

"We are an ever-growing group of sober Chicagoans, diverse in age and sobriety, who want for our city a chance to host the next International Conference of Young People in AA (ICYPAA). We are committed to unifying newcomers and young people in AA, generating enthusiasm and participation for the 52nd ICYPAA in New York, NY, and ultimately creating a group of excited and capable AA members who can help bring ICYPAA to Chicago. Throughout our pursuit we aim to share our experiences with others, honor the traditions and spiritual principles of AA, and carry a message of gratitude, service, and fellowship."

The 52nd ICYPAA in New York City will be my third ICYPAA. I have taken the bus the past two times, despite vows to myself after each bus trip that I would never ever take the bus to ICYPAA again. It's a lot like my alcoholism and vows never to drink half a bottle of vodka by myself... and then doing it again the next night. This year, however, I have done something to better my experience: I am on Chicago's Bid Committee, and have gotten to witness the planning an work that foes into being able to take a train to the 52nd ICYPAA with 40 other alcoholics. I have gotten into the middle of it all, which is where I like to be, and found a way to make myself useful. So, although it is still a cramped, long, sleep-deprived ride, I am getting better at preparing for it and focusing on the good things the longer I have been sober. Despite the discomfort, it is one of the

Third Time
At an ICYPAA
Rachele O.

most amazing experiences I've ever had. After listening to fifteen people give consecutive five-minute leads, it's really hard not to be grateful for my sobriety, my friends, and my good fortune for being able to ride on this train with people I love, and being able to join 4,000 other young alcoholics in New York to celebrate our sobriety. I almost cried (tears joy and gratitude) about an hour ago when the majority of our group took a moment to say the Third Step Prayer together before a friend's lead. I have gotten to know and talk to some wonderful women in the program. There are a bunch of newcomers here, and hearing their stories makes me that much more grateful for this program. So even if I get off this train saying that I'll never ever do it again, I'm sure that I will be trudging the road to happy destiny next year, wherever ICYPAA happens to be, with all these wonderful people by my side!

I was skeptical of taking the train at first; thoughts like, "But I don't really know anybody," "What if they don't like me?", and "Twenty hours and 'trapped' on the train, really?!" were crowding my head. I am grateful to say that these preconceptions and projections of what the journey was going to be like quickly dissipated. In the last twelve hours alone, we've had two AA meetings. The experience has been constant fellowship, whether playing card games or Mad Libs, or having one-on-one con-

First Time at
ICYPAA
Olga L.

versations, which for me is the key to getting out of my own head and actually relating to others on a deeper level. The amenities on the train are great too. The car is spacious, with lots of leg room and a bunch of space to move around, swap seats, or visit the lounge car. Overall, this has been an amazing experience so far. I got to know my fellows on a more personal level than the occasional "Hi," at the meetings where I usually see them. What a way to start this long weekend in NYC!
