

2020

Summer
Newsletter

ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS
BRIDGING
THE
GAP

TEMPORARY CONTACTS

THIS YEAR'S EVENT HAS BEEN RESCHEDULED
We look forward to seeing you in 2021

Same weekend—Same place

Holiday Inn Rock Island Hotel

226 17th Street

Rock Island, Illinois 61201

Watch for registration & highlights in upcoming newsletters

September 10-12, 2021

About the BTGWW Newsletter

For many decades AA members have been helping problem drinkers bridge the gap between Alcoholics Anonymous and hospitals, institutions, and corrections facilities. We arrange an AA contact to go with the clients and offenders to their first AA meetings when they arrive home.

BTGWW is an informal gathering of AA members from many entities, including groups, districts, conference areas, the General Service Office and intergroups/central offices.

The BTGWW newsletter, Annual Workshop Weekend, and digital Resource Library are other tools that help us learn from each other.

Our committee members invite you to join us and share your experiences.

This workshop is self-supporting
through registrations.

*This newsletter is confidential and meant to
be shared within the fellowship of
Alcoholics Anonymous*

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2020-2021 BTGWW OFFICERS

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Host Committee	
Wheezie, Host Chair	host@btgww.org

The health and safety of our community is our main priority. Working with the hotel and Area 20 the 30th Annual Bridging the Gap Workshop Weekend event has been rescheduled for September 10-12, 2021 at the Holiday Inn Rock Island, 226 17th Street, Rock Island, Illinois 61201.

BTGWW will continue to connect inside alcoholics requesting temporary contacts with outside members of Alcoholics Anonymous through its bridging portal on the BTGWW website at www.btgww.org. Please contact us if you need assistance using our site or resources to help support inside alcoholics in your district or area. We are available to attend your bridging the gap meetings via technologies such as Zoom, to offer site support or help you with your bridging programs.

We would love to pass on information about how you are meeting the needs of inside alcoholics leaving facilities during these challenging times, so please remain in touch!

Dan L.
coordinator@btgww.org

Laura S.
altcoordinator@btgww.org

From the Alternate Coordinator

We are taught to live life on life's terms. Bridging the gap between inside alcoholics and outside Alcoholics Anonymous during the Covid-19 pandemic challenges us to continue serving our fellows, even though familiar access has been affected. We are called on to set aside old ideas and search for creative, innovative methods to ensure alcoholics leaving treatment and corrections facilities have temporary contacts. How do we ensure newly released alcoholics are connected to a member of Alcoholics Anonymous? How do we provide them with someone who will take them to meetings, introduce them to members of the fellowship, and, most importantly, help them choose a homegroup and sponsor? We need to think outside the box, given many of our meetings are using internet technologies, such as Zoom. We need to solve the problem of meeting with and introducing newly discharged and released alcoholics to members of our fellowship while keeping safe social distancing in mind. Some of us rely on correspondence, video visits, or telephone. In whatever way you adjust your programs during these changing times, we must continue our vital Twelve Step service bringing newly released alcoholics into the middle of Alcoholics Anonymous.

Laura S.
Alternate Coordinator, Bridging the Gap Workshop Weekend
altcorrinator@btgww.org

Now about Technology

Hi Everyone,

Things have been unusually different recently—I hear members in service constantly struggling with the fact that we have no guidebook—no one has gone before us to show us how to do this—and I wonder if this is how Bill and Dr. Bob and the other first members of AA felt when they were trying to figure things out in 1935.

I have heard it said that the only thing constant is change. And while AA typically moves slowly, things have changed very rapidly in recent months. Technology, that some members weren't even aware of four months ago, has become standard.

So I have to remember that technology is just a tool that we use. Technology will always be changing— what does remain constant is the heart of AA members and their willingness to help other alcoholics get sober. By whatever means, face to face, on the phone, texting, or thru the internet, it is still one alcoholics sharing their experience, strength and hope with a new member trying not to drink that day.

Please share your experiences, successes, and difficulties with us—we may be spread out across the conference but we are not alone.

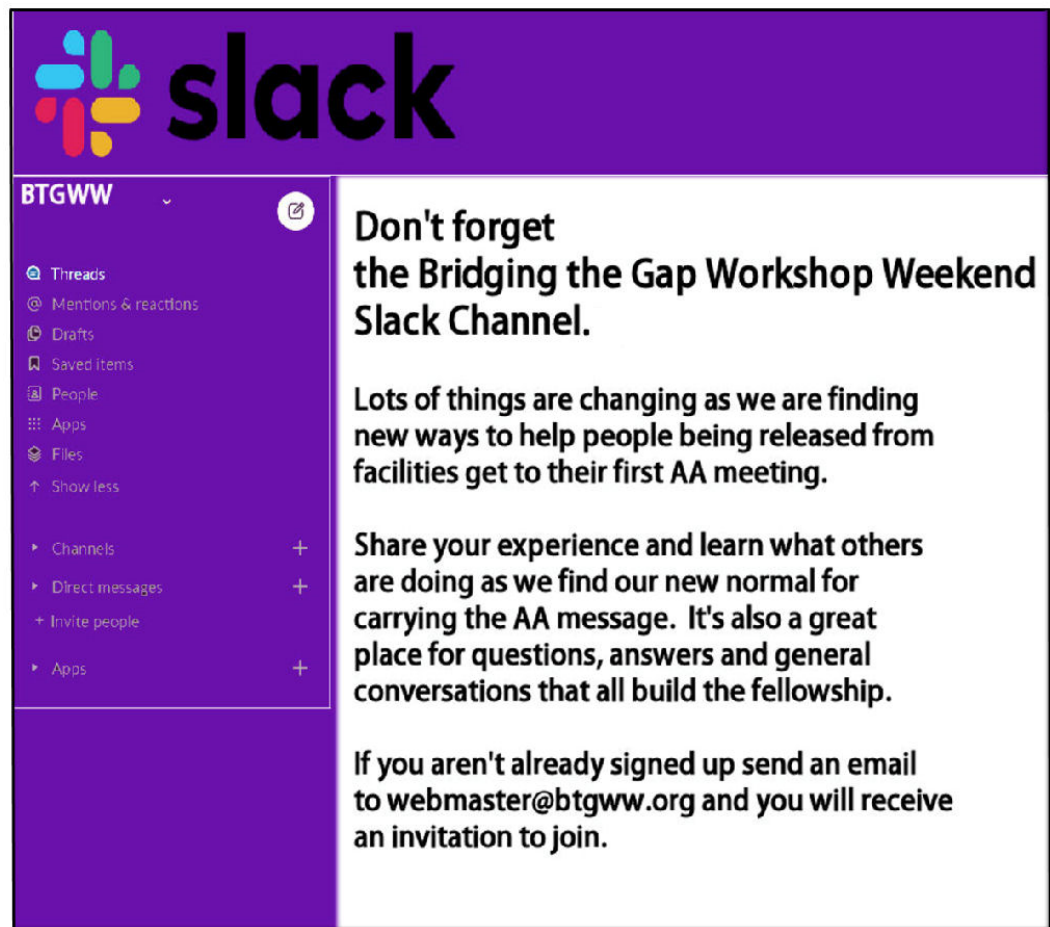
Last year, we set up a slack work space for BTGWW. Here we can share what we are doing and what has worked and what hasn't, in real time.

The slack workspace is available to any AA member.

Please join me as we bridge the gap together.

Cheri J.

Web Administrator



The image shows a screenshot of a Slack workspace for BTGWW. The interface is dark-themed with a purple header. On the left is a sidebar with navigation options: Threads, Mentions & reactions, Drafts, Saved Items, People, Apps, Files, and Show less. Below these are expandable sections for Channels, Direct messages, Invite people, and Apps. The main content area on the right features a white message box with the following text:

Don't forget the Bridging the Gap Workshop Weekend Slack Channel.

Lots of things are changing as we are finding new ways to help people being released from facilities get to their first AA meeting.

Share your experience and learn what others are doing as we find our new normal for carrying the AA message. It's also a great place for questions, answers and general conversations that all build the fellowship.

If you aren't already signed up send an email to webmaster@btgww.org and you will receive an invitation to join.

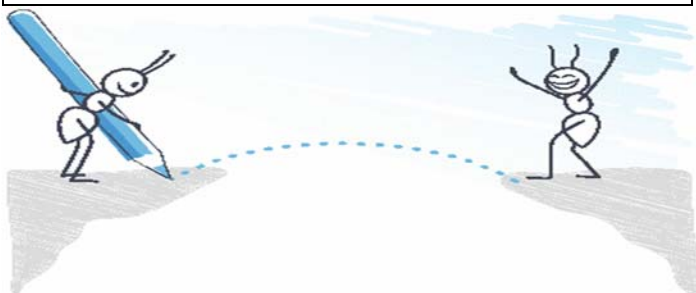
“... all these members know that they belong to AA’s world-wide community, that theirs is only a physical separation, that their fellows may be as near as the next port of call.” Bill W. letter 1966

***Bridging the Gap in Treatment Centers
of Northern California Coastal
Area 06 During the Covid-19 Crisis***

Larry B., CNCA Area 06 BTG Chair, Panel 69, is aware how difficult it can be for inside alcoholics to become connected to local AA groups and fellowship during this health crisis and his committee is taking action to ensure it continues to effectively bridge the gap in recovery centers while under Shelter in Place Health Orders. Most of the recovery centers they serve are open, and his committee has begun making presentations using Zoom technology. In response Area 06 is now accepting BTG requests directly from facility staff.

Larry has asked his District BTG Chairs to let treatment facilities know their service committee continues to function as a Twelve-Step resource for their clients. He wants the facilities to know the Fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous has demonstrated its resiliency, with many groups transitioning to online meetings using Zoom. Their intergroups and central offices are posting online meeting schedules with information on how to access those meetings and their members continue to staff help line phone numbers.

They accept BTG requests from staff via email or text containing their client's name, gender, city, phone number and email. They also continue to match newcomers with volunteers willing to support their recovery by phone, help them find meetings online, and attend those online meetings with them. They also send facility staff their BTG Request Form, a list of Northern California intergroups with their websites and phone numbers, and information on using Zoom and Understanding Anonymity.



***Past Coordinator of BTGWW
Uses "Win, Win, Win"
When Talking About Bridging the Gap***

Members of AA simply love three-word phrases. It's true; Happy, Joyous and Free – Experience, Strength and Hope – Honesty, Open-mindedness and Willingness. I use them, so do you – I'm sure.

When talking about Bridging the Gap, and I talk about that a lot – I use Win, Win, Win.

Bridging the Gap is definitely a Win, Win, Win scenario for AA. Let me explain that thought. The First Win is easily explained. That is the Win for the Prospect, which is what we call someone who has become interested in Alcoholics Anonymous primarily from contact with members taking meetings into a Treatment Facility, Correctional Facility or similar institution. The Prospect Wins when they take the opportunity to go to an AA meeting and change their life. To help them get integrated into the AA way of life, there are two sober members of Alcoholics Anonymous to meet them and explain what is taking place, show them where the coffee pot is, identify possible sponsors, introduce them to other AAs and generally help them feel a part of. That is the first big Win.

The second Win is equally well-known. That is the Win attained by the Volunteers that help the Prospect during their first few meetings. Ever since Bill and Dr. Bob visited the Akron City Hospital in 1935, members have replicated that Win over and over – simply good old-fashioned 12th Step work. There is nothing like it and I know that many of you know exactly what I am talking about. The second Win keeps us sober by letting us give of ourselves so that others may survive. What about this third Win in Win, Win, Win?

The third Win is for AA as a whole. Plain and simple, we all Win when we actively engage in Bridging the Gap. As we create and grow Bridging the Gap in our Districts, Central Offices, Intergroups, and Areas,

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***Past Coordinator of BTGWW
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we sit on a committee with other AAs that have an equal passion for Twelve Step work. We rub shoulders with others that are willing to give their time and energy to answer the phone, make up contact lists, carry meetings and information into the facilities, visit Groups or Districts to encourage fellow AA members to volunteer in whatever capacity they can, and to be willing to drop everything to meet with the Prospect once the contact is made.

Members who are a part of Bridging the Gap are more efficient AA members because they learn how to use the many tools that are available to assist them, such as CPC, Literature, Corrections, Treatment, Public Information and even Grapevine. They understand that the world of AA extends far beyond the walls of their Home Group.

The Win for Alcoholics Anonymous as a whole comes in the guise of Prospects arriving at our meetings with a better understanding of what AA actually is. They have seen these volunteers bring meetings into their facility and, if they have reached out for help, they know that someone is waiting for them inside the rooms that will help them understand exactly what the meetings on the outside are like.

The Win for AA as a whole comes through the understanding that We can make a difference in someone’s sobriety – our own, our fellow group members and potential members we haven’t even met yet nor would have met without being active in Bridging the Gap.

It has been my privilege to be active in Bridging the Gap for a number of years. Like many others, my first exposure to Bridging the Gap came through attending the Bridging the Gap Workshop Weekend. Having attended a dozen Bridging the Gap Workshop Weekend events, it has been my privilege to be up to my neck in planning and presentation of the last five Workshop Weekends.

Looking at each separate group of attendees over the years has brought me to the realization of how special this group of Volunteers really is. Meeting in different cities of our own choosing, fully supported by the voluntary contributions of the attendees of the event, we gather. There are some familiar faces and many new friends.

We gather for a single purpose and that is to share our experience, strength and hope with each other so that we may come away from this event more effective in Carrying the Message through Bridging the Gap.

Win, Win, Win.

Pete G., BTGWW Coordinator, 2018-19

We often get requests for information and access to the BTGWW Digital Library.

As we move forward, please send letters, documents, and procedures that are developed so they can be added to the library. We currently have separate sections for corrections and treatment, and sub-sections for members, professionals, and clients/offenders. Our shared experience is our strength.

The library is password protected and blocked from search engines so that any personal contact information contained in the documents is protected.

Greetings!

Due to our "Shelter in Place" order, we will offer the Staff in Recovery Centers the opportunity to send us the BTG/Corrections request forms from your clients. While our local BTG Committee of Alcoholics Anonymous has temporarily stopped making Presentations at your Facilities, our Service Committees continue to function as a Twelve Step Resource for your Clients.

In response to our recent Health orders, the Fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous has demonstrated its resiliency with many Groups transitioning to online Meetings using applications such as Zoom. Our Intergroups and Central Offices are posting online Meeting Schedules with information on how to access these Meetings. Our Members continue to staff our Help Line Phone Numbers.

BTG will continue to match Newcomers with volunteers who are willing to support their recovery by phone, helping to find Meetings online and attend those online meetings with them. We also have online groups that will verify attendance if required.

As fellow alcoholics in recovery, we can only imagine how difficult it must be to become connected to our local AA Groups and the Fellowship during this health crisis.

BTG Request Forms, <http://www.btg.wamo-aa> for those being released in Missouri or <http://www.btgww.org> (look for first entry –"if you are being released from a treatment center") and our BTG Phone number 816-508-5889 will continue to be a vital resource. We have added links to Zoom and Understanding Anonymity.

We hope you are in Good Health and your Clients find this information helpful.

Your Local BTG Committee of Western Area 39

Online Meetings that Verify Attendance

The following three online groups have indicated they will provide verification of attendance.

[Step Chat Group click here \(http://stepchat.com/aa.htm\)](http://stepchat.com/aa.htm).

O, A, CH>>Step Chat O=anyone may attend, A= Regular, CH=Chat (text) Meeting

There 19 AA meetings a week scheduled at Step Chat, and an open chat room is available 24/7.

For your protection, chat rooms require registration and a password, but you can use an alias to register.

[For Information about Joining Meetings click here \(http://stepchat.com/aa.htm \)](http://stepchat.com/aa.htm)

[For Information on Confirmation of Attendance click here \(https://stepchat.com/confirm.htm \)](https://stepchat.com/confirm.htm)

NoNameYet Group: [For Information click here \(https://nonameyet.org\)](https://nonameyet.org)

[For Information on Confirmation of Attendance click here \(https://nonameyet.org/our-online-meetings/nonameyet-guest-chat/ \)](https://nonameyet.org/our-online-meetings/nonameyet-guest-chat/)

OnlinegroupAA: [OnlinegroupAA click here \(www.onlinegroupaa.org \)](http://www.onlinegroupaa.org) Register with the group, then follow their directions.

Note: Please check with the person requesting verification to make sure that online meetings can be used to meet their specific requirements. Some jurisdictions/organizations do recognize online meetings, but others do not.

Why Have A BTGWW Archives ?

From 1991 to this year (2020, 30 years) we have been collecting items related to A.A.'s BTG efforts. One thing I have learned from Bill Wilson's writings is that A.A.'s archives (including BTGWW Archives) are important to have and maintain :

In 1957 Bill W. wrote : "We are trying to build up extensive records which will be of value to a future historian... "It is highly important that the factual material be placed in our files in such a way that there can be no substantial distortion... "We want to keep enlarging on this idea for the sake of the full length history to come..."

The following BTG-related and annual Workshop Weekend (BTGWW) topics are those that can be found in our Archives :

History	Newsletters	Registration Flyers
Workshop Agendas	Workshop Attendees	BTG Skits
BTG Pamphlets	Workshop Summaries	Workshop Finances
Workshop Guidelines	GSO Letters	Box 459 Articles
GSO Newsletters	Conference Reports	Grapevines
International Conventions	Workshops Tapes, CDs	Local Area's Literature
Advisory Actions	Future Workshops Host Bid Sheets	

Please contact me concerning any topic I might be able to help with.

Craig B., BTGWW Archivist

One of my favorite history items I came across is what I consider is the very first successful Bridging The Gap event (and the essence of what BTG is about) during the beginning of A.A. as follows :

The Earliest Bridging The Gap Work . . . began 24 days after the start of AA. This was



when Bill W. & Dr. Bob had been Twelfth Stepping AAs Third Member ("The Man On The Bed") Bill Dotson. It was on that day (July 4th, 1935) in Akron's City Hospital that he (Bill Dotson) admitted he couldn't control his drinking and had to leave it up to God. Then they (Bill W. and Dr. Bob) made him get down on his knees at the side of the bed and pray and say that he would turn his life over to God. Before the visit was over, he suddenly turned to his wife Henrietta and said, "Go fetch my clothes, dear. We're going to get up and get out of here." He walked out of that hospital a free man, never to drink again. AA's Number One Group dates from that day.

That same day (Fourth of July) they had plenty to celebrate. So they had a picnic. The Smiths, Bill Wilson, the Dotsons, and Eddie Riley (the first alcoholic they tried to help) were there.

At that time in the early summer of 1935 there were no meetings like we have been enjoying for 85 years. Still, instead of leaving Bill Dotson to his own devices when it was time to be discharged, why someone decided to stick close by – even if it was just a picnic -- to help the newcomer get a good start in sobriety. That is about as close to today's Bridging The Gap as one can get.