

# The Northeast Ohio Recorder

April-May-June 2018

<http://www.area54.org>

Volume XXV, Issue 6

**"Let us remember that great legion who still suffer from alcoholism and who are still without hope. Let us, at any cost or sacrifice, so improve our communication with all these that they may find what we have found - a new life of freedom under God."**

*A.A. Co-Founder, Bill W., February 1961, From: "The Shape of Things to Come", I Am Responsible: The Hand of A.A., © A. A. Grapevine, Reprinted with permission*

## A Word From Our Delegate

Hello to all in Area 54:

It's hard to believe it is already spring (although the weather is making us wonder about that!)

I have learned so much from my experiences these past 18 months. One of the most significant things I learned is the importance of having a sponsor. When I first came into alcoholic anonymous I was instructed to get a sponsor (women with women and men with men), I followed directions and got a sponsor. When I decided to become involved in general service, I was told I needed to have a service sponsor in addition to my recovery sponsor. I was told that at this level of participation in AA the suggestion of women with women and men with men did not necessarily apply. I chose Mary B., a past delegate as my service sponsor. I had several questions about general service and she shared with me her experience and her perception of AA. I did not always agree with her perception, but I listened and was able to look at many things from her point of view. When Mary passed away, I knew I needed to obtain another service sponsor. I asked another past delegate (this time a male) if he would be my service sponsor. When he served as delegate I really respected how he functioned. So when I have a question and go to him, his reply is not exactly the answer but something that makes me really think about it and come up with an answer myself. For me this is one of the roles of a sponsor.

We are given tools to help us with sobriety i.e. our recovery sponsor; our service sponsor to help and guide us in being of service to alcoholics anonymous. However, these tools will only work if we use them!!



Co-founder Dr. Bob said, "I spend a great deal of time passing on what I learned to others who want and need it badly. I do it for four reasons:

1. Sense of duty.
2. It is a pleasure.
3. Because in doing so I am paying my debt to the man who took time to pass it on to me.
4. Because every time I do it I take out a little more insurance for myself against a possible slip."

The basis of all sponsorship is to lead by example. Service sponsors can impart to their sponsees the pleasure of involvement in the work of Alcoholics Anonymous. This is best done by stressing the spiritual nature of service work and by pointing out the usefulness of simple footwork and faith.

I am blessed to have a great recovery sponsor and to have inspiring service sponsors placed in my path. I Love Alcoholics Anonymous!

Jamie B., Panel 67 Delegate, Area 54 – Northeast Ohio

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### A Travel Experience in Area 56

During the St. Patrick's Day weekend, Jamie and I traveled down to Southwest Ohio to the Area 56 Mini-Conference. In the early evening hours, we had dinner with our Ohio area delegates and general service staff. Afterwards, the festivities began! The conference theme was: "A.A. - A

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solution for all generations". The conference chair David L., Area 56's alternate delegate/area chair opened with a warm welcome and a few announcements pertaining to the weekend conference.

The evening session began with a virtual tour of the GSO office given by Patrick C., the newly hired GSO staffer visiting for the Area 65 Mini Conference. He has been at the office for about one year. Patrick shared an enlightening PowerPoint of the office, the 12 committee staffers and many other support staff that works at "our office"! This was first time that I can recall having a visual report of the office. What stood out was being able to attach a name and face to the standing committees at GSO. Throughout the report, Patrick stated that the "GSO office was a repository of A.A.'s shared experience" on different topics and issues. Afterward our recently-

(Continued on page 3)

## From the Editor...

### OUR LEGACIES OF RECOVERY, UNITY, AND SERVICE

A Letter to the Editor:

*When I was new in this program, I was told to figure out where I was supposed to be; what fellowship I belonged to, and then get active in that fellowship. The old-timers in AA, NA, and Ca back then didn't want their message getting watered down or confused. I decided that I am an alcoholic, so I am a member of Alcoholics Anonymous and no other fellowship. It has come to my attention that there are some members of this Assembly who are not members of Alcoholics Anonymous. Or if they are members, they are also members of other fellowships. My primary purpose is to carry the message to the alcoholic who still suffers. I cannot carry the message of recovery to an addict.*

*In the text of Tradition 4 in the 12&12 it says, "Any two or three alcoholics gathered together for sobriety may call themselves an A.A. group, provided that as a group they have no other affiliation." It seems there are member sof this body that have other affiliations. Other fellowships take this primary purpose principle seriously; as alcoholics, we are not able to speak at meetings of other fellowships, let alone become trusted servants in their service structure.*

*Tradition 5 in the 12&12 says that "Each group has but one primary purpose — to carry its message to the alcoholic who still suffers." In the text of Tradition 5 it says, "The very life of our Fellowship requires the preservation of this principle." What message is this Assembly—this group—carrying? Tradition 5 goes on to say that "These legacies of suffering and of recovery are easily passed among alcoholics, one to the other. This is our gift from God, and its bestowal among others like us is the one aim that today animates A.A.s all around the globe." A non-alcoholic cannot carry this message to me or other alcoholic; the Language of the Heart, as Bill W. calls it, just isn't there.*

*Tradition 2 states, "Our leaders are but trusted servants, they do not govern." I am not sure I trust the servants that are governing this Assembly.*

J.T.

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From the editor:

Thank you for your comments. I'm not familiar with the personalities involved in this observation of yours, so I will stick to principles only.

As a Fellowship, A.A. has no opinion on outside issues, including other 12 Step fellowships and their membership. As an individual member, I can have all the opinions I want and am free to express them without fear of censorship or reprisal. Concept XII speaks to this:

General Warranties of the Conference: in all its proceedings, the General Service Conference shall observe the spirit of the A.A. Tradition, taking great care that the Conference never becomes the seat of perilous wealth or power; that sufficient operating funds, plus an ample reserve, be its prudent financial principle; that none of the Conference Members shall ever be placed in a position of unqualified authority over any of the others; that all important decisions

be reached by discussion, vote, and, whenever possible, by substantial unanimity; that no Conference action ever be personally punitive or an incitement to public controversy; that, though the Conference may act for the service of Alcoholics Anonymous, it shall never perform any acts of government; and that, like the Society of Alcoholics Anonymous which it serves, the Conference itself will always remain democratic in thought and action.

That also sums up my response as an individual member. Any A.A. member is free to join any other 12 Step fellowship, in search of recovery from those myriad 'other' issues. I am not at liberty to deny an individual's right to free assembly and association, if our fellowship is to remain democratic in thought and action. I need to clean up my side of the street first.

As an A.A. member, I do have a responsibility to honor our Traditions and focus my comments on our common solution and our common problem, as our basic text calls them (BB, p17).

I have a responsibility to be a unifying voice in the assembly as well as at meetings. How can we best be helpful to the still suffering person who walks into the rooms of A.A.? That is our sole aim. Helping that new person figure out what illness they have and how best to find recovery is one way we can assist the uninitiated or confused member. But we must always temper our comments with love and tolerance.

Tradition 9 in the 12&12 reminds us that **"Great suffering and great love are AA's only disciplinarians; we need no others."** (p.174)

Dr. Bob parted with these last words in 1950,

"Let us also remember to guard that erring member the tongue, and if we must use it, let's use it with kindness and consideration and tolerance.

"And one more thing: None of us would be here today if somebody hadn't taken time to explain things to us, to give us a little pat on the back, to take us to a meeting or two, to do numerous little kind and thoughtful acts in our behalf. So let us never get such a degree of smug complacency that we're not willing to extend, or attempt to extend, to our less fortunate brothers that help which has been so beneficial to us."

~Your editor,  
Jeff

**We welcome your service-related contributions, comments and questions. Send topic ideas or complaints to: [newsletter@area54.org](mailto:newsletter@area54.org)**



## AREA OFFICER REPORTS

*(Continued from page 1)*

elected East Central Regional Trustee Mark E., gave a General Service Board report on the Board Weekend that occurred earlier in the year. Mark is also a past delegate from Area 56.

Mark began his report discussing the limited details about the "printer manuscript" lawsuit. This is the original printer copy of the "Big Book". When this lawsuit occurred, there were many vocal thoughts about "A.A." being in the courts. However, after listening to the many voices of our fellowship that called, emailed, and wrote letters about this matter, our General Service Board has decided to drop the attempt in trying to obtain this A.A. historical artifact.

Next, he discussed that A.A. was nearly 80% self-supporting. This is because of the continued donations that are coming in to the office from the many groups, meetings and individuals. Mark has been a part of the fellowship 37 years, and for him, seeing this level of self-support is very encouraging. If this trend continues, maybe in the future, literature sales would not have to be used to keep our services functioning at "our office." Mark finished his report talking about the Grapevine. A survey was taken throughout the fellowship about the need for the magazine. 98% of our fellowship believe that the Grapevine is vital and important and should be kept! However, less than 10% subscribe. So, I say we need, as a fellowship, to subscribe to the Grapevine, whether it's a print, online subscription, or gift subscription to keep this "meeting in print" viable. Friday night ended with Mark sharing his lead.

The conference convened on Saturday morning with a reading of the purpose of the mini-conference and its importance. Afterward Andrea H., read through "What Are We Here For?" She talked about the purpose of the mini-conference. Then, the Area 56 delegate Jenny C., gave a summary of the agenda items that would be discussed in committee. Soon, the committee sessions broke out in different suites to discuss the agenda items. I sat in on the Agenda/Literature/Trustee committee. Rousing and sometime contentious discussions were had by everyone involved with our breakout session. The morning gatherings ended with us having a sumptuous lunch in the Area 56 hospitality suite.

In the afternoon, the voting portion of the conference started with Immediate Past Delegate Laura G., as the chair. Each breakout group came to the podium to share the outcome from the morning committee sessions. This part of the conference can have a lot of questions and answers, but that's important so everyone can get a clear understand of each agenda item and can make an informed decision or vote. The conference assembly was lengthy, and all items were not able to be completed on Saturday afternoon. Area 56 uses Sunday morning to complete the voting assembly. Saturday evening ended with several enjoyable activities. First, there was a delicious dinner along with a lot of laughter. Next, during the evening we heard reports from DCM's from Area 56 and all Ohio area delegates. Afterwards, Patrick C., GSO staffer shared his A.A. message. Finally, the night ended with a stimulating conversation and ice cream social in the hospitality suite. As the conference closed on Sunday morning, Jamie and I had to leave early to make it back for Area 54's March assembly. The travel experience in Area 56 was filled with several

learning opportunities, meeting new people and was a pleasurable experience.

Love and Service,

**Shyrl B., Area 54 Panel 67 Alternate Delegate**

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### Reflection

As I sit and reflect on this final year as the Area's Chairperson, I can honestly say it has impacted my recovery tremendously. Being a trusted servant has pushed me to follow my dreams outside of recovery. I have learned about my own issues with expectations of self and others and how important the Traditions are in working through this. By being the chairperson the past two years, it has helped me to learn to take my personal feelings out of the situation, although tough at times. At first, I didn't understand the importance of removing my feelings and the Traditions helped me to see it's not about me it's about the good of AA. I have learned a lot in this position about balance, commitment, and dedication. I am looking forward to whatever is next in my recovery and any future service opportunities. The most important part in this journey is to remain teachable in all areas.

We are told that our recovery and higher power will help us through anything. I didn't understand that at first. I thought, and I still struggle with thinking, that I must do everything myself. But now 13 and a half years sober and a few years of service work under my belt, I am finally understanding I don't have to do it all myself. Although I still try to do everything myself the thing that's changed is that I'm not afraid to ask for help and I do ask. My service work and my recovery guide me in all areas of my life, no matter what those situations may be. Yes, I may still freak out and get a little crazy, what I have learned is to trust in my recovery and what it has taught me and to ask for help and tell on myself when I am overwhelmed. If I don't, these feelings can prevent me from being of optimal service to my fellow alcoholics and the fellowship.

These tools are taught to us from day one. It is important to use these tools when things get crazy or are going great. Lately for me my service to the Area has helped me tremendously to find that strength that was inside me and to use it to pursue other opportunities in my life. It has helped me to grow more in my recovery and my private life. The lessons I have learned from observing the examples others have taught me how to handle situations in recovery and real life and to trust what I have been taught by them and many others, both here and those no longer with us. These lessons are shown to me by my sponsor, my service sponsor, and others in service work, including the newcomer. They have all taught me that when real life happens, use your tools, and get busy searching for your answers, pray the simplest of prayers, quit relying on self-will run riot and get busy.

Love and Service,

**Tina C., Area 54 Chairperson**

*(Continued on page 4)*

# AREA OFFICER AND COMMITTEE REPORTS

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## Self-Support

A.A. has never been fully self-supporting. Home groups around the world seem to fare well with self-support with respect covering their own expenses. Many groups do not contribute to the GSO, and instead use then 7th tradition monies on social events or cling to their financial purse beyond what is considered a prudent reserve. While the cost of living continues to rise, the percentage of home groups that contribute to GSO has historically been less than 50%.

2017 has given hope and insight to potential strategies that could possibly help A.A. become what Bill W. had envisioned... Self-Supporting. Our East Central Region Trustee, Mark E., gave a promising report on the financial state of A.A. at the 43rd Area 54 Mini-Conference. He reported, that the \$7.27 campaign caused an overwhelming influx of donations to GSO. In 2017, A.A. was nearly 80% self-supporting with an increase in contributions of more than 9%.

The maximum amounts that an individual can contribute or bequest to AA is currently reviewed biannually and is now \$5,000. Recommendations about maximum contribution amounts or ways to regulate it, remain a recurrent agenda item at the General Service Conference in New York. Our East Central Region Trustee also revealed that only a very small percentage of people donate the maximum amount to GSO, averaging between 9-30 people yearly out of the entire fellowship of AA. The \$7.27 campaign, is evidence that many A.A. members may never be able to contribute the maximum amount, but many are willing to contribute what they can. If we had to rely on large contributions, A.A. surely would not survive.

Love and Service, **Dawn J., Area 54 Treasurer**

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## 2018 Area 55 Mini-Conference Report

Thank you Area 54 members for allowing me to represent you at the Area 55 Mini-Conference held in Perrysburg Ohio. The Northwest Ohio Mini-Conference was at the French Quarter Holiday Inn. It was well attended - 220 something attending, if memory serves me correctly. NWOYPAA was present and hosted the hospitality all weekend. I attended with our Delegate, Alt-Del., and Chairperson: Jamie B., Shyrl B. and Tina C.

It was a well-planned event which we all learned a lot from or fellow alcoholic counterparts. They had a lot of neat simple ways of helping the group conscience to understand. I remember my first mini-conference I had no clue what was happening on the floor. I was just there and that was about it. Area55 had a way of streamlining for the person who hasn't had a lot of experience in conference format. The info was really easy to digest. For instance in my packet a committee agenda lay out and a glossary of terms used in the agenda, like: Consider-Discuss & Review. Words that have a very specific meaning in conference proceedings. This alone was instrumental in keeping or committee on topic.

I served on the "Corrections/International Convention/Regional Forum Committee". There were 17 voting members, and 4 non-voting observers from other Areas. Matt M., Beth P. were Chairpersons and Dennis D. was secretary. Our agenda was very clearly planned and moderated effectively. They voted on a 2/3 vote for agenda items and 3 minute discussion time per person, which helped the process to move along. During conference deliberations the committee reports were displayed on a large view screen so the language was not lost due to people not being able to keep up. I learned a lot as did the other panel members who were with me. That is what this is all about learning from others and sharing ideas. All of it centered around an informed group conscience.

**Dustin S., Area 54 panel 67 mailing secretary**

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## Area 53 Mini-Conference Report

*What Did I See* - Rolling hills, trees and animals on the way to Salt Fork Lodge in Cambridge, Ohio. Once I entered...I encountered a huge wood-burning fireplace....warm smiles and friendly faces.

*What Did I Hear* -

- Discussion on Literature (LIT 2) with the GSO Staffer (Sandra W.) in attendance.
- Differing opinions on the development of pamphlets (Atheist/ Agnostic)....and the change to the subtitle on the GSR pamphlet (May Be The Most important Job in AA).
- The ECR Trustee (Mark E.) and the current Literature Desk (Sandra W.) share their experience, strength and hope.

*What Did I Feel* - A PART OF. A Solution for All Generations because; I am a member of AA. The Steps/Traditions/Concepts....gave Area 53 groups the opportunity to contribute to the General Service Actions, scheduled for this year's conference. This is how "we" are heard, through the process of a mini-conference....so our Delegate can share our collective conscience....in New York. With Gratitude,

**Beverly F. - Recording Secretary - Area 54/Panel 67**

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This year has been busy so far. I am getting all the new group updates and have been working with a couple of dark districts. We had one of the districts at the last area meeting and was happy they was there.

Yours in service, **Marilyn Hyatt, Area Registrar**

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As a GSR I find I have not been doing my job. I should have been announcing about the Birthday and Anniversary envelopes. It takes all of us to help with finances. I find that when I do the announcement about the envelopes, people respond by donating. So each one of us must do our part by giving out the envelopes. Thank you .

**Mae R., Finance Chair**

## Mini-Conference Voting Results

On Saturday afternoon, March 24, 2018, the Area 54 mini-conference attendees sat in 'mock' conference to consider the results of committee deliberations that morning. Here are the voting results of that session which included real agenda items from this year's 68th General Service Conference, to take place in late April in New York City.

### I. Agenda

- A. Review suggestions for the theme of the 2019 General Service Conference. Committee recommends that the theme of the 2019 General Service Conference be "AA yesterday, today, and tomorrow" [7-2], Passed 60-0.
- B. Review presentation/discussion topic ideas for the 2019 General Service Conference. Committee recommends these topic ideas: "How we were yesterday; how we are today; how we will be tomorrow". [9-0] Passed 60-0.

### II. Cooperation with the Professional Community

- B. Consider revisions to the pamphlet "A.A. as a Resource for the Health Care Professional." Committee recommends that the suggested revisions concerning the military be made on page 7 [10-0]; on page 9 [7-3]; on page 10 [10-0]. Passed 56-1.
- C. Consider revisions to the pamphlet "Members of the Clergy Ask About Alcoholics Anonymous." Committee recommends all suggested revisions concerning the military be made [8-0]. Passed 55-0.
- D. Consider revisions to the pamphlet "If You Are a Professional." Committee recommends that the suggested revisions concerning the military be made [unan]. Passed 53-1.

### III. Corrections

- A. Consider request to create a pamphlet for inmates who are to be released after long term incarceration. Committee recommends to create a pamphlet for inmates who are to be released after long term incarceration. [9-0]. Passed 37-16.

### IV. Finance

- A. Consider developing a method to standardize increases to the limits on individual contributions and bequests to the General Service Board. Committee took no action.

### V. Grapevine

- B. Review Audio Strategy status update. The committee discussed the benefits of the Grapevine and audio strategies presented, accepting them favorably. [9-0]
- F. Consider list of suggested Grapevine book topics for 2019 and later. The committee reviewed list of suggested Grapevine book topics favorably. [9-0].

### VI. Literature

- A. Consider proposed revisions to Alcoholics Anonymous:
  - 1. Request to add an appendix reflecting recognition received from the Library of Congress. Committee took no action. [4-7]
  - 2. Request to add the A.A. Preamble and Responsibility Statement. Committee took no action. [0-10]
  - 3. Request to add an endnote to Bill W.'s story acknowledging co-founder, Bob S. Committee took no action. [2-9]
- N. Consider request for the development of a new book combining Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions with Twelve Concepts for World Service. Committee recommends the development of a new book combining Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions with Twelve Concepts for World Service. [9-2]. Passed 55-12. Reconsideration failed 10-48.

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### Let's Go Green!

Area 54 General Service is inviting you to Go Green! Get your Area flyers, information, and an EXPANDED web-only version of the Northeast Ohio Recorder. All the information that comes to your USPS mailbox now can come to your inbox.

The NEOH Recorder you're reading now is 8 pages long—that's the page limit to keep postage weight within our budget and so that it can be folded to fit in an envelop. But we have so much more Area 54 news for you! The web version of this issue of NEOHR is 15 pages packed with experience, strength, and hope.

Let Dustin S., your Area 54 Mailing Secretary, know that you would like to save a tree or three (and save the area some \$Green\$) with a message at [mailingsecretary@area54.org](mailto:mailingsecretary@area54.org)

Please note: if you do nothing, you will still get your Area mail by USPS and by email (if we have your email address) as you always have.

**Expanded Content (15 pages!) and a Color-Enhanced version of this newsletter is now online at <http://area54.org/NEOHRecorder.html>**

## Mini-Conference Voting Results

### VII. Policy/Admissions

- B. Review dates for the 2021 General Service Conference. Committee reviewed dates without exception.
- F. Consider request to develop a policy for the use of the Conference dashboard. Committee recommends a policy be developed for the use of the Conference dashboard. [9-0] Passed 42-2.

### VIII. Public Information

- E. Consider revisions to the pamphlet "Understanding Anonymity" which expand content on Traditions Eleven and Twelve and adds information related to safety in A.A. All proposed items were approved by committee as recommended, except one. [unan], Passed 50-1.  
Additional consideration to replace current paragraph on p.7 "in stressing..." with new bold opening and new paragraph as written in draft changes to 'Understanding Anonymity'.
- F. Consider revisions to the pamphlet "A Brief Guide to Alcoholics Anonymous" which update language, contact information and information on the prevalence and severity of alcoholism and add information related to safety in A.A. All proposed items were approved by committee as recommended. [unan] Passed 50-1.

### IX. Report and Charter

- A. The A.A. Service Manual, 2018-2020 Edition:
- 3. Consider adding "Panel" to the Glossary of General Service Terms. Committee recommends that the word "Panel" be added to the Glossary of General Service Terms in the next edition of SM. [6-0] Passed 66-0.
- 5. Consider adding text regarding standing committees from p.25 of "The A.A. Group" pamphlet. Committee recommends adding text regarding standing committees from "The A.A. Group" pamphlet in the next edition of SM. [6-0] Passed 71-0.
- 6. Consider removing the following statement from the section Area Newsletters or Bulletins: "Any group or district of the Fellowship is free to use the symbol of a circle and triangle on newsletters, meeting schedules or other A.A. material." Committee recommends removing the statement concerning the symbol of a circle and triangle in the next edition of SM. [6-0] Passed 49-22.
- C. General Service Conference Final Report.
- 1. Consider request that Conference committee addition al considerations be published in their entirety both in

the printed Conference Final Report and the anonymity-protected digital version. Committee recommends that additional considerations be summarized in the printed Conference Final Report and published in their entirety in the digital online version. [6-0] Passed 57-9, as amended.

### X. Treatment & Accessibilities

- D. Review summary of the Fellowship sharing on the need for additional material to support carrying the A.A. message to Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing A.A. members. Additional considerations: It is suggested to separate information for deaf and hard of hearing, as well as large type pamphlets and possibly braille or other blind-accessible materials, to be inclusive of members with special needs.
- E. Review contents of Treatment Kit and Workbook. Additional consideration: after review the committee agrees that the pamphlet 'A Message to Teenagers' should still be included in the Treatment Kit and Workbook.

### XII. Archives

- C. Consider developing a policy on distribution of audio recordings of General Service Conference presentations. Committee recommends that a policy on distribution of audio recordings of General Service Conference presentations be developed by the trustees' Archives Committee. [9-0] Passed 54-1.

### XIII. Int'l Conventions/Regional Forums

- A. Discuss selection of cities to be considered as a site for the International Convention in 2030. Committee recommends continued search for sites for the International Convention in 2030.
- C. Discuss ways to encourage interest in Regional Forums and attract first-time attendees. Additional considerations: (1) Focus on communicating with home groups and individual members (2) Look closely at results of survey for future forum events (3) Continue to highlight the individual contact; one AA asking another AA to get involved (4) Advance registration for committee and also get the information out to people ahead of time (5) Groups work together on transportation and share rides and rooms.

#### Floor action:

That AAWS endeavor to license from UK GSO their pamphlet "The God Word" for distribution through US/Canada literature channels. Motion failed 19-27.

# UPCOMING DATES FOR THE AREA AND BEYOND

## NOTE THE DATE

April 15	
Area Assembly	2:00 pm
May 20	Lit sales
Unity Day—Delegate's Conf. Report	2:00 pm
June 8-10	GV sales Saturday only
Founders' Day at University of Akron	
June 24	
Area Open House Picnic	
Swine Creek Reservation	1:00 pm
July 15	GV Lit sales
Area Assembly	2:00 pm
August 20	
GSR/DCM Workshop	2:00 pm
September 16	
Area Assembly	2:00 pm
October 21	GV Lit sales
Area Assembly (area elections)	2:00 pm
November 12	GV Lit sales
Gratitude Sunday	TBA
2019—Panel 69	
January 20	GV Lit sales
Area Assembly	2:00 pm
February 17	
GSR/DCM Workshop	2:00 pm
March 17	
Area Assembly	2:00 pm

## OUTSIDE OUR AREA

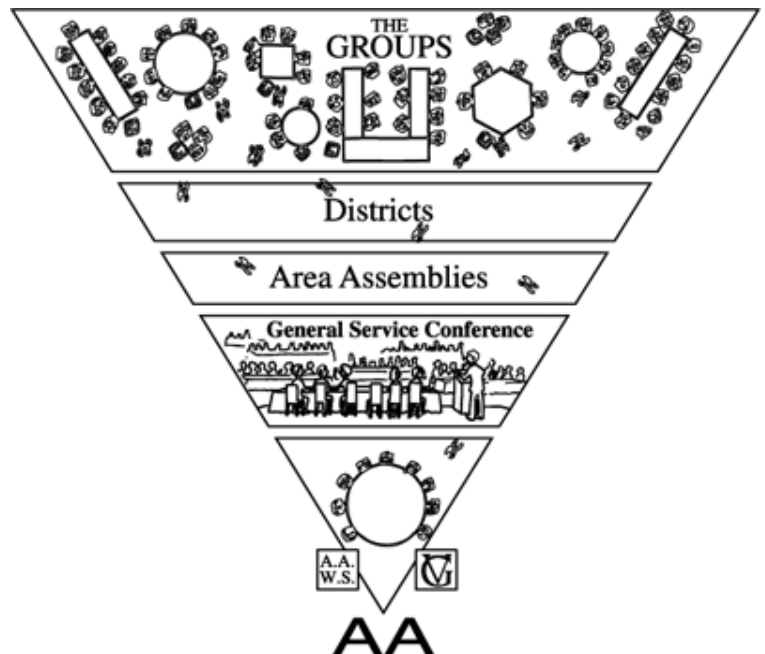
April -21-28 – New York, NY  
68<sup>th</sup> General Service Conference

May 5 – Columbus, OH 11:00 am  
Ohio State Convention Planning Meeting

July 27-29, Perrysburg OH  
62<sup>nd</sup> Ohio State Convention

August 24-26, Kalamazoo, MI  
East Central Regional Conference

November 3 – Columbus, OH 11:00 am  
Ohio State Convention Planning Meeting



Unless otherwise noted, Area Assemblies & Workshops are held at The 12 Step Recovery Club, 1480 Pearl Rd., Brunswick, OH (on 42 about 1/4 mile south of route 303 Phone: (330) 273-7216



## RECOVERY, UNITY AND SERVICE

These are the Three Legacies of our A.A. experience. Our leaders are but trusted servants, they do not govern. God, expressed through our group conscience, is our sole authority. World Service is the heart of our Third Legacy. Our meetings are informative and educational. They are held so that the Committee Members, GSRs and all interested members may be better equipped to carry the message of World Service back to their home groups and individual members, thus giving a better understanding to our purpose, our hopes, and our work.

### Confidential Contact List

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## The Four Absolutes – Some History

I was asked to research the origin of the Four Absolutes and the pamphlet by that same name published by our office. We have scant local resources for research of this kind, so I reached out to the Archives Department at our General Service Office. It was assigned to Associate Archivist Steven D'Avria who spent considerable time and careful effort on this task. A local member and theological researcher, James T, found the sources, Thank you so much, Steven & James! I blended his research with ours.

The Four Absolutes come from the Oxford Group, a precursor of AA. Both Bill W and Dr. Bob attended their meetings before starting AA and for a few years thereafter. We were originally the “drunk squads” of that organization. What is the Oxford Group presents these four moral principles (Honesty, Unselfishness, Love, Purity) in great detail but offers no advice from whence they came. The Oxford Group: Its History and Significance describes these as: “The ethical program of the [Oxford] Group is epitomized in the counsel of moral perfection defined by the Four Absolutes.” It further details much of the sources of the OG’s tenets and alludes that the Four Absolutes themselves originated from the works of Presbyterian Minister Robert E. Speer. These “standards” apparently appeared first in *The Principles of Jesus* by Speer published in 1902. In 1909, Professor Henry B. Wright of Yale, citing Speer's work, added additional Bible verses setting forth these same principles in his book *The Will of God and a Man's Life-work*. Labeling Speer’s standards as “the Fourfold Touchstones of Jesus and the Apostles,” Wright presented them as a rather extensive series of studies comprising the second part of “How to Know

the Particular Will of God.” Frank Buchman, founder of the OG, was an admirer of Wright’s works and the Oxford Group adopted and popularized these principles as “The Four Absolutes.”

When asked why the Absolutes were omitted from the Big Book, Bill stated “The Four Absolutes...are expressed or implied in the Twelve Steps. Bill W also opined that their “moral perfection” was too lofty a goal for most alcoholics; “We claim spiritual progress rather than spiritual perfection.” Bill also strongly wanted to differentiate AA from the OG. The OG had experienced some public controversy which we needed to avoid.

Nonetheless many AA members hereabouts found and find these principles of such universal usefulness that Lloyd H, co-editor of Cleveland’s Central Bulletin, wrote essays on these principles as they better apply to AA members. They were published in serial form in the January to June 1960 issues. These received such wide acclaim that in October 1962 we decided to publish them in pamphlet form. They first appeared as a 16-page booklet in April 1963 but the oldest copy we have in the office archives was printed after 1974.

I among others, when facing indecision, rely on these as a touchstone of God’s will for me—the moral path to pursue. Dr. Bob spoke of this at length in his last major talk in 1948. (see next page)



**Bob McK, Cleveland District Office Archivist**

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# Dr. Bob Talks the Absolutes

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The Four Absolutes - Excerpt taken from Dr. Bob's Last Major Talk, Detroit, December 1948

"The four absolutes, as we called them, were the only yardsticks we had in the early days, before the Steps. I think the absolutes still hold good and can be extremely helpful. I have found at times that a question arises, and I want to do the right thing, but the answer is not obvious. Almost always, if I measure my decision carefully by the yardsticks of absolute honesty, absolute unselfishness, absolute purity, and absolute love, and it checks up pretty well with those four, then my answer can't be very far out of the way. If, however, I do that and I'm still not too satisfied with the answer, I usually consult with some friend whose judgment, in this particular case, would be very much better than mine. But usually the absolutes can help you to reach your own personal decision without bothering your friends.

"Suppose we have trouble taking the First Step; we can't get quite honest enough to admit that John Barleycorn really has bested us. The lack of absolute purity is involved here - purity of ideas, purity of motives. Absolute unselfishness includes the kind of service I have been taking about - not the dime or two bits to the bum, but actually giving of yourself.

"As you well know, absolute love incorporates all else. It's very difficult to have absolute love. I don't think any of us will ever get it, but that doesn't mean we can't try to get it. It was extremely difficult for me to love my fellowman. I didn't dislike him, but I didn't love him, either. Unless there was some special reason for caring, I was just indifferent to him. I would be

willing to give him a little bit—it didn't require much effort. I never would injure him at all. But love him? For a long time, I just couldn't do it.

"I think I overcame this problem to some extent when I was forced to do it, because I had to either love this fellow or attempt to be helpful to him, or I would probably get drunk again. Well, you could say that was just a manifestation of selfishness, and you'd be quite correct. I was selfish to the extent of not wanting Bob hurt; so, to keep from getting Bob hurt, I would go through the motions of trying to be helpful to the other fellow. Debate it any way you want to, but the fact remains that the average individual can never acquire absolute love. I suspect there are a few people who do; I think maybe I know some who come pretty close to it. But I could count them on the fingers of one hand. I don't say that in any disparaging manner; I have some wonderful friends. But I'm talking about the final aspects of absolute love, particularly as it applies to A.A."

The Bigbook asks 3 times to test for self-will - the bondage of self  
p67 Where had we been selfish, dishonest, self-seeking and frightened?  
p84 Continue to watch for selfishness, dishonesty, resentment, and fear.  
p86 Were we resentful, selfish, dishonest or afraid?

<b>HONESTY</b>	(Self-will)	(the opposite is)	(God's will)
	Dishonesty .....		Honesty
<b>PURITY</b>	Resentment .....		Purity
	Selfishness .....		Unselfishness
<b>UNSELFISHNESS</b>	Fear .....		Love
	The opposite of dishonesty is HONESTY!		
<b>LOVE</b>	Honesty .....	The "TRUTH" not "your" truth	
	Purity .....	Motive: Is your motive pure?	
"The 4 Absolutes"	Unselfishness ...	Helping Others vs Yourself Only	
	Love .....	Joy, Oneness vs Separate, Shrink	

## A.A. and THE YELLOW SAFETY CARD: A Counter-Point

*(This guest editorial was provided by an Area 33 delegate in the form of a talk given at the East Central Regional Conference of Delegates Past and Present panel discussion in February 2018 in Indianapolis IN)*

In the spring of 2011, Karla B. finally seemed happy. She was 31 and in love, eager to move ahead on the path to maturity – marriage, a family, stability. She had a good job in the customer-service department of a large medical supply firm, and was settling into a condo she had recently bought near her childhood home in California's San Fernando Valley.

Her 20s had been rough, a struggle with depression, anxiety, alcohol and drugs. But early that spring, she told her parents and younger sister that she had met a charming, kind, and handsome man who understood what she had been through.

Their relationship blossomed as the couple attended Alcoholics Anonymous meetings several times a week. But there was much Karla did not know about the tall, blond man who said he was an A.A. old-timer.

Court records show that Eric E. repeatedly relapsed and turned violent when drunk, lashing out at family members, his ex-wife, and people close to him. By the time he and Karla crossed paths, judges had granted six restraining orders against him. The 40-year-old, sometime electrician had been convicted on dozens of criminal charges, mostly involving assault and driving under the influence. He had served more than two years in prison.

Unlike Karla, Eric was not attending A.A. meetings voluntarily. A succession of judges and parole officers had ordered him 52 times in 22 years to attend meetings as an alternative to jail.

In that regard, Eric was part of a national trend. Each year, the legal system coerces more than 150,000 people to attend our meetings. Many are drunken drivers who have been ordered to attend a few months of meetings. Others are felons whose records include sexual offenses and domestic violence and who choose A.A. over longer prison sentences. They mingle with A.A.'s traditional clientele, ordinary citizens who are voluntarily seeking help with their alcohol problem from a group whose main tenet is anonymity. Forced attendance (an on-going bone of contention for many A.A. members) seems at odds with our Third Tradition which states that the only requirement for membership is a desire to stop drinking.

So far, as a Fellowship, A.A. has declined to caution members about potentially dangerous peers or to create separate meetings for convicted criminals. We do not discriminate against any prospective A.A. member, even if he or she comes to us under pressure from a court, an employer, or any other agency. We cannot predict who will recover, nor have we the authority to decide how recovery should be sought by any other alcoholic.

Friends and family members say that Eric gained little lasting medical or spiritual benefit from A.A. On the way home from meetings, he'd stop at the liquor store and buy a pint of vodka.

His estranged wife Jennifer said Eric frequently told her that he never had any intention of stopping drinking. "He had no desire to ever get sober," she said.

But Eric did manage to figure out something by attending A.A. meetings. Friends and his former wife say he learned to troll the meetings for emotionally fragile women whom he impressed with his smooth mastery of our Movement's jargon and principles. In recent years, some critics have pressed A.A. to do more about the com-

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## A.A. and THE YELLOW SAFETY CARD: A Counter-Point

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bustible mix of violent ex-felons and newcomers who assume that others “in the rooms” are there voluntarily. Some would say it’s like letting a wolf into the sheep’s den.

According to reporting done by the CBS television show 48 Hours, by the time young Karla met the man who would kill her, she had been to addiction rehab twice and also, had attended A.A. and N.A. meetings. He was an A.A. veteran of many years and unbeknownst to her, had a criminal record—one that included violence particularly when he drank. 48 Hours reported that within a short time of their meeting, Eric moved from a run-down sober living facility into her condo, and not long after that, while drunk, he badly beat her.

Karla bailed him out of jail, and they continued to live together. Four weeks later, on September 1, 2011, she was dead.

On September 18, 2014, a jury found Eric E. guilty of first degree murder for smothering Karla B. to death. He is serving 26 years in a California prison, yet Karla’s parents did not feel that justice had been fully served. They filed a lawsuit against A.A. And according to 48 Hours, in their lawsuit, the parents “claim A.A. is in part at fault for Karla’s death for not warning attendees that violent criminals like Eric could be at the same meeting.” One step they wish to see A.A. take would be to separate criminals from the rest of the ‘regular’ A.A. population. For Karla’s parents, A.A. was to blame for failing to prevent the murder because Karla had met Eric at A.A. meetings.

According to them, A.A. World Services Inc. was “a parent, subsidiary, affiliate, alter ego, partner, agent, franchisee, licensee, employee, employer, controlling franchiser, controlling licensor, principal ... Who failed to pre-

vent such acts when having the power and/or duty to do so.”

Lawyers representing A.A. World Services, Inc. disagreed and argued in their demurrer and motion to quash that they breached no duty owed to Karla. They state in their demurrer: “Plaintiffs do not (and cannot) plead defendants owed a duty to Ms. B.” And, while their lawsuit continues against other defendants name—i.e. Eric himself and Karla’s A.A. sponsors—the two most prominent defendants, the General Service Board of Alcoholics Anonymous Inc. and Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, Inc., were officially dismissed from the case by Los Angeles Superior Court Judge Rita J. Miller on December 15, 2015.

Not surprisingly, this case is not the only one of its kind. In 2010, a Hawaii judge mandated that Clayborne C., a troubled Iraq veteran, must attend A.A. after nine months in a state psychiatric hospital. Clayborne had post-traumatic stress disorder and a record of violence against women—facts little known to Kristine C., a Honolulu marketing consultant he met at an A.A. meeting. According to published reports, in mid-summer 2010, Kristine spurned Clayborne’s romantic overtures. Enraged, he began to show up at her workplace.

Early on the morning of Aug. 20, 2010, Conley pried open the security bars of Kristine’s condo and shot and killed her, her 13-year-old daughter, and a neighbor’s dog before killing himself.

And in 2012, Sean C. was on probation in Montana after jail time for molesting a 12-year-old girl. Among Lake County Court’s demands for the first-time offender were that he attend A.A. meetings regularly, remain abstinent from alcohol, and not enter into any relationships with women. He was able to abide only by the first condition, according to court documents pub-

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lished in the Leader Advertiser, a Montana newspaper. His probation officers discovered alcohol in his possession, along with a diary in which he admitted to preying on women at A.A. meetings, precisely because they were fragile.

In 2007, stories in the Washington Post and Newsweek described the sexual and emotional abuse of young women at a cult-like A.A. group in Washington, D.C., called the Midtown Group. The stories included the accounts of young women who said they were pressured to have sex with many A.A. members, but especially with the group leader, Michael Q., who has since died. Police concluded that no crime had been committed, since the women involved were over the age of 16 and therefore of legal age.

A.A. groups abroad have also confronted the issue of sexual predation among its members. In 2001, Australian AA officials published guidelines for how to bar financial, spiritual, and sexual predators from the group, noting that older members had a “moral obligation” to help protect vulnerable new members – and possibly a legal one. In 2002, 3,400 British A.A. groups voted to adopt a new code of conduct regarding predatory behavior, concluding, “Failure to challenge and stop inappropriate behavior gives the offender permission to repeat the offensive behavior and encourages others to follow suit.”

I cite these riveting anecdotes, not to be maudlin or provocative but rather to illustrate the type of pressure that apparently has been brought to bear on our Fellowship to address the issue of safety for our members. This pressure most recently has produced the F-211, otherwise known as the Yellow Safety Card. When first presented with the task of providing the contrarian point of view regarding the Yellow Safety Card, I felt burdened and unenthusiastic about it. I mean, what

could possibly be wrong with a gentle call to our Fellowship to provide a safe environment for the 12 Steps of recovery to do their restorative and life-giving work, I asked myself. Surely such a call would be greatly appreciated and of course desirable. Who, in his or her rightmind, could ever argue against it? Then it occurred to me: an alcoholic could, and I should try to identify rather than compare.

So I began to contemplate the idea of safety at an A.A. meeting and what that means to me. And I asked others what it meant to them as well. I recognized that for me safety at A.A. meetings means being safe from the discussion of outside issues. Others see safety at meetings to mean:

1. Safety to be comfortable in a group, ideally one in which people look like me. When people look dangerous, unkempt, or smell bad, it's frightening.
2. Safety from predators: sexual and financial.
3. Safety from court ordered people who do not want to be here (this is accompanied with the theory that court ordering has made meetings unsafe in general).
4. Safety to discuss my other addiction issues without bias or criticism.
5. Safety to be an atheist.
6. Safety to be gay or transgendered at a group with strong religious leanings.
7. Safety from the inappropriate—the drunks, the mentally ill and potentially violent.
8. Safety from gossip and anonymity breaks.

Anyone could increase this list. While it is evident from the illustrations at the beginning of

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this presentation that there are safety concerns within A.A. and without, I have to ask this question—are we confusing safety with security? In other words, are we calling it “safety” when what we are really after is “security”? To my mind, security suggests freedom from worries that derive from knowing that certain external safeguards are in place and that I can rely on them to protect me and my property. Safety on the other hand, is a richer word that includes an inner certainty that all is well. In a sense, security is external, while safety is internal. It was coming to this realization that caused me to interpret that what the Yellow Safety Card seeks to accomplish is suggested guidance for the provision of security rather than safety—protection from some sort of external harm or danger. To some, this distinction may appear to be splitting hairs, but inasmuch as the topic is a hot button, it is my feeling that it deserves further examination.

Assuming we agree that the Yellow Safety Card was created with the best of intentions, how then, practically speaking, shall we proceed as A.A. members within a group? Any attempt to hold A.A. responsible for the behavior of people who attend our meetings is absurd on its face.

And certainly, I am not here to beat up on victims in any way. But does it seem that we as A.A. members are being asked to form security teams of sorts when, for example, one member references something at a table which offends another, words are then exchanged, turning the encounter into a “meet me in the parking lot” kerfuffle? The following are important parts of some of our traditions to keep in mind when considering how inconsistent with the underpinnings of our Fellowship it would be for us to take on the role of screening or separating out certain members:

- Tradition Three: “The only requirement for A.A. membership is a desire to stop drink-

ing... Our membership ought to include all who suffer from alcoholism.”

- Tradition Four: “With respect to its own affairs, each A.A. group should be responsible to no other authority than its own conscience.”
- Tradition Seven: “Experience has often warned us that nothing can so surely destroy our spiritual heritage as futile disputes over property, money, and authority.”
- Tradition Nine: “Each A.A. group needs the least possible organization.”
- Traditional Ten: “No A.A. group or member should ever, in such a way as to implicate A.A., express any opinion on outside controversial issues – particularly those of politics, alcohol reform, or sectarian religion. The Alcoholics Anonymous groups oppose no one.”

These traditions have served us quite well for almost... 100 years. But what they mean is that there is no central authority for A.A., no corporate or other entity can speak for it. That said... the second sentence of the Suggested Statement on Safety reads: “As our Traditions remind us, the formation and operation of an A.A. group resides with the group conscience.”, leaving all thought and decision making up to the groups. Then, in the very next sentence, the Suggested Statement on Safety renders a conclusion with these words: “Therefore, we ask that group members and others refrain from any behavior which might compromise another person’s safety.” (Again, my interpretation of the word safety is as an internal feeling, something for which A.A. owes no provision). For the Card to make such a dramatic shift from all power’s belonging to the group with this phrasing, “the formation and operation of an A.A. group resides with the group conscience” to “therefore, we ask that group members and others refrain from...” is a stealthy, rhetorical maneuver to say the least. It

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giveth; then, it taketh away.

And so, I had to ask myself, who is this WE that's doing this asking? If the General Service Board or the A.A.W.S Publishing is doing the asking, are we not opening a Pandora's Box for future litigation? After all, if our groups' autonomy is partly or wholly what, in the past, has protected the Board(s) from protracted litigation and/or punitive damages, where then is the wisdom in their connecting themselves to us in this way now? It appears as though whoever the "we" is, has inserted itself into the affairs of groups. This could never be good. I ask this because the phrase "Therefore we ask..." possesses instructive tendencies, tendencies coming directly from our Service Boards. This to me seems way out of line, a gross mis-step on their parts, and anathema to everything we stand for in Alcoholics Anonymous.

My greatest opposition to the card therefore is that it is deceptively intrusive on the front and somewhat out of scope on the back. I find the last sentence on the back of the card to be clumsy and unnecessary. It reads: "For this reason, groups, and members discuss the topic of safety to raise awareness in the Fellowship and to seek through sponsorship, workshops and meetings, to create as safe an environment as possible to carry A.A.'s message of hope and recovery to the still suffering alcoholic." I maintain the position that much of the unpleasantness regarding safety/security that we encounter in A.A. meetings has a great deal to do with our refusal to adhere consistently to all of our traditions and to our singleness of purpose.

Rogelio Flores, a Superior Court judge in Santa Barbara County, Calif., finished a six-year term as a Class A (non-alcoholic) Trustee of our General service Board in April 2013. He acknowledged that mandating at-

tendance at A.A. meetings was not always the best solution, but he said that it often seemed better than sending another person suffering from any combination of mental illnesses, alcohol, and substance abuse into California's overcrowded prisons. "In the balance of justice, he said, "there are a lot of competing interests."

If it were up to him, Judge Flores said, he would devise a plan to put every convicted criminal through a psychological assessment to help determine the best treatment option. "A.A. is one piece of a much bigger puzzle. How do we deal with sociopaths? What do we do with them? No one wants anyone to be hurt by predatory conduct," he said. "I wish I had a better answer for alcoholics," Judge Flores said. "I really do."

Admittedly, people have varying opinions about the Yellow Safety Card, and I would opt for a larger, more informed conversation about the nature of our Fellowship's escalating security concerns rather than an oversimplified rush job of a safety card.

~Carlyle W., Delegate Panel 67 Area 33

