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Intergroup Office Handles Inquiries For New York Area

Serving the greater New York area seven days a week - including Sundays - the Intergroup Association of Alcoholics Anonymous plays an important part in AA's program of helping the sick alcoholic to recover in the New York area.

The association, which was organized last winter and which opened its offices at 194 East 75 Street, New York, on December 1, 1946, is a non-stock, non-profit member corporation composed of delegates from more than 33 A.A. groups in the New York metropolitan area.

The officers of the association - president, secretary, financial secretary and treasurer and its board of directors are elected by the delegates. A steering committee, composed of the five officers and four board members, directs the affairs of the Intergroup office.

Two delegates from each participating A.A. group in the New York area form the general assembly of the association. At present the area includes the counties of New York, Bronx, Queens, Kings, Richmond, Westchester, Nassau and Suffolk.

Acts As Liaison

According to Fred M., president of the association, the purposes of the organization are: to handle inquiries and referrals for newcomers to A.A., to

arrange hospitalization for sick alcoholics who request it, to act as liaison between member groups of the association, to handle public relations for the New York area and to plan and conduct the weekly Intergroup meeting.

To carry out its aims, the office is staffed by two paid secretaries and numerous volunteer workers who carry out the 12th Step work. It is a busy place - the office handles more than 140 telephone calls daily and an average of 40 letters a day.

On weekdays, the office opens at 10 a.m. and closes at 8 p.m. On Sundays and holidays, the office is open from 12 noon to 6 p.m. A telephone answering service goes into operation when the office is closed.

The paid secretaries spend a large part of their time arranging hospitalization for alcoholics who request it. Most of the persons are sent to Knickerbocker Hospital, New York, where A.A.s are allowed to visit the patients and inform them of the A.A. program of recovery. Other hospitalization is available in New York, however, and, depending on the availability of bed space and the need, the secretaries make the arrangements.

The planning and conducting of the Intergroup meeting of A.A. each week is another function of the office. Speakers are chosen and a program arranged each week for the meeting in the Engineering

Auditorium, 29 West 39 Street, New York. In addition, a monthly "special events" Intergroup meeting is arranged in that auditorium.

Each week a mimeographed bulletin goes out from the office to the secretaries of the member groups. Once a month, a bulletin, in color, goes out to the groups announcing the programs of the next two "special events" Intergroup meetings. From time to time, a printed list of the open and closed meetings of all groups in the New York area goes out to the groups.

Volunteers Explain A.A.

A considerable amount of work and an equal responsibility falls on the volunteer A.A. workers who are on duty in the office. Four desks for volunteer workers - both men and women - are provided at all times.

These volunteer workers answer the telephone, if the caller is a person seeking aid or information, talk the problem over with him. If hospitalization is indicated, the volunteer worker turns the call over to a secretary. Volunteers are the first person to see the visitors to the office. If the visitor is an alcoholic interested in becoming a member of A.A., the volunteer interviews him, tells him the story of A.A. And directs him to the group nearest his

home. As all of this type of work is considered 12th Step work, the paid secretaries do not handle it.

The following case which was handled recently, illustrates how the Intergroup office functions:

At 1 o'clock in the afternoon, a 35-year-old man visited the office. An interview with a volunteer worker disclosed that the man not only needed medical attention but was jobless and without money.

Medical Attention Arranged

After hearing the man's story, the volunteer called a doctor who is sympathetic to A.A. The doctor agreed to see the man who was escorted to the doctor's office by another volunteer worker. The man received the necessary medicines and an injection of Vitamin B. He was then escorted back to the office.

Further talk with the man disclosed that he had been discharged from his job on Christmas Eve for drinking; that he had continued to drink until he became drunk, when he was rolled; that he had continued drinking and had drawn all of his money from the bank.

When his funds were exhausted, the man begged, borrowed and stole to get liquor for a period of three weeks when his wife and family held a council of war to decide whether to commit him to an institution. Alcoholics Anonymous, however, was suggested and this suggestion brought the man to the office.

Feeling better, the man was directed by the volunteer worker to the South Bronx Group, nearest his home. At present, the man is sober, an active A.A. in the Bronx Group and has been reemployed by his company.

Plenty of 12th Step Work

According to the secretaries, the Intergroup telephone number will be listed in all directories of New York in the very near future. At present the telephone number is Butterfield 8-9643. "We sure could use more volunteers," one of the secretaries said. "It's the very best kind of 12th Step work," said the other.