

# TAG Times

## SDOP Supports The Alumni Group

Denise Henry—freelance writer and member of Grace Fellowship Orthodox Presbyterian Church in Philadelphia

The Self-Development of People Committee (SDOP) of the Presbyterian Church U.S.A. was developed as a compassionate response to the plight of the underprivileged around the world. The ministry personifies the church's 150-year mission to give the poor the means to fulfill their potential. In 2009, there was a "marriage made in heaven" when SDOP met and embraced The Alumni Group's ministry to men in recovery. The ministry of the SDOP is to glorify God, as is TAG's key purpose.

SDOP and TAG are kindred spirits, sharing the mutual goal of fostering self-sufficiency. "One of TAG's main goals is to make people self-sufficient. It is about putting people in a place to be sufficient by helping them with things such as school,

social skills and saving money," shared the president of The Alumni Group. The two ministries met providentially at the Eastside ministry in Chester a few years ago, and SDOP encouraged TAG to apply for funding to help with their house they were renting for ministry purposes. The Alumni Group has since secured funding at the local, synod and national levels, totaling in excess of \$40,000 over the past few years.

"The house was the biggest milestone so far," the president reflects. TAG was able to pay their rent with the generous assistance from SDOP for the past couple of years. In the late spring of this year, they were able to purchase their home and are paying the mortgage through

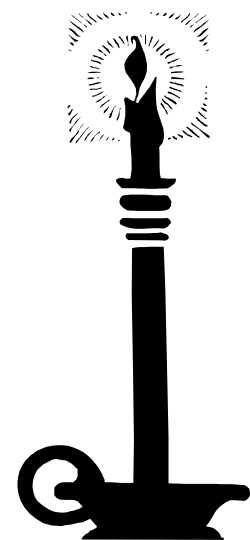
the plentiful support of the SDOP. "Our biggest need is money, but the SDOP is about more than that. They are about all things that promote self-sufficiency," said the president. During the process of getting funding, SDOP asked a lot of questions about TAG's ministry commitment and goals. "They knew we were committed and the bottom line was to glorify God," the president added.

TAG consists of a twelve member core group, including the board of directors. "It is a very well-rounded group. We have a wide variety of gifts that work together," said the president. The Alumni Group oversees the accounting and distribution of funds through the office of Treasurer .



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*A candle loses  
nothing lighting  
another candle!*

## SDOP Supports The Alumni Group (continued) Denise Henry

Financial reports are submitted monthly with all receipts accounted for and checkbooks fully in order. TAG operates with integrity and a firm commitment to help the men it serves to reach their full potential in Christ.

In addition, The Alumni Group also seeks

to “pay it forward” by referring other projects to the SDOP ministry. So far, they have referred two other projects to them. SDOP has resources they want to share with ministries that coincide with their mission to empower the underprivileged to be all that God has made them to be. SDOP has been a

tremendous asset to TAG, and they want other non-profit organizations to also benefit from the wealth of resources and support they have received.



## The Miracle of TAG Gary Klein

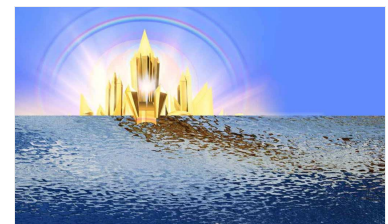


When someone enters the TAG House, leaving the swirl of cars zipping around the corner, dumpsters across the street and occasional refuse on the sidewalk, one is transported into a peaceful environment. The House is spotless and tastefully decorated, while the men living inside exude their inner warmth. As the holy day of Christmas approaches and we celebrate the miracle of the birth of Jesus, I can only surmise how different the physical environment in the manger must have

been...dark, dirty and smelly. Not a place where we would like to socialize or have a child born. But if this was the environment in which Jesus entered the world, then maybe there is a message being sent to us that the physical environment in which we live does not need to be bright, clean and pleasant?

The fascinating thing about religious meaning is that we are free to offer our own interpretations in a way that helps us to best serve God. I personally feel that it is important that the TAG House does not look like a manger, and reek of manure, as I imagine you do too. But it probably was no accident that

Jesus was born in such conditions. So what meaning can we glean from His birth not occurring in the much nicer Inn? I looked online at some different thoughts about this, and one that resonated with me is that the manger is like *us* – inside we have dark and dirty elements that we must overcome to serve God. Jesus came to clean out the mangers that reside within us. When one enters the TAG House, I believe one witnesses a rescued environment – one that has taken in the miracle of Jesus and formed the miracle of TAG.



## The Making of Disciples Pastor John D. Mitchell—Kingdom life Ministries

About a year ago I was invited to a meeting in Upland with a group called TAG, The Alumni Group. I had never met these gentlemen before but was open to talk to them. At this organizational meeting I was introduced to the members. As they discussed achievements and opportunities for bettering their efforts I didn't really know what I could do. The only initial commonality is our relationship with another Chester City ministry. And I honestly stated that I wasn't sure why I was there but the Lord gave me peace about attending.

Subsequently, I have been meeting with the members, attending the Bible Studies and generally building relationships. As a pastor, I have been looking at the individuals involved and being served to see if they are growing in the Lord and have a vision of developing their lives in the

near and distant future.

What impresses me about TAG and its leadership is the focus on working with individuals based on the idea that "God DELIVERS us from evil". Visa vie dependences to drugs or alcohol rather than you are a slave all your life to these issues. I also know that God can and does deliver us so that we are no longer bound by anything that can hinder us from living and bringing others into the Kingdom of God.

The Making of Disciples is the command of the Lord in Matthew 28:19. We are called not to make converts but disciples. Men, women and children who understand how to be a disciplined follower of Christ. Easton defines it as; *"One who (1) believes Christ doctrine, (2) rests on His sacrifice, (3) absorbs His spirit, and (4) imitates His example*

*(Matt. 10:24; Luke 14:26, 27, 33; John 6:69)."*

The board and the members of TAG are sincerely working to help others live a life free from the bondage and ravages of drugs, alcohol and other dependences in life. They need our help and support to provide the resources necessary to have a hospice so that those they serve will have time to grow and move on with lives that have been transformed and conformed to Christ and who become or regain productive lives for The Kingdom and the community.



## TAG Peer Mentoring Still Going Strong Kent Henry

This has been a year of considerable development for The Alumni Group. While we are still in a somewhat fledgling state, we have established some foundations that promise to offer a stability we have never before enjoyed. In 2011, there has been a great deal of attention focused on the purchasing of the TAG house, the

development of a strong, consistent operational board and our successful Bible Study. However, out of all the thing we do, I am most proud of the peer mentoring that is taking place between the TAG residents and the men who are navigating recovery, on their way to freedom. Our primary ministry (Mentoring) is stronger than ever (though it has been in the

shadow of God's seemingly more tangible blessings). I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the men of TAG for their continued and tenacious commitment to mentoring men in long term drug rehabs, who follow us. May God continue to bless you and your efforts to take part in His glorification through service to Him. "If you love Me...feed My sheep".

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*A candle loses nothing lighting  
another candle*

## “Food For Thought”

### **Institutionalization: Friend or Foe?** Kent Henry

. Institutionalization is an often-deliberate process whereby a person entering an institution is reprogrammed to accept and conform to strict controls that enables the institution to manage a large number of people with minimal necessary staff. This would seem to be an essential system for a drug rehab, long term or short term. Unfortunately, for many institutions there does not seem to be a mechanism to remove that necessary conditioning once a person leaves the rehab. Consequently, an individual (due to no fault of his or her own) tends to remain in that mindset of conventional thinking. The problem is, in order to live free in Christ, unconventional principles must be embraced. One can see the dilemma here.

In many cases, there are strong leaders who themselves “contract” institutionalization after a residency in a long term facility. Because of their natural leadership abilities, the programming is perpetuated. All those who follow him or her adopt that same agenda, and the cycle continues.

Imagine being told every day, several times a day that you are an addict and you will be an addict for the rest of your life. That is not an easy programming or prospect to overcome. The message of perpetual addiction, though a popular one, has no support in The Alcoholics Anonymous Basic Text known as The Big Book (which proclaims a principle that is the exact opposite). Institutionalization was the last thing on the minds of the writers of The Big Book. Additionally, Holy Scripture certainly does not advocate conformist views and practices.

Now imagine being told every day, several times a day that you can live free in Christ. Then imagine life as you embrace the truths of God’s Holy Word, acknowledge Gods’ Spirit working in you and through you, and realize the power of a personal, intimate and unique relationship with Jesus Christ. That old “institutionalization” doesn’t stand a chance.



**THE MEMBERS OF T.A.G. WOULD  
LIKE TO WISH EVERYONE A  
BLESSED CHRISTMAS AND A  
HAPPY AND PROSPEROUS NEW  
YEAR. PEACE TO ALL OF OUR  
FRIENDS, FAMILY AND  
NEIGHBORS.**

