

DECEMBER

OUTSIDE THE

2025

BOTTLE



District 16 Newsletter

MARTY B.

GRATEFUL FOR THE MAN I BECAME

My name is Marty, and I am an alcoholic. I grew up believing I was a liar and a thief after being wrongly blamed—and punished—when I was five. By 13, guilt and confusion led me to drinking. A man down the street made wine and let us have as much as we wanted, and I knew where he kept the key.

After high school, I was drafted and sent to Korea. Beer was a nickel, and my drinking escalated. As a medic, I saw things I wasn't prepared for. On my first ambulance run, faced with blood and chaos, the older guys told me I'd be fine—and took me for beer. I stayed drunk almost the entire time I was overseas.

When I came home, I worked at General Motors—another place where drinking was easy to hide. I could stop for a while whenever my wife or in-laws complained, but I always returned to alcohol. In the '70s, Valium, Librium, and marijuana were easy to get, and I used them whenever I needed to look “okay.”

Eventually I had an affair. I knew if my wife left, she'd take the kids. I wasn't a perfect husband, but I loved my children deeply—I fed them, dressed them, did everything for them. I went to treatment to figure out a plan. I was shaking so badly the kids brought me half-filled cups of coffee. I spent 28 days there and started attending meetings. At St. David's, I met my sponsor, Joe.

Joe didn't rush me. When I told him AA was boring, he said it stays boring until you start working the steps. Step One showed me I was powerless over alcohol—I'd never had *one* drink in my life.

Step Two taught me that sanity simply meant sober, rational thinking. Step Three required me to set aside old religious baggage and choose a Higher Power I could understand.

The Fourth Step changed everything. Joe told me I didn't love my wife or girlfriend because I didn't love myself. He asked me to look in the mirror and say, “You're the nicest person I know.” It felt ridiculous—but slowly I began to believe it.

Sobriety opened new doors. I started volunteering with Special Olympics—first warming up athletes, then chaperoning, then coaching. People trusted me. I even

learned to ski in my 40s and joined ski patrol, where I helped save three lives, including my wife's. My six grandchildren have never seen me drink.

Over time I learned what love means: wanting the other person to be happy, whether or not I'm part of that happiness. Sponsoring others gives me joy—I love watching people come alive in the program. Joe taught me that if someone doesn't stay sober, it doesn't mean I failed. My job is to stay sober myself.

My wife struggled with her health for years and ultimately chose to die at home so everyone could say goodbye. Before she passed, she told me she wanted me and Scruffy to take her van, travel, and find someone who would make me happy. We had made our amends. We were happy for decades.

Life isn't always fair—my father used to say the only fair is at Woodward and 8 Mile—but today, life is good. I'm grateful for sobriety, for the people who trusted me, and for the man I've become.



DENISE P

LESSONS LEARNED

“It works if you work at it!”—that’s what I’ve learned. I came to AA about 20 years ago. I wish I could say I stayed sober from that first meeting, but that wasn’t my story. I strung together many 30-day chips, several four- and six-month stretches, and even three- and five-year sober periods. Along the way, I made mistakes I pray I never forget again.

I returned to AA in October 2022. Then, on January 15, 2023, my son overdosed and passed away. That day, I went to a meeting—and I went every day for a long time. For the first three months, all I could do was cry and feel anger. My homegroup showed up for me in a big way. My sponsor suggested I do a Fifth Step just about my son. I took her suggestion. After hearing me, she told me she could help with some of it—but I also needed a therapist for the rest. I am forever grateful to her guidance and honesty. Over these years, I’ve learned some hard lessons:

Lesson One: Never stop praying for the willingness to go to any lengths. When I stop praying, I lose willingness. When willingness goes, the steps go—and then I forget how bad my drinking was. Without prayer, I drift toward danger.

Lesson Two: Do not stop going to meetings. When I stop going, I stop working the steps. I stop helping others. I lose accountability, and my mind forgets where I came from.

Lesson Three: Get a sponsor. When I tried recovery without one, I had no direction. Following my sponsor’s suggestions gives my life structure and solutions.

Lesson Four: Don’t skip writing a Fourth Step. When I avoided putting resentments, fears, harms, and behaviors on paper, I fell into madness—anxiety, confusion, pain, and hopelessness.

Lesson Five: Don’t avoid the Fifth Step. If I don’t share those truths with someone safe, the emotions and defects spill out everywhere. Doing Step Five helps me see what I need my Higher Power to remove in Steps Six and Seven.

Lesson Six: Don’t rush Steps Six and Seven. When I hurried them, I didn’t grow spiritually. I lost humility and ignored my motives and misbehaviors. When pain hit, my defects raged like fire.

Lesson Seven: Review Step Eight with a sponsor. When I tried doing it alone, I made amends that caused more harm and devastated a family. I didn’t understand the process.

Lesson Eight: Learn how to make amends the right way. One person on my Fourth Step had hurt me deeply as a child—I thought I had to make amends to him. I didn’t yet understand my true part, which was unwillingness to forgive. My sponsor helped me see who I owed amends to, and who I didn’t. She also reminded me: wait for God’s timing. Some amends still haven’t been possible, and that’s okay.

Lesson Nine: Don’t neglect Step Ten. When I stop taking daily inventory, I repeat old behavior. My character defects return, and I become blind to my part. Step Ten keeps me grounded and honest.

Lesson Ten: Don’t stop praying or meditating. Without them, my ego takes over. I forget to look at the world through spiritual eyes. I forget that helping others is a privilege. My soul gets tired when I skip meditation. My Higher Power gave me grace—so I must give grace to others. Recovery shows up in small ways too, even in something as simple as returning a grocery cart.

These are just some of the lessons I’ve learned. There are many more, but these stand out. I pray I never forget them. I remain teachable because I still have so much to learn. By continuing to work the steps—*continuing* being the key—my life has gotten better. Sponsorship, meetings, and service are essential to my program. I can’t keep it if I don’t give it away.

KAYE W.

G.I.F.T.S. OF SOBRIETY

As the year comes to a close, I find myself reflecting upon my journey of recovery. There was a time where I was merely a hopeless shell of insanity – full of fear and drinking to escape reality. I started drinking alcohol at a young age, which I account for the lack of my emotional development. I numbed my feelings for over 25 years! With the help of Alcoholics Anonymous, I have begun to find clarity and strength to overcome my fears and enjoy reality.

Holidays always seem to get a bit stressful. There are parties & potlucks & presents ... gifts. I am an overthinking individual and always want a gift to mean something or have some sentimental value to it - only to watch it be torn open & tossed aside. So with the opportunity to write this, I would like to share my gifts of sobriety!

Sharing is caring ...

G – Gratitude: I have found a way to be grateful for what I have ... It is amazing what a small drop of appreciation can do! I attempt to voice my gratitude – the attitude of gratitude is contagious!

I – Intuition: The 9th Step Promises point out that we will intuitively understand things which used to baffle us. With the help of this program, I can comprehend situations with a level of acceptance that I did not have previously.

F – Friends: Friends. Real friends. The kind I can laugh with, cry with and who are rigorously honest. I can finally feel comfortable in my own skin because I'm not hiding anything.

T – Twenty-four Hours: No more; No less. This concept of “One Day At a Time” has allowed me to continuously improve each day. I can focus on the day ahead without the overwhelming thoughts of yesterday or tomorrow.

S – Spirituality: I have identified a higher power that is not myself. I remind myself everyday (at 3:15pm an alarm goes off on my phone) to turn my life over. I am not alone and I have a self-defined, loving, caring guide through this journey.

Today, I look forward to being present – through the joy and struggles. I have worked the 12 steps multiple times and am able to recognize my defects before my mind gets to the point of no return. I have a toolbox full of ways to help me navigate situations. Life has taken on new meaning. I have a purpose. I have been given so many gifts throughout my 4 years of sobriety. And in order to keep those gifts, I must give away what was so freely given to me.

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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 Officers

Bob P--District Committee Member
Christina N-- Alternative District Committee Member
Peter S-- Treasurer
Tana M --Secretary

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

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

December 7, 2025

915 E Eleven Mile Rd, Madison Heights, MI 48071