

Please direct all
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‘We are all going to foot the bill’

I got sober a few days before Christmas in 1986, so I feel especially grateful and reflective this time of year. I am still awed at how miraculously A.A. has worked in my life, even before I walked into my first meeting.

I was desperate, but a bit clueless. I saw a classified ad (and I am showing my age!) in the back of the local paper that said: “Drinking problem? Maybe we can help.” That was followed by a listing of meeting times and places in my neighborhood. It would take me a few weeks of white-knuckling it before I went to my first meeting. I was welcomed into a warm room and offered refreshments. And while someone told me I would never have to hurt like this from alcohol again, I couldn’t get out of there fast enough.

But my getaway was slowed by a gauntlet of members who handed me A.A. pamphlets and meeting books and encouraged me to stay for the second meeting. It took me a few days to return, but I didn’t drink.

As an alcoholic, self-centered in the extreme, I just came to expect that all this help would be there for me. It wasn’t until my first business meeting that I realized it was made possible by the money members were putting in the basket. This was my first of many lessons over the years in the power and [impact of self-support](#).

Bill W. wrote of the critical importance of self-support to the Fellowship and the special obligation this tradition asks of members in his October 1967 article “A.A.’s Tradition of Self-Support,” which is included in the 2025 International Convention commemorative edition of [Language of the Heart](#).

Every single A.A. service is designed to make more and better Twelfth Step work possible, whether it be a group meeting place, a central or intergroup office to arrange hospitalization and sponsorship, or the world service Headquarters to maintain unity and effectiveness worldwide.

These service agencies are absolutely essential to our continued expansion — to our survival as a Fellowship. Their costs are a collective obligation that rests squarely upon all of us. Our support of services actually amounts to a recognition on our part that A.A. must everywhere function in full strength — and that, under our Tradition of self-support, we are all going to foot the bill.

We all share this responsibility to ensure that A.A. is there for the next person who stumbles into our rooms, as it was for us when we needed the gift of recovery. Bill's recognition that "we are all going to foot the bill" is both our spiritual responsibility and our spiritual heritage.

John W.
Class B General Service Trustee and AAWS treasurer

Learn more about group and individual contributions and their impact [at aa.org](https://www.aa.org).