

# The Check N

Volume XIV

“. . . *Spiritual Progress Not Spiritual Perfection.* . . .”

Fall 2007



When you have a right relationship with your Higher Power. . .

He treats you like a pumpkin.

He picks you from the patch. . .

Brings you in . . .

And washes all the dirt off of you!

Then, He cuts off the top and scoops out all the yucky stuff.

He removes the seeds of doubt, hate, and greed.

Then, He carves you a new smiling face and puts His light inside of you to shine for the entire world to see.

*Will M.*

## Healthy Meetings Retreat Has Healthy Pre-registration

As of October 5, 60 people had pre-registered for the 2007 IISAA Fall Retreat, *Healthy Meetings for Healthy Recovery*.

“Meetings are the heart of the SAA fellowship. At meetings we emerge from our shame, secrecy, and fear, into a community of people who share the common goal of freedom from sex addiction. They give us the opportunity to talk about our lives and our addiction with other sex addicts, people who have had similar experiences and understand the problems we face.” (*Sex Addicts Anonymous* p. 10).

Registrants from eight states outside of Indiana constitute 30% of those planning to attend. What a great opportunity for the Indiana Fellowship to share in the experience, strength, and hope of meeting groups that may employ procedures, practices, and policies that are different than our own and which could help us to improve the quality of our own meetings.

A variety of individual and panel presentations are included in the retreat program, along with numerous opportunities to “retreat” from the everyday stresses and problems of life so that one can focus on the really essential matters. All of this takes place in the beautiful and serene confines of Camp Pyoca which is nestled in the gently rolling hills of southern Indiana.

The current rate for the entire weekend is \$80 and includes two night’s lodging and all meals and materials. If your schedule will not allow you to spend the entire weekend, how about coming down for the day on Saturday. The Saturday only fee is \$40. Scholarships are available. At this time, it is best to register directly with Mike C. at (317) 784-2180; however, you can register at the door.

## 2007-2008 Intergroup Officers

Harry D., Friday KIS

Dale W., Friday KIS

Richard S., Sunday Morning Men’s

Bill G., Tuesday, Epworth

Kevin C., Saturday, Shame to Grace

Mike C., Wednesday, Methodist Hospital

Chair

Vice-Chair

Treasurer

Corresponding Secretary

Recording Secretary

Literature Representative

From the Editor

## Good Stewards?

A steward is someone charged with managing the finances or affairs of others. In that regard IISAA is the steward of the donations it receives from its member groups. I have served on Intergroup for many years and I have always been an advocate for good stewardship.

In planning for our annual picnic, there was a lively discussion of how much we should spend on the event—the discussion was rekindled when the picnic report showed that only 13 people attended.

Planning activities in 12-Step groups is complicated by many factors. Not the least of these are anonymity, the varied interests of members, the amount of time members are able and/or willing to dedicate to recovery, and/or legal restrictions as to activities in which they can participate.

Because I believe that all addicts need quality outer circle activities to support their recovery, I do not hesitate to vote to use our treasury to provide top-quality events for members of the Indiana fellowship of SAA where they can socialize in healthy ways. Unfortunately, attendance at these events is sometimes disappointing.

Recently, I helped to staff an SAA table at Fort Wayne Pride for seven hours where we only handed out nine pieces of SAA literature. Was it worth it? I believe that, if even **one** person's life was impacted by our fellowship having a table

there, the time and the cost of booth rental demonstrate good stewardship.

I view these and similar recovery activities the same as I view meetings. It is impossible to know at which one meeting which one person will receive what he/she needs to end a life of addiction and begin one of recovery.

What do you think?

*Mike C.*

## Kindness

*A little word in kindness spoken,  
a motion or a tear,  
has often healed the heart  
that's broken  
and made a friend sincere.*

*A word, a look,  
has crushed to earth  
full many a budding flower,  
which, had a smile  
but owned its birth  
would bless life's darkest hour.*

*Then deem it not an idle thing  
a pleasant word you spake,  
the face you wear,  
the thought you bring,  
a heart may heal or break.*

*John Greenleaf Whittier*

## Jim M.

1982 – 2007

Jim M., a gentle and quiet person, attended a number of local meetings. Jim, like other members who find their way to our program early in life, had the potential to avoid the painful progression of addiction and to find a healthy, happier life. Sadly, such was not to be the case.

His obituary stated, "Jim was a gentle person who enjoyed nature and animals, but was tormented by mental illness that took away his young adulthood. He dreamed of earning his Bachelors Degree from Marian College, a campus where he felt at home. His family and friends were so proud of his perseverance to overcome many problems and bad habits, and try to become a good Christian man while living on earth."

Jim's family expressed that he felt safe and welcome in our meetings and expressed gratitude for our kindness to him.

Please remember Jim and his family in your thoughts and prayers.

The Check **N** is the newsletter of the Indiana Intergroup of Sex Addicts Anonymous (IISAA) and is published quarterly.

The Check **N** is provided free of charge to SAA members and others upon request.

Material for inclusion in the newsletter, permission to copy all or part of the newsletter, or comments for improving this publication may be addressed to:

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## A Perfect Picnic?

The annual fellowship picnic is the oldest of the four social activities that Intergroup currently sponsors. It was begun by the Sunday Morning Men's Meeting which planned and presented it for many years. I attended a few of the picnics held at Eagle Creek Park and I believe that I have been to all of the picnics in the past 15 years.

In my experience, there has not been a nicer picnic than this year's.

The August heat wave relented and provided a near-perfect day of weather with clear skies and low humidity. **Dale W.**, Vice Chair of Intergroup, decorated the shelter house and created activities that made for a festive and fun afternoon. And, the grill-master, **Mike P.**, served burgers and dogs that were complimented by the pitch-in dishes that everyone brought.

**Tracy P.** and **Dale W.** won the Bocce Ball tournament. **Morris B.** was victorious in completing the Recovery Crossword Puzzle. **Mike P.** scored the most points in the Dart Toss. **Bill J.** found Scavenger Hunt items beginning with nearly every letter of the alphabet. And, **Tracy P.** and **Dale W.** kept from breaking their water balloon in the Water Balloon Toss until everyone else had endured a nice, moist, cool-off. With two first-place finishes, **Tracy P.** was the grand prize winner for the day.











The only really disappointing thing about the day was the attendance. Only **13** members of the fellowship participated.

Most every year, someone comments that many of our members who have probation or parole restrictions cannot attend the

picnic if it is held in a public park. Every year, we ask for suggestions for alternative sites. Only a few facilities are ever recommended. We check out every one of those sites. So far, none have met our needs. (Note: Several people recently suggested the *Celebrations* facility on the west side. That property is for sale and they are not accepting 2008 reservations.)

This year, **Dale W.** and I have committed ourselves to finding a new site for the 2008 picnic. We have already visited at least a half-dozen possible locations. **YOU** can help!

What we are looking for:

-  A private facility (NOT owned or operated by a member of the fellowship) that would be open to a 12-Step group.
-  Available on a Saturday or Sunday afternoon.
-  Exclusive use of the facility during our picnic.
-  A reasonable rental rate.
-  In Indianapolis or between Indy and Bloomington.
-  A shelter of some kind, in case of rain.
-  Restrooms (we will consider a site that would require us to rent porta-potties).
-  Parking
-  Green space for Bocce Ball and other lawn games.
-  Recreational facilities: volleyball court, horseshoe pits, etc. (nice, but not necessary).

If you know of a church, union hall, fraternal organization, service group, etc. that has such a facility, please contact **Dale W.** (317) 339-6958 or **Mike C.** (317) 784-2180 as soon as possible.

## Holiday Party



### December 15

The 18th annual IISAA Holiday Party is scheduled to be held on Saturday, December 15, 2007 at the Lawrence United Methodist Church at the corner of 52nd Street and Shadeland Avenue. The doors will open at 6:30 p.m. and serving will begin at 7:00.

This is an adults-only (18 or older) activity. Spouses or significant others are most welcome. The party is free; however, we will pass a 7th Tradition basket as a means of paying for the use of the facility.

Turkey, ham and drinks will be provided. Please bring a vegetable or dessert for the sharing table.

The Indiana Intergroup hopes that you will make a special effort to attend this year's party to enjoy the wonderful food and participate in the great fellowship that this activity provides. It will also be a wonderful opportunity to meet other people in the program and to renew friendships with people you may not have seen for a while. Holiday decorations and door prize drawings will add to the fun.

Directions: From Pendleton Pike and I-465 on the northeast side of Indy go west on Pendleton Pike to Shadeland Avenue. Turn right (north) onto Shadeland and follow it to 52nd Street. Turn left (west) and go to the back of the church which will be immediately on your right. Enter the building through the northern-most door. At the first hallway, turn left. This will take you directly to the festivities.

The Dark Night of the Soul by San Juan de la Cruz, 16<sup>th</sup> century Spanish poet and mystic priest, is often cited as the best Spanish poem ever written. It tells of a spiritual journey and the stages experienced on the path to spiritual fulfillment.

## *The Dark Night of the Soul*

St. John of the Cross

*One dark night,  
fired with love's urgent longings  
- ah, the sheer grace! -  
I went out unseen,  
my house being now all stilled.*

*In darkness, and secure,  
by the secret ladder, disguised,  
- ah, the sheer grace! -  
in darkness and concealment,  
my house being now all stilled.*

*On that glad night,  
in secret, for no one saw me,  
nor did I look at anything,  
with no other light or guide  
than the one that burned in my heart.*

*This guided me  
more surely than the light of noon  
to where he was awaiting me  
- him I knew so well -  
there in a place where no one appeared.*

*O guiding night!  
O night more lovely than the dawn!  
O night that has united  
the Lover with his beloved,  
transforming the beloved in her Lover.*

*Upon my flowering breast  
which I kept wholly for him alone,  
there he lay sleeping,  
and I caressing him  
there in a breeze from the fanning cedars.*

*When the breeze blew from the turret,  
as I parted his hair,  
it wounded my neck  
with its gentle hand,  
suspending all my senses.*

*I abandoned and forgot myself,  
laying my face on my Beloved;  
all things ceased; I went out from myself,  
leaving my cares  
forgotten among the lilies.*

## *The Dark Night of My Soul*

Anonymous Member

The "dark night" can be described as letting go of my ego's hold on me, making room for change that can bring about my complete transformation and my relationship to my Higher Power.

This period was very frightening and lonely and certainly a time of "darkness". I suddenly found my life extremely difficult and unbearable. I suddenly felt abandoned by everyone, God, family, friends, sponsor, sponsees, and my addict as well. I had no idea who I was. Was my addict really me? Was I the person I thought I was? Was I someone else not yet known to me?

The loneliness and the darkness were horrifying and unbearable. The physical and emotional pain was totally incapacitating and in a strange way unreal and mystifying. I shed tears that did not heal and my soul cried out for relief. I felt completely and utterly abandoned and that my life had collapsed into complete ruin. I had been told to "stay in the pain and learn from it." I didn't know how. Learn what? So confused. How did I ever get here?

Rather than being a negative event, the dark night was a blessing in disguise and a severe test of my faith.

The Dark Night is the onset of the transformation process. Up to this point, I was actively reforming myself, doing what I could to know my Higher Power. When I had done all I could, my Higher Power stepped in and took over. This process was an undoing and redoing. The descent of the dark cloud was actually the falling away of my ego, which left me looking into a dark hole, an empty space within me.

Without the veil of the ego, I did not recognize my Higher Power; it was not as I thought it should be. Being in the presence of my Higher Power is a reality that shattered all my expectations. From here on I had to feel my way in the dark, and the special inner eye that allowed me to see in the dark opened up at this time; opened up to life as I would have it.

*Humility is the acceptance of my reality.*

Alan S..

☞ Book Review ☞

## *Healing the Child Within*

By Charles L. Whitfield, M.D.

Reviewed by Will M.



The rehabilitation and recovery process is a difficult one with considerable emotional pain as we learn more about ourselves. At some point, those in recovery need to work on the healing of their “inner child.”

Dr. Whitfield says, “no matter how distant, evasive, or even alien it may seem to be, we each have a “Child Within”—the part of us that is ultimately alive, energetic, creative and fulfilled. This is our Real Self—who we truly are.” Some psychologists call it the “real self”, “true self or the “inner child.”

Our Child Within is expressive, assertive and creative. It can be childlike in the highest, most mature, and evolved sense of the word. It needs to play and to have fun. And yet it is vulnerable, perhaps because it is so open and trusting. It surrenders to itself, to others and ultimately to the universe. And yet it is powerful in the true sense of power. It is healthily self-indulgent (note the word “healthily” with the word self-indulgent), taking pleasure in receiving and in being nurtured.

It is also open to that vast and mysterious part of us that we call our unconscious. It pays attention to the messages that we receive daily from the unconscious, such as dreams, struggles and illness.

By being real, it is free to grow. And while our false self forgets, our Real Self remembers our oneness with others and with the universe. Yet for most of us, our Real Self is also our private self. Who knows why we chose not to share? Perhaps it is a fear of being hurt or being rejected. Some have estimated that we show our True Self to others on average for only about 15 minutes each day. For whatever reasons, we tend to keep that part of us private.

Many of us suffer from a condition called co-dependence which is a disease of lost selfhood. Co-dependents become so focused upon or preoccupied with important people in their lives that they neglect their True Self. The birth of co-dependence begins when we repress the observations, feelings and reactions to our experiences. We may begin by denying a family secret or another secret. Because we focus so much on the needs of others we begin to neglect our own needs, and by so doing we stifle our Child Within.

But we still have feelings, often of hurt. Since we continue to stuff our feelings, we become increasingly tolerant of emotional pain. We often become numb. And because we stuff our feelings, we are unable

to grieve our everyday losses to completion.

When we grow up in a troubled or dysfunctional family we nearly always have a feeling of shame or low self-esteem in all members of that family. People often confuse shame with guilt. While we feel both, there is a difference between them. *Guilt* is the uncomfortable or painful feeling that results from doing something that violates or breaks a personal standard or value, or from hurting another person, or even from breaking an agreement or a law. Guilt thus concerns our *behavior*, feeling bad about what we have done, or about what we did not do that we were supposed to have done.

*Shame* is the uncomfortable or painful feeling that we experience when we realize that a part of us is defective, bad, incomplete, rotten, phony, inadequate or a failure. In contrast to guilt, where we feel bad from *doing* something wrong, we feel shame from *being* something wrong or bad. Thus guilt seems to be correctable or forgivable, whereas there seems to be no way out of shame. In addition to feeling defective or inadequate, shame makes us believe that others can see through us, through our façade, and into our defectiveness. Shame feels hopeless: that no matter what we do, we cannot correct it. We feel isolated and lonely with our shame, as though we are the only one who has the painful feeling.

Our shame seems to come from what we do with the

*see Book Review, page 6*

*Book Review, from page 5*

negative messages, negative affirmations, beliefs and rules that we hear as we grow up. We hear these from our parents, parent-figures and other people in authority, such as teachers and clergy. These messages basically tell us that we are somehow not all right, not okay. That our feelings, our needs, our *True Self*, our *Child Within* are not acceptable. Over and over, we hear messages like “Shame on You!” “You’re so bad!” “You are not good enough.” We hear them so often, and from people on whom we are so dependent and to whom we are so vulnerable, that we believe them; and, we incorporate or *internalize* them into our very being.

But, there is a way out of this mess. Psychologists have learned from the recovery experience of hundreds of thousands of people that there is an effective way out of this constricting and binding effect of shame: That is, to tell the story of our trauma and pain to safe and supportive others. What we expose and share is our *Child Within*, our *True Self*, with all of its weaknesses *and* all of its strengths. We cannot heal our shame alone; we need others to help us heal ourselves. They validate our predicaments and our pain, and they accept us as we are. And when we hear others tell their stories and share their shame, we help them to heal *their* shame. Doing so helps us as well. By such sharing and listening, we begin to practice the principles of compassion and unconditional love.

Psychologists sometimes use the term “*age regression*” to describe times when our feelings cause us to feel helpless like little children again. It occurs when we revert to an earlier survival mechanism. For example, any time we feel hurt by an authority figure, such as one of our parents, we may feel anger. However, the anger quickly changes into or is covered up by feeling shame.

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***Ultimately, we cannot control life, so the more that we try to control it, the more out of control we feel . . . .***

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We may also begin to feel fearful and confused. Because all these feelings may begin to feel overwhelming, as though we might lose control, we quickly suppress all of them and become numb. During this, and for several minutes afterward, we can become dysfunctional in varying degrees. This whole process may take just a few seconds, but we may feel as though we are helpless little children again.

We can begin to break free of a shame bind or an age regression by becoming aware of it. When it occurs, we recognize it. And when we recognize it, take *several slow, deep breaths*. Doing this will relieve us of our confusion, numbness and dysfunction and allow us increased awareness of what is happening, so that we can better take control of ourselves. Instead of being paralyzed, confused and dysfunctional, we pull ourselves right back into our *True Self*.

An issue that can keep us from our *True Self* is “all-or-none thinking and behaving”. This is the ego defense against pain that therapists call *splitting*. When we think or act this way, we do so at either one extreme or the other. For example, either we love someone completely or we hate them. There is no middle ground. We see the people around us as either good or bad, and not the composite they really are. We judge ourselves equally as harshly. The more we use all-or-none thinking, the more it opens us up to *behaving* in an all-or-none fashion. This type of thinking sharply limits our possibilities and choices. To be so limited makes us feel constricted, and we are unable to be creative and to grow in our day-to-day lives.

In our recovery, we have learned that ***control*** was probably the most dominant issue in our lives. No matter what we think we have to control, whether someone else’s behavior, our own behavior or something else, our false self tends to latch on to this notion and won’t let go. The result is often emotional pain, confusion and frustration.

Ultimately, we cannot control life, so the more that we try to control it, the more out of control we feel because we are focusing so much attention on it. Frequently, the person who feels *out of control* is obsessed with the need to be in control.

Another word for control is “*attachment*”. Wise people have found that attachment or needing to be in control is the basis for

*See Book Review page 8*

## Special Problems Effecting Recovery in Addicted Gay, Lesbian, and Bisexual Persons

*Anonymous Member*

Recent research publications consistently report a higher incidence of alcoholism and/or other forms of chemical or behavioral dependency in gay and/or lesbian persons. Sheppard B. Kominars states, "One of the greatest obstacles to long-term sobriety for gay men and lesbians is internalized homophobia. The fear of, and hatred of, one's homosexuality is a major cause of relapse in the recovery process of the chemically dependent gay man, lesbian, and bisexual."

Acknowledging ourselves *as we are*, and allowing others the same freedom will provide the baseline for change and open the road to recovery.

In my own recovery, the denial of sexual orientation confusion produced great anxiety and profound fear that others would discover what I was unwilling to admit to myself. Because I was unable to address this basic fear, years of therapy were fruitless. I was not able to open up and therefore believed I could never rid myself of this secret, too horrible to admit to anyone let alone myself.

Sexual compulsivity may be understood as a powerful urge to connect with "something" that is compelling and fascinating, over which the individual feels he has little or no control. The basic instinct is sexual in nature and for gay men the compelling object is the phallus. Being in the presence of the phallus can be a "numinous" experience (resulting in a connection with

transpersonal or spiritual energies) although the person might not be aware of it. This feeling may consist of a sense of divinity, a sense appealing to the higher emotions, or to the aesthetic senses and is felt to be supernatural, mysterious or even spiritual.

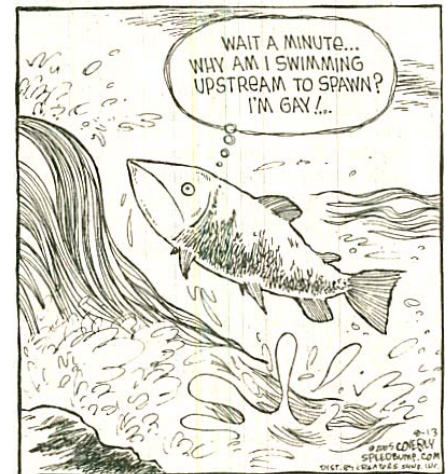
It only added to the confusion I felt and the inability to control thoughts, behaviors, or fantasies. Instead of Priapus, the Roman god whose enormous erection would not go away, my ideal was Antinous, the supremely handsome young lover of the Roman emperor Hadrian.

Romance addiction also complicates my recovery. Not until I could admit this to myself, to my therapist and to my fellow addicts could I begin true recovery. I had to accept who I was and not get hung up on how I got that way.

I also entertained the Jungian concept of "*pueri aeterni*" the pursuit of the ideal of eternal youth, an unwillingness to accept growing old or growing up; a fantasy that only leads to ridiculous situations.

I had to decide how I wanted to live my life and how I would value my intimate relationships with my spouse and family. The SAA program has played the major roll in my recovery, along with therapy and medication. It brings spiritual relief which results in a life without the pain of addictive strife. A life filled with the promises of the program.

Speed Bump



### Religion vs. Spirituality

"Simple belief in God is not Religion. Religion is an organized form of worships and beliefs. Spirituality is a state of being, mind, or heart, and how we deal with our fellows.

How I view God is not enforced or dictated as how you must view God. Each person is encouraged to find that relationship for him or herself. Agnostics and atheists are just as likely as others to find what they need in a 12-Step program

The confusion stems from when AA, in its infancy, adopted principles from the Oxford Group, which had a 6-Step program with religious leanings. AA redefined those principles, added others and created the 12-Steps as we know them today.

Individuals in AA have a choice to be religious, but enforcement of religious values is not a practice of those in main stream 12-Step programs. There are a few individual groups that identify themselves as Christian 12-Step, etc. But since each group is autonomous, you can feel free to go to another group that serves your spiritual needs better.

*Adapted from an Internet Blog*

*Book Review, from page 6*

suffering. Certainly, suffering is part of life. We all may have to suffer before we can begin to consider our alternatives. Suffering may point out the path toward peace of mind. One alternative that nearly always relieves our suffering is surrender: we surrender our false self, and our attachment to the notion that we can control anything.

Whitfield states that we have two basic kinds of feelings or emotions – joyful and painful. Joyful feelings make us feel a sense of strength, well being and completion. Painful feelings interfere with our sense of well being, use up our energy and can leave us feeling drained, empty and alone. Yet even though they may be painful, they are often telling us something-- a message to our self that something important may be happening, something that may need our attention. Our Real Self feels both joy *and* pain and it expresses and shares it with appropriate others. However, our false self tends to push us to feel mostly painful feelings and to withhold and not share them.

As an example, our false self (we could call this our “addict”) wants to keep us in the following false self feelings: *fear, hurt, sadness, shame and guilt, anger, confusion, emptiness, and numbness.*

But, with our Real Self we can add the following Real Self feelings: *unconditional love, bliss, joy, compassion and empathy, enthusiasm, and contentment.*

In the past, we learned that we could not always “share” our feelings with just anybody.

Whitfield suggests using the technique of “share-check-share”. When we have a feeling that we want to share, but perhaps aren’t sure who is safe and who is not, we can share just a bit of our feelings with selected people. Then we check their response.

If they don’t seem to listen or if they try to judge us or if they immediately try to give us advice, we may not wish to share any more feelings with them. If they try to invalidate our feelings, or if they reject us and certainly if they betray us by talking about us, especially our confidences, then they are probably not “safe” to continue sharing with.

However, if they *listen*, are supportive and do not react with the above responses, then it may be safe to continue sharing with them. Further clues for “safe” people are those who make eye contact with us, tend to appear sympathetic but do not try to rush in and change us, our situation or feelings. Over the long term someone who is safe will be consistent in listening and supporting and will not betray or reject us. Taking time with our feelings is essential to our growth and happiness. **The way out of a painful feeling is “through it.”**

***Healing the Child Within*** also contains chapters on The Process of Grieving, Transforming our Lives, Integrating these insights into our lives, and the Role of Spirituality.

Speed Bump



## Southside Meeting Has Formed

A new SAA meeting has formed at the Southport Presbyterian Church, 1427 Southview Drive (about two blocks north and two blocks west of the intersection of Madison Avenue and Southport Road). The group meets in the basement, Room 14, Thursdays from 6:30 - 7:30 p.m.

For more information, contact: Kevin E. at (317) 831-1197

### 2007 Calendar

#### **October**

- 13 IISAA Meeting, 4 p.m.
- 19-21 13<sup>th</sup> Annual Fall Retreat

#### **November**

- 10 IISAA Meeting, 4 p.m.

#### **December**

- 8 IISAA Meeting, 4 p.m.
- 15 Holiday Party 6:30 p.m.
- 31 Check **N** Deadline.

#### **January, 2008**

- 12 IISAA Meeting, 4 p.m.