

September 1951

WIVES

CHICAGO'S family group idea, which flourishes throughout the city, stems from a meeting in Akron 14 years ago. At that time the wife of Chicago's first AA attended a meeting of wives in Akron, which had been suggested by Dr. Bob and other AAs in that city. Dr. Bob's wife, Anne, gathered together the wives of alcoholics to help them in any way she could.

"Family Group" Cooperates

The purpose of the family group in those early days was the same as it is now. This was stated at that time by Lois, Bill's wife, when she said a family group should give cooperation and understanding to the AA at home; live by the Twelve Steps in order to grow spiritually along with the AA; and to welcome and give comfort to the families of new AAs.

"Wives Group" Inspiration

The first family group in Chicago came into being 10 years ago when the AA group was comparatively small. The wives felt a need for self-improvement and understanding. In close cooperation and friendship with the alcoholic they banded together as "The Wives Group." As the nucleus grew and encompassed husbands and relatives of

AAs, the name was changed to "Family Group."

"Stand by Quietly and Help"

"We of the family group are deeply grateful and privileged to share in the program of living," said the wife who journeyed to Akron. "This does not mean, however, that we infringe on or interfere in the alcoholics' plans or working of the Program. We simply stand by quietly and help in any small way we can when called upon to do so.

"We have enjoyed since the start of AA here the privilege of the alcoholics' wanting us to attend one open meeting with them each week. As there is a closed meeting another evening each week, we feel we are not depriving them by attending the open meeting, and we gain much thereby.

Organization Taboo

"In our family group meetings we have no place for controversy, gossip, criticism or the discussion of our alcoholics' drinking escapades. We try to keep in mind our three-fold purpose and to conduct our meetings with as great simplicity and merit as the alcoholic conducts his. We meet once a month and have no need for organization, officers or money.

Neighborhood "Family Groups"

In many sections of Chicago, several neighborhood groups band together monthly for a joint meeting. These groups are usually an offshoot of an original neighborhood group that was forced to split because of size. In turn the split groups were divided. While the AAs hold their closed meetings at these monthly sessions the "family" group retires to another hall and holds its meeting. Then, after both meetings have been concluded, the two groups get together for coffee and cake.

"In the family group two volunteers serve for three months and arrange programs which include two speakers each meeting from our own group, with occasionally

an alcoholic, usually a woman, addressing us. The talks are concerned with the AA Program of living, of self-improvement, a discussion in the form of a question box, or on any subject which will be helpful to the family as a whole. We open our meetings with a quiet time and close with the Lord's Prayer,

"Many groups have sprung up in Chicago and suburbs, in fact all over the country. We feel a friendliness, a close bond, uniting us with each other and with the AAs,

"For after all, are we not sharing in this new way of life - whether alcoholic or nonalcoholic? Have we not attained a peace of mind and serenity beyond our expectations? We are all deeply grateful for the many blessings AA has showered on us as families working together as a team,"

