very confident that he now understood himself and his problem so well that he had it licked. However, almost immediately after leaving Jung, Rowland was drunk again. He returned to the doctor and begged him for more help. Jung said that he could not; that he tried everything he knew to produce a

change within Rowland sufficient enough to cure him. He explained that, in his experience, alcoholics of Rowland's nature must be permanently locked up or else they would die or go insane. This moment is seen as AA's first big break. Had the doctor been driven by pride or ego he may have said, "Yes. Give me some more time." Instead, he was honest, and his answer gave Rowland the gift of desperation. This desperation prompted him to ask if there was any exception. Jung replied, telling him of unexplained and life changing emotional and religious/spiritual experiences that have occasionally occurred within people like Rowland. Jung recommended Rowland try to have this type of experience.

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Frank Buchman was a Lutheran minister who had a conversion experience in 1908, after hearing a sermon on forgiveness at a small chapel in England. As a result of that experience, he founded a movement called A First Century Christian Fellowship in 1921, which later became known as the Oxford Group. The Group's specialty, one might say, was "spiritual conversions". Frank laid out principles for the group to follow, one of which was continuance- sharing your experience with others. You were responsible as a life changer to help the new person become all that God wanted him to be. Only God could change a person and the work of the life changer had to be done under God's direction.

In his quest to find the spiritual solution that Dr. Jung had told him of, Rowland Hazard came across the New York branch of the Oxford Group, led by Reverend Dr. Sam Shoemaker. Under the guidance of Shoemaker, Rowland accepted and began practicing the Oxford Group tenets, and soon found that the obsession to drink had been removed. Rowland was thrilled with the Oxford Group way of life, through which he was able to remain sober.

In August of 1934 Rowland and two of his Oxford Group friends, Cebra G. and Shep C., went to Rowland's summer home in Vermont for vacation. During their stay they learned that Ebby Thacher, an old drinking buddy of Shep and Cebra, was in trouble, and looking at a possible six-month jail sentence for "repeated drunkenness". Rowland and Cebra showed up at the hearing, explaining they could help Ebby with his drinking, and asked that he be released into the custody of Rowland and Shep. As luck would have, the judge was Cebra's father, and he approved their request. Ebby, who was then introduced to the Oxford Group in New York, would later become Bill Wilson's first sponsor.

Throughout the early 1930's, Bill Wilson, a New York Stock Broker, was spiraling into the darkest depths of his own alcoholism. From 1933-1934, Bill was admitted several times to Towns Hospital in New York City for treatment. During his time there he became friendly with Towns Director, Dr. Silkworth, and more importantly, he became acquainted with Silkworth's medical theory that chronic alcoholism was an illness rather than a moral failure or failure of willpower. He believed that alcoholics were suffering from a mental obsession, combined with an allergy that made compulsive drinking inevitable.

While Bill was struggling to understand his own alcoholism, Ebby was able to stay sober as a result of his own spiritual conversion. Ebby knew that according to the principals of the Oxford Group, he had to find another alcoholic to help. Rumor had it his old school friend and drinking buddy Bill Wilson was down and out. On a bleak November day in 1934 Ebby paid Bill a visit, and they talked at Bill's kitchen table. Although Bill did not like what Ebby had to say about finding religion Bill couldn't help but notice there was, "something different" about Ebby; something attractive about his life. Shortly after that visit, on Armistice Day, Bill began his last run, and a month later, on December 11, 1934 (his sober date), he checked into Towns Hospital for the last time.



Bill Wilson and Ebby Thacher

During his last hospital stay Bill had a "white light Spiritual experience" relieving him of his obsession. Alarmed by this, fearing he might have gone insane, Bill called for Dr. Silkworth, telling him of the experience and asking him if he was still sane. The Doctor told him, "Something has happened to you I don't understand. But you had better hang on to it. Anything is better than the way you were". This is another moment in AA history that is considered an important turning point. Had the doctor responded differently, perhaps by saying, "It's just the medication, go back to bed," or, "It's the DTs. Don't worry about it," he would have discredited the power of the experience. Instead, he emphasized the importance of it. Bill, compelled by the experience and most likely influenced by what Ebby passed on to him from the Oxford Group, knew he must share this with others and that they in turn must do the same.

Over the next few months Bill devoted himself to trying to help other drunks. One after another he would tell them tirelessly about his white light experience and how they had to find God. After almost six months of this and seeing no drunks get sober, Bill began to get discouraged and two very important conversations in AA history occurred.

First, Bill expressed to his wife Lois how discouraged he was; that perhaps he was wasting his time, because no one was staying sober. Lois simply replied, "You are." A light bulb went off, and Bill realized he needed other drunks in order to stay sober himself. Around the same time he had a similar talk with Dr. Silkworth, and the doctor told him, "I have been watching you. You are preaching to them about your 'white light experience', and they don't want to hear it. Why don't you try talking to them about our medical theory, the allergy and the mental obsession?"

Talk to them about your troubles with alcoholism and how you drank and that you don't any more. Let them become interested in the fact you stopped and let them ask you how." This advice would come in handy later.

Bill had not worked in a while because of his alcoholism. Now sober, Bill began getting active on Wall Street again. In May of 1935 an opportunity arose for Bill to lead the takeover of a company in Akron, Ohio. Bill accepted the job, and left for Ohio with visions of grandeur and financial success. The deal, however, fell apart, and Bill found himself broke, alone, and discouraged, wondering how he was going to pay his bill at the Mayflower Hotel. As Bill paced the lobby of the Mayflower he could hear the chatter and laughter coming from the bar. Suddenly, for the first time since that night in Towns Hospital, the thought of a drink crowded his mind. Then, just as suddenly, he thought, "I need to find another Alcoholic to help."

At one end of the lobby was a payphone and a church directory, while at the other end of the lobby was the bar. Bill's mind raced back and forth. Then with his last bit of money he started calling numbers, proclaiming himself a rum hound from New York who needs to talk to another alcoholic in order to stay sober. Call after call, the voices on the other end would respond the same way: "No, I don't know any drunks." Many calls later a Reverend Tunks answered. Tunks told Bill that he didn't know any drunks, but he knew a woman who might know one. "Call Henrietta Seiberling," he said. And Bill did.

It was May 12, 1935, Mother's Day, when the phone rang at the Seiberling Gatehouse where Henrietta lived. Bill introduced himself, again saying, "I am a rum hound from New York and I need another alcoholic to talk to." Henrietta replied, "I've been expecting your call." Henrietta had no heads up from Reverend Tunks. She was not told about Bill's search for another alcoholic. However, Henrietta was an Oxford Group member, and a woman of strong faith. There had been a Dr. Smith, an admitted alcoholic, and his wife Anne attending her group. Dr. Smith's practice was falling apart as a result of his drinking and he wanted desperately to stop but couldn't. Henrietta had been praying for this doctor to find an answer, and here it was in the form of Bill Wilson. Henrietta would later refer to the call as "Manna from Heaven".

That same morning Anne Smith was greeted by Dr. Bob, completely smashed, potted plant in hand. Anne had just helped Dr. Bob get to bed when the phone rang. It was Henrietta. She explained about the man from New York that wanted to help Dr. Bob with his drinking, and insisted they come that evening for dinner. Due to Bob's condition, Anne tried to make excuses, but Henrietta would not take

no for an answer. Later that day Anne informed Dr. Bob of the plan and he was not agreeable. Finally, out of guilt and shame, Dr. Bob reluctantly agreed, saying he'd only give Bill fifteen minutes.

That evening Bill Wilson and Dr. Bob sat down and talked. Remembering the advice from Silkworth, Bill did not preaching. Instead he talked about how he drank, and he explained the medical theory of the allergy and the mental obsession. This approach worked. Dr. Bob had said no more than fifteen minutes, but the two men talked for hours.

Over the next several weeks Bill and Bob had endless conversation about helping other alcoholics and the spiritual practices of the program they were developing. Dr. Bob had remained sober. He was "all in", except for one small aspect of the program – amends. Dr. Bob felt that a man of his position and standing in the community should not be admitting to people he was an alcoholic; that it would be damaging to his reputation.

Around this same time Dr. Bob announced to Bill and Anne that he was going to the American Medical Association convention in Atlantic City. Now that he was sober, he felt he should attend. Anne was against it, but Bill felt that if Dr. Bob was truly sober, he should be able to go.

A few mornings later Anne got a call from Bob's secretary, Ruth. She told Anne that Bob was at the train station, drunk, and that Anne needed to come get him. Later the evening, Dr. Bob came to consciousness in a panic, realizing he had to perform a surgery in the morning. Bill spent the entire night nursing Bob back to the best condition he could. The next morning Bill drove Bob to the hospital,

giving him a few beers and a sedative to calm his shaking. As he got out of the car Bob said to Bill, "I am going to go through with it".

Bill and Anne Smith sat nervously at the kitchen table awaiting Bob's return. The day passed, and Bob did not show up. Much later that evening, when Anne and Bill had resigned themselves to that fact that Bob was out drinking again, the door opened. In walked Bob with a big grin. They asked him where he had been. He told them, "I have been all over town making restitution to everyone I could think of." (Perhaps when Bob said, "I am going through with it," he was referring to amends, not the surgery.) That was June 10th, 1935. It was the last time Dr. Bob had a drink. It was the birth of Alcoholics Anonymous.

Whether it was by providence or coincidence, one thing is certain- had these events not unfolded this way, AA wouldn't be here today. Because everything happened the way it did, millions of otherwise hopeless people now have an answer and a way out of alcoholism. ♦

-By NFF Alumni Dave W.



Top: Anne Smith

Bottom: Henrietta Seiberling

Spotlight on Alumni: Jesse D. Brings the Shovel

For the past five years, Jesse has been fortunate enough to work at what he calls, “the greatest place on Earth”. (Aside from Hershey Park, that is.) As a CA supervisor at CARON Foundation, Jesse gets to be a positive role model for young men embarking on their journey to recovery.

This job is a testament to Jesse’s own successful recovery. Not only is he able to help those who are still suffering, he is also able to maintain steady and meaningful employment, something he wasn’t able to do before getting sober. “Having a job for five years, that’s amazing for me,” he said. “In the past I couldn’t do anything for five years except get high and drunk.”

Jesse’s drug use began at a very young age. “I started smoking pot around eleven, twelve years old,” Jesse said. “At thirteen years old I pretty much introduced everything else, and it was a race from there.” The beginning stages of Jesse’s addiction did not stem from a lack of structure or values. “I was raised with your regular set of morals and standards. My parents really drilled that stuff into me,” he said. For him, he said, a big part of the problem was a lack of knowledge. “I didn’t have a whole lot of education before hand about what drug and alcohol addiction was. We did the DARE program in fourth grade, but at that age no one really knows what the DARE guy is talking about.”

Once Jesse started, he didn’t stop. It became his “answer to everything,” and from what he saw, there didn’t appear to be any consequences. “There were older kids in the area that were still having fun with doing drugs and alcohol, partying and all that stuff,” he said. “So, as a young kid, that’s what I saw, was the fun, and the hanging out, with no education on what addiction was.”

At thirteen years old, Jesse found his drug of choice. “The first time I used heroin, I didn’t know anything about it. I had no clue what it was,” he said. He unknowingly began a love affair that would last a decade. “I used it for ten years. If I wasn’t incarcerated, I was using it.”

At 23, Jesse found himself in detox, facing potential jail time. When asked where he wanted to go when he was released, and he said as far away from his P.O. as possible. That’s how he ended up at Newfound Freedom, two and a half hours away from home. Jesse arrived at Old Orchard, which was then a recovery house, in August of 2008. “At that point I don’t know if I was ready to stay sober for the rest of my life,” he said. “The only thing that I knew was that I didn’t want to live the way I was living anymore. So I needed to make some kind of change.”

He was unsure at first, questioning why he had to go to meetings, why he had to go through the steps, but then something happened: “I was sitting on the couch at Old Orchard that August, and one of the guys that I really clicked with relapsed, and relapsed hard. [A few] days before the guy was happy. He was loving life and everything was good, and then seeing him a couple days later- he was just a broken individual. I thought to myself, ‘I don’t want to do that; I don’t want that to be me.’” At that moment he was “ready” to accept the solution that had been offered to him. Jesse began listening to the advice of the other guys, got a sponsor, and went through the twelve steps. He stayed in Old Orchard until the fall of 2009.

After leaving Newfound Freedom, Jesse returned to his hometown of Berks County. He immediately became active in the recovery community there, going to meetings and sharing his story. One night, after he spoke, the preacher of the church approached him. “He encouraged me to go up and fill out an application [at CARON]. With the experience that I had, he said, I’d probably be very helpful to the young men up there.”

Working for CARON or any treatment center was never part of Jesse’s plan, but he took the advice. “It was completely off the blueprint that I had designed for my life,” Jesse said. “We’re always looking for signs from a higher power. When Father Bill approached me, there was a sign right there.” And it’s a good thing he followed that sign. It lead him to a place that he believes in and loves.



*Jesse D. on his wedding day
Photo provided by Jesse*

"I've seen it absolutely change people's lives," Jesse said about CARON. "It's a one of a kind treatment; individualized treatment. It's a 12-Step based program. It's centered around getting you the care you need. And the cool thing about them is the way they follow up with you after you leave." CARON also provides extensive education on drug and alcohol addiction. This service is provided to staff, patients, and family members, creating an environment of awareness and enlightenment.

Now Jesse is able to see treatment from the other side, and his experience and education give him a unique perspective on the program. Jesse currently works on the unit for 19-25 year olds, to whom he can relate very well. "I got sober at 23 years old. [Having gone from] the life that I lived, running around the streets and all that, to living a life that is happy and joyous and free, I can set that example for other young guys," he said. "I can set the example cause I was there. I've gone through it and I survived."

Jesse is able to provide guidance, understanding, and empathy, which is very important. "I remember being in treatment," he said. "The recovery staff that were in treatment were the ones who really helped me, so I try to give that back, and really be there for the guys." As someone who is coming back sober, this can be both fulfilling and frustrating. "One of the biggest challenges I have is- you know the answer, you know the solution, you've been through the twelve steps, you're living that life and you have the answer in the palm of your hands, and you're trying to give it to people who just don't want it. Some people are just not ready for it." That's where patience comes in handy, and Jesse's strong foundation in recovery allows him to have patience, waiting for the new guys to latch on to the solution and begin changing their life.

The young men on Jesse's wing are not the only people who are learning and growing on a daily basis. Jesse himself is constantly working on his own recovery, and this job is a reminder that it takes work. "It keeps you very green, it keeps you very fresh," Jesse said about his job. "You're working with people who are still very sick, so it takes you back, reminds you where you came from. It can be a taxing job, mentally and emotionally, so it keeps your meeting attendance very sharp. Keeps me going back there just to keep myself on good spiritual ground."

This self-maintenance and daily work is what allows Jesse to have the life he has today. In addition to his amazing career, Jesse has plenty of other things to celebrate. He has come a very long way since August of 2008.

"When I showed up to Newfound Freedom, I had a garbage bag full of clothes and two shoes that didn't match," he said. "And now I have the bills are paid every month. children now. I can be a father. I can] babysit my nieces. Seven able to see my nieces." And it's relationship with his family, but other people. "I can get mad and street and getting into a fight getting high, I walk away for a figure it out. I am able to show need help carrying groceries said, what it comes down to is human being."

7 years ago, when Jesse left temporary way out. What he life. "I showed up [to Newfound deserved a second chance, but Scott did. He gave me a second chance. I was a person with nothing. Now life is amazing. Anybody who shows up to the doors there, just listen to what they have to say." Jesse listened, and he took advice, and went to meetings, and he found his way. "That's what changed my life," he said. "And I never would have had that opportunity had it not been for showing up to Newfound Freedom."

As someone who gives advice daily, Jesse is equipped with tons of encouraging, supportive, and motivational sayings. But his favorite piece of advice is this:

"God can move mountains but you need to bring the shovel." These words, he said, have really stuck with him. And it is his willingness to pick up the shovel that has allowed him to be so successful. "Your higher power can take you to amazing places, and can do amazing things, but you're gonna have to do some of the work." ♦

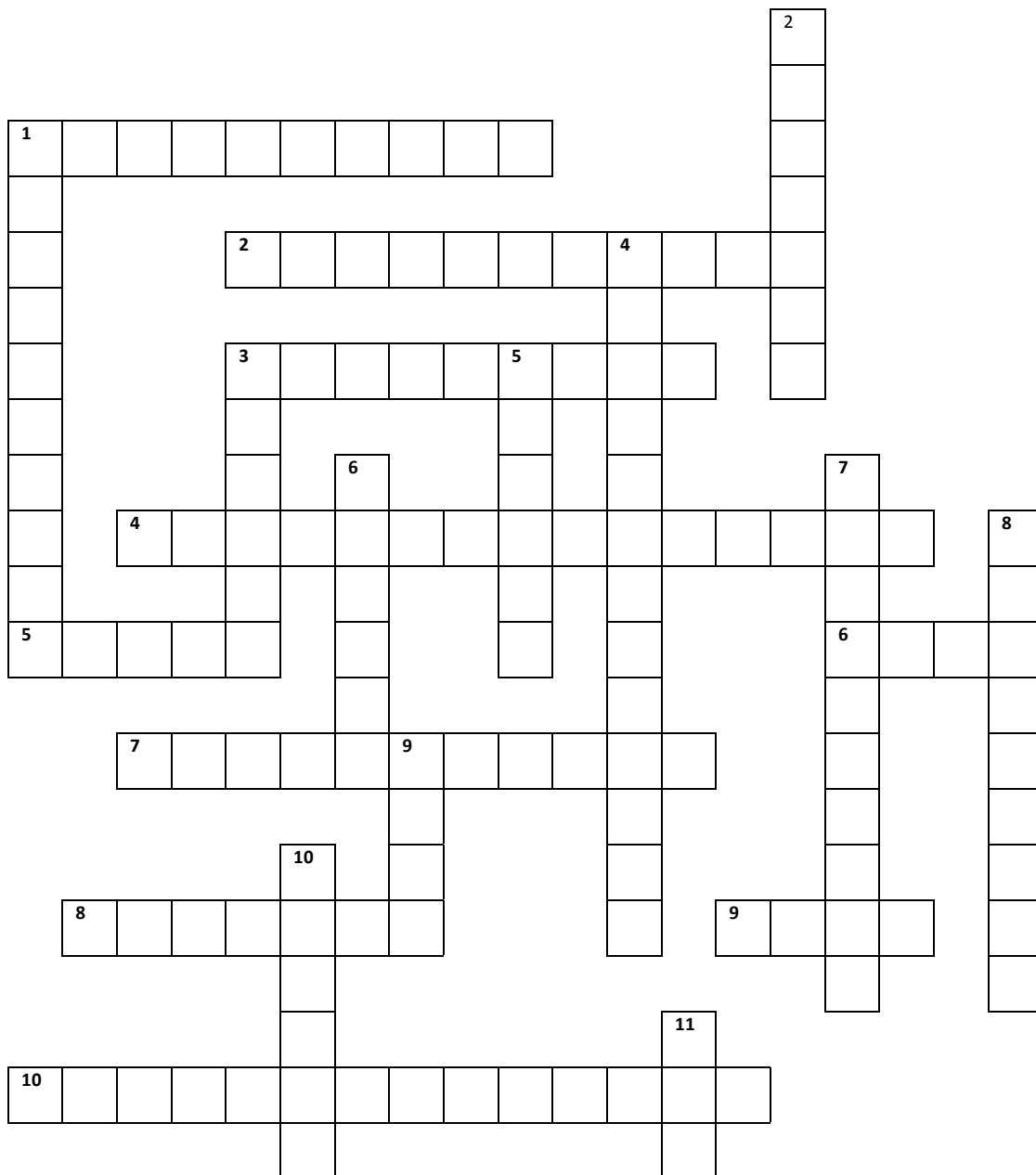


*Jesse with his family
Photo Provided by Jesse*

an established home, for which I'm married now. I raise three can be a brother. I can be a son. [I years ago I wouldn't have been not just having a home and a also an awareness of himself and instead of running down the with somebody or going and few minutes and come back and up for the neighbor when they into the house." In the end, he "being able to actually be a

detox, he was just looking for a found was the answer to a new Freedom] not even thinking I

AA HISTORY CROSSWORD PUZZLE



ACROSS

1. Where Bill worked
2. Principle of the Oxford Group
3. Where AA was born
4. How Henrietta described the phone call from Bill
5. The hospital where Bill spent a lot of time
6. Founder of AA
7. What June 10th is called by AA members
8. Mental obsession combined with an _____
9. The Dr. sought out by Rowland
10. Where Bill made the fateful payphone call

DOWN

1. What Bill saw during his spiritual experience
2. The number of minutes Bob said he would give to Bill
3. What Bob didn't agree to at first
4. Where Bill talked with his childhood friend
5. The group whose specialty was "spiritual conversions"
6. Rowland _____
7. Last name of woman who was expecting Bill's call
8. The Dr. who helped Bill
9. Bill's first sponsor
10. Founder of AA, with punctuation
11. Month of Bill's sober date, abbr.

Thanks to Everyone for Coming Out to “Officially” Kick off the Summer!

On Monday, May 25th, everyone gathered at Silver Lake for food, fun, and fellowship.

It was a beautiful day for a picnic, and folks enjoyed burgers, hotdogs, and even a veggie burger or two.

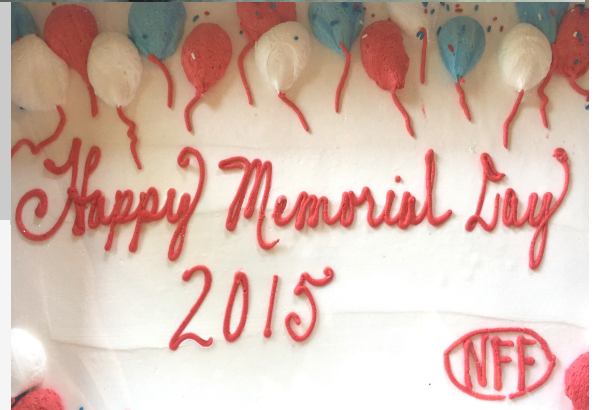
The crowd gathered together in the pavilion to listen to NFF Alumni speaker, Danny B. His message was full of humor and hope, bringing a lot of laughter and a few tears to the group.

It was an afternoon of smiles, hugs, old friendships, and new bonds.



Above: Danny B. Speaking for the Crowd.

Right: Memorial Day Cake from ShopRite.



As always, it was a successful NFF event.
See you in September for the Labor Day Picnic!

Have a
GREAT SUMMER!



Brennan's Corner

*Helping Others
is the
Path Out of Self*

-Chris Brennan

June 2015						
Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
31	1 AA Step Mtg 7pm @ First Pres. NA Text Study 7pm @ St. Paul's	2 Men's Big Book Study 7:30pm @ 60 Jonquil	3 Garage Mtg (Men's Lit Study) 7:30pm @ Bowman	4 Recovery Rap Mtg 9:30am @ Blue Ridge	5 Have a great weekend!!! ☺	6
7 9am- Freedom Fighters vs. Beginners	8 AA Step Mtg 7pm @ First Pres. NA Text Study 7pm @ St. Paul's	9 Men's Big Book Study 7:30pm @ 60 Jonquil	10 Garage Mtg (Men's Lit Study) 7:30pm @ Bowman	11 Recovery Rap Mtg 9:30am @ Blue Ridge	12 Founders' Day Celebration Have a great weekend!!! ☺	13 Founders' Day Celebration
14 Founders' Day Celebration 9am- Freedom Fighters vs. Longshots	15 AA Step Mtg 7pm @ First Pres. NA Text Study 7pm @ St. Paul's	16 Men's Big Book Study 7:30pm @ 60 Jonquil	17 Garage Mtg (Men's Lit Study) 7:30pm @ Bowman	18 Recovery Rap Mtg 9:30am @ Blue Ridge	19 Have a great weekend!!! ☺	20
21 9am- Freedom Fighters vs. EMZ	22 AA Step Mtg 7pm @ First Pres. NA Text Study 7pm @ St. Paul's	23 Men's Big Book Study 7:30pm @ 60 Jonquil	24 Garage Mtg (Men's Lit Study) 7:30pm @ Bowman	25 Recovery Rap Mtg 9:30am @ Blue Ridge	26 Have a great weekend!!! ☺	27
28 9am- Freedom Fighters vs. Emilie House	29 NFF Celebration Mtg 7pm @ First Presbyterian	30 Men's Big Book Study 7:30pm @ 60 Jonquil	1 Garage Mtg (Men's Lit Study) 7:30pm @ Bowman	2 Recovery Rap Mtg 9:30am @ Blue Ridge	3 Have a great weekend!!! ☺	4

Freedom Flyer Writing Contest! Open to Everyone!

We will be accepting submissions on the theme of *CHANGE*.

Pieces can be in any format (personal essay, poem, informational article, cartoon, etc.)

Winners will be selected anonymously by NFF staff and pieces will appear in the October Freedom Flyer.

Email submission to newsletter@newfoundfreedom.com or mail to:

NFF Newsletter,
2817 Bowman Ave, Bristol, PA 19007

Include your name & how you heard about us.

Submissions due by August 15th

Upcoming Events!

*4th annual Liberty Bell Roundup- August 21-23

Register Now!

<http://libertybellroundup.com>

*NFF Labor Day Picnic- September 7

*PROACT Recovery Walk- September 12



NFF Celebration Meeting

Last Monday of Every Month!!!



Contact Us:

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