

Area 54 – Panel 53

Self-Support in Northeast Ohio

“the language of the Heart in Action”

presented to the 28th Annual Mini-Conference – April 4, 2003 – by Andy T. – Area 53 - Panel 53 Delegate

In 1946 a little over 10-years after the start of A.A.; co-founder Bill W. wrote in a May Grapevine “In the first years of A.A. we had no money problems. We met in homes where our wives made sandwiches and coffee. If an individual A.A. wished to grub stake a fellow alcoholic, he did so. It was purely his own affair. We had no group funds, hence no group money troubles.....Our A.A. membership does not depend on fees or dues.” A tradition was born.

At first Bill W. called these traditions “The Twelve Points to Assure Our Future.” Tradition Seven of the Twelve Traditions of Alcoholics Anonymous states: Every A.A. Group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions. In the long-form the point in Tradition Seven that we are discussing this evening is ***“Then, too, we view with much concern those A.A. treasuries which continue, beyond prudent reserves, to accumulate funds for no stated A.A. purpose.”***

Money has never been a requirement for A.A. membership, and to keep it that way all of A.A.s trusted servants have an ongoing obligation to inform groups and individuals about the value of self-support and the need for voluntary contributions throughout the Fellowship.

Now, where do A.A.’s services – worldwide, area, local – fit into our scheme of things?” asked Bill W. in an October 1967 article in the A.A. Grapevine. “Why should we provide these functions with money?”

According to Bill, “The answer is simple enough. 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...or world service Headquarters.....” “Though not costly, these service agencies are absolutely essential in 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.***”

The above excerpts are from an A.A. Pamphlet – Self-Support, #F-3

These are generic responses and apply to all groups and individuals. If you want more details on why Bill W. believed we all should contribute or why service exists read the stories in The Language of the Heart and/or the Self-Support pamphlet.

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But specifically, in Area 54, why should we support general service? What does it do? How do I know it does what it says? Do I or my group have a voice in the spending?

To help support A.A.’s essential services, the General Service Conference suggests that individual groups, through an informed group conscience, adopt a specific contribution plan tailored to meet the group’s financial situation.

Once the basic group expenses have been taken care of (rent, refreshments, A.A. literature) and a prudent reserve has been set aside to cover any emergency contingencies that might arise, the group **may decide** to further carry the message by sending money to the following A.A. service entities.

THE DISTRICT – 64 Districts in Area 54, including one Spanish District encompassing the whole Spanish speaking population of the area; through approximately 1,200 registered groups and 6 intergroup offices. Districts communicate directly with the groups, providing the district group conscience for area assemblies, and serving as a link between the area delegates and the G.S.R.s.

THE AREA COMMITTEE – 6 elected officers, the 64 District Committee Members (DCM), and 10 Standing Committee Chairpersons meet to discuss vital A.A. activities of the geographical area (one of four areas in the state of Ohio); send a delegate to the annual General Service Conference; hold 6 area assemblies, 2 DCM workshops, a picnic style Open House, and a Gratitude Sunday celebration of A.A. each year. The Committee determines the needs of the Fellowship; and provides information from A.A. worldwide & A.A. in Area 54.

The Standing Committees – interested A.A.’s who meet to discuss and focus on:

- 1. Archives** – acquiring/preserving our A.A. Area history
- 2. Cooperation with the Professional Community** – defining A.A. to medical and business professionals
- 3. Correction Facilities** – provides A.A. to those behind the walls
- 4. Finance** – prepares and monitors Area finances
- 5. Grapevine** – sales and distribution of our meeting in print
- 6. Literature** – helping groups with service information & understanding
- 7. Newsletter** – ensuring A.A. literature and materials are available
- 8. Public Information** – defining A.A. to the general public
- 9. Special Needs** – help to individuals to attend/benefit from A.A.
- 10. Treatment Facilities** – defining A.A. to recovery center clients & programs; making 1st contact.

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The Area Officers are the trusted servants elected to keep you informed, to come to your groups, your A.A. events; your group consciences; the individuals you talk to about what, why, and how you or your group can be a part of AA self-support. The individuals who can keep you informed of where, how and what your contributions are being used for and why. The only place Area receives financial support is from you, individually and as groups. Your dollars help us help you.

Your contributions support the delegate to the annual General Service Conference; to other Area activities; to Regional activities in your 5- state region; and to groups and districts throughout the area; to be informed and to inform; to keep the communication between A.A. worldwide and your group available; to share the experiences of others so we may grow in fellowship together. Your contributions support the officers and committees to ensure the message of A.A. is carried to anyone anywhere, whenever they ask.

This is what service in Area 54 is and does and why we do it. Your participation and attendance at Area Assemblies, your local District; sharing information with your homegroup; purchasing A.A. Conference-approved literature all support general service and ***can enhance your sobriety.***

Okay, you understand the local contributions and support – it may even make sense to you and you might even decide to support a little. But, what about world services, **why should you support the General Service Office in New York?** A.A. needs your help to keep A.A. itself alive. Referring to the A.A. General Service Manual, page S19, the late Bernard B. Smith, nonalcoholic, and then chairperson of the board of trustees stated: “we need it (a conference) to ensure that changes within A.A. come only as a response to the needs and wants of all A.A. and not a few. We need it to ensure that the doors of the halls of A.A. never have locks on them, so that all people for all time who have an alcoholic problem may enter these halls unasked and feel welcome. We need it to ensure that Alcoholics Anonymous never asks of anyone who needs us what his or her race is, what his or her creed is, what his or her social position is.”

Powerful words and from a nonalcoholic giving freely of his time and energy and he didn't even have our problem. Now we need to look inward with rigorous honesty ask ourselves am I self-supporting? Let's look at some facts.....

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Area 54 reported 1,345 groups – with 283 groups contributing an average of \$1.64 per person to your General Service Office of A.A. (“G.S.O. to most members) **Area 54 ranked 92nd (21.0%), or 2nd from the bottom in contributions**, in the 93 General Service Areas of the United States & Canada based on information listed in the 52nd Final Report of the General Service Conference; printed summer 2002 for year 2001. The highest area contributing was at 88.9% and the lowest was 14.6% of the groups contributing. **In 2002 all Area contributions increased 4 %.**

Exact figures for Area 54 were not available in preparing this report – ask your Treasurer or Delegate

Contributions to your General Service Office & the A.A. Grapevine, located at 475 Riverside Drive in New York City support services to all A.A. groups in the United States and Canada and also offers services to A.A. overseas; especially in countries where there is no service structure. G.S.O. serves as the clearing house and exchange point for the wealth of A.A. experience accumulated over the years, coordinates a wide array of activities and services and oversees the publication and distribution of A.A. Conference-approved literature and service manuals.

You or I are not going to write or print a Big Book; answer phone calls every day and NIGHT; ***you and I are not*** going to have a bunch of strangers over to our house to explain how our program works. But, in general service that’s exactly what happens – through your districts, your area, your intergroup and your GSO, with the help and aid of your area committee and GSO staff; A.A. is made available to anyone, anywhere, whenever they ask for it.

Area 54 hosts six (6) assemblies for all interested AA’s, a weekend Mini-Conference rotated biannually throughout the area, to provide the delegate with an informed group conscious and offer interested AA’s a mock conference experience; a table for Grapevine Committee to encourage subscriptions is hosted at Founder’s Day weekend each year. Area 54 is home to the Akron intergroup office and archives of A.A. history and co-founder’s Dr. Bob’s home.

Area 54 prepares a quarterly newsletter of area events, activities, committee reports and assembly minutes. Area 54 participates in the Area State Planning Committee for all 4-areas of the state, held twice a-year, in Columbus, OH to develop and format the rotating annual state convention hosted by each area.

This is what service does and Area 54 needs your participation and support.

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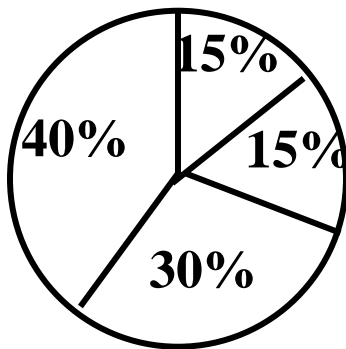
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How can you help? Well, it’s not just your money and the amount does not matter – **what matters is you do it.** On your sobriety birthday donate a \$1.00 for each year you have. At your group conscience make sure your money is supporting all of A.A., ask questions. When the basket is passed give freely. Give of your time and energy. Attend an assembly; elect a group service representative (GSR); make a contribution to Area services; attend the Area activities planned for your benefit; call with an idea or suggestion; get involved.

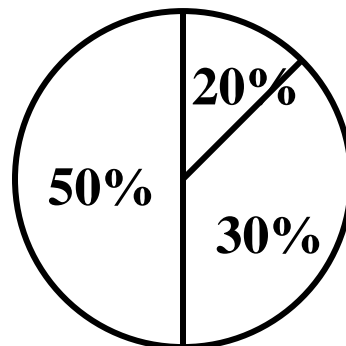
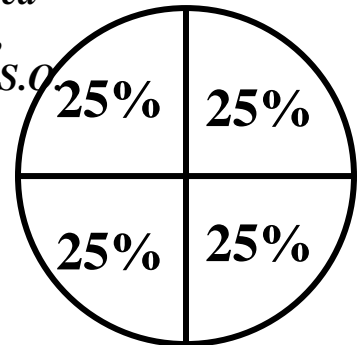
SUGGESTED PLANS for CONTRIBUTIONS

from the A.A. Pamphlet Self-Support: Where Money and Spirituality Mix

*15% District;
15% Area Committee;
30% G.S.O.;
40% Intergroup or Central Office*



*equal distribution
to district, area
committee,
intergroup, G.S.O.*



*When
No District active;
20% Area committee;
30 % G.S.O.;
50% Intergroup or
central office*

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**A.A. Is Self supporting
Through its own contributions
PRICES ARE CHANGING – HAVE YOUR CONTRIBUTIONS?**

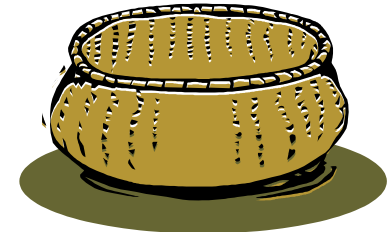


1960 - .10
1970 - .20
1980 - .35
1990 - .50
2000 - 1.00



1960 - .05
1970 - .15
1980 - .35
1990 - .50
2000 - 1.00

A.A. CONTRIBUTIONS

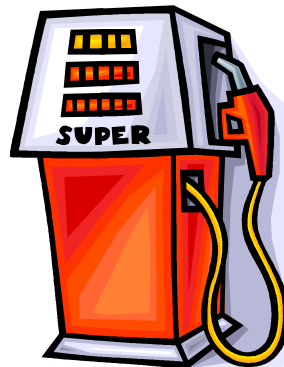


1960 - \$1.00
1970 - \$1.00
1980 - \$1.00
1990 - \$1.00
2000 - \$1.00

2002 – Is it time you increased?



1960 - .25
1970 - .65
1980 - 1.65
1990 - 2.00
2000 - 3.15



1960 - .22
1970 - .35
1980 - .90
1990 - 1.10
2000 - 2.49