

The Northeast Ohio Recorder

April, May, & June 2012

<http://www.area54.org>

Volume XXII, Issue 6

NOTE THE DATE

May 20	
Ohio State Planning Mtg	1:00 pm
Unity Day	2:00 pm
June 24	
Open House Picnic	Noon ->
July 15	
Ohio State Planning Mtg*	1:00 pm
Area Assembly*	2:00 pm
August 19	
Workshop	2:00 pm
Sept 16	
Assembly	2:00 pm
October 21	
Election Assembly	2:00 pm
November 18	
Gratitude Sunday	TBA

* These events will be held at the Beachwood Hilton hotel



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

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A Word From Our Delegate



By the time you receive this newsletter, I'll be home from the 62nd General Service Conference (GSC) in Rye, New York and will be preparing my report for Unity Day on May 20th in Brunswick. I'll be available

to make my GSC report upon invitation to your district or group at a mutually agreeable date. Bring your calendar to Unity Day. Bring your appetite, too—the organizing committee has promised some 'good groceries'!

Our 37th annual Mini-Conference was held April 6th, 7th, & 8th in Independence, Ohio. I want to thank all the registrants for giving up part of their holiday weekend to consider the agenda items for the Thank you all for contributing to the formation of the area conscience which helped inform my decisions at the Conference. Deliberations of the recent mini-conference can be found on pages 6-7 of this issue. The editor has promised a jam-packed issue full of great articles and reports.

With love and service, Bob D., Delegate Area 54, Panel 61.

Alternate Delegate's Report



In all of my conversations about General Service, I mention how much being involved continues to enhance my sobriety. One of the things, I have come to realize, that has had a significant impact on that enhancement are the "Twelve Concepts for World Service." I realized this at the Regional Forum in Kalamzoo, MI. A past delegate from Chicago, Ruben G., spoke on how he uses the Concepts in all aspects of his life. Now I look at the Concepts in a somewhat different light. I see that these principles are not only for use in General Service, but just as Ruben said, for family and friends and the people with whom we come into contact daily.

As we celebrate the 50th Anniversary of our "Twelve Concepts for World Service," may we never forget that just as the Twelve Steps are the spiritual side of our program and the Twelve Traditions make for unity and discourage disunity, "the Concepts are aimed at recording the why of our service structure in such a fashion that the highly valuable experience of the past and the lessons we have drawn from that experience, can never be forgotten or lost." - Bill W. We do not regret the past nor wish to shut the door on it.

I am forever grateful to be a part of such an amazing program and to be given the opportunity to partake of its fruits. In other words, a triangle simply cannot stand without all three sides, Recovery – Unity – Service.

In Loving Service, Ola P. – Alternate Delegate, Panel 61

WHAT HAS NEW YORK EVER DONE FOR ME?

From the Editor...

I'd like to start with the Daily Reflection for September 16: "...no society of men and women ever had a more urgent need for continuous effectiveness and permanent unity. We alcoholics see that we must work together and hang together, else most of us will finally die alone."

And, so, my editorial this issue will focus on the means by which we, as a Fellowship, can get along with each other, and with the outside world, as we strive to carry this message of recovery to the still sick and suffering alcoholic. Or, put another way, once heard from one of the newer members of my home group at his first group conscience meeting, "**What has New York ever done for me?**"

"Our Twelfth Step — carrying the message — is the basic service that the A.A. Fellowship gives; this is our principal aim and the main reason for our existence.

"Therefore, A.A. is more than a set of principles; **it is a society of alcoholics in action.** We must carry the message, else we ourselves can wither and those who haven't been given the truth may die.

"Hence, an A.A. service is anything whatever that helps us to reach a fellow sufferer —ranging all the way from the Twelfth Step itself to a ten-cent phone call and a cup of coffee, and to A.A.'s General Service Office for national and international action. The sum total of all these services is our Third Legacy of Service.

"Services include meeting places, hospital [and jail] cooperation, and intergroup offices; they mean pamphlets, books, and good publicity of almost every description. They call for committees, delegates, trustees, and conferences. And, not to be forgotten, they need voluntary money contributions from within the Fellowship.

"The most vital, yet least understood, group of services that A.A. has are those that enable us to function as a whole, namely: the General Service Office, A.A. World Services, Inc., The A.A. Grapevine, Inc., and our board of trustees, known legally as the General Service Board of Alcoholics Anonymous. Our worldwide unity and much of our growth since early times are directly traceable to this cluster of life-giving activities." (Reprinted from *THE A.A. SERVICE MANUAL combined with TWELVE CONCEPTS FOR WORLD SERVICE*, pp.S1-S2, with permission of A.A. World Services, Inc.)

Bill W. and Dr. Bob soon realized after publishing the Big Book, that we, as a Fellowship, and we alone, must own the rights to our message of recovery. That is how A.A. got into the book publishing business, and the original justification for what was then called the Alcoholic Foundation.

As A.A. spread from town to town, far away from Akron and New York City, groups had problems and questions. They naturally turned to Bill and Bob for answers. This service formalized with the hire of Ruth Hock as our first paid special worker — a secretary for Bill in the little NYC headquarters, who typed and retyped the original manuscript and its many revisions, getting it ready to go to the printer. The deluge of book orders following the 1941 Jack Alexander article in the Saturday Evening Post cemented the NYC location as AA ground zero. The Fellowship quadrupled in size that year alone

from 2000 to 8000 members.

The attention that this article drew to our Fellowship required a standard public relations policy — again coming out of the experience of the groups collected and shared from the NYC office.

During the 1940's, A.A. continued rapid growth. More alcoholic staff members were engaged. As they divided the work between them, departments began to be created. Today's office has a good many — group, foreign and public relations, A.A. Conference, office management, packing and mailing, accounting, stenographic [computational], and special services to Loners, prisons, and hospitals.

So, what has New York ever done for me? you might ask. As Bill W. once said, "Let's look at the record."

- All of our literature is published by us, ensuring that the message remains un-fooled-around-with and not exploited for any outside commercial purposes.
- Our overall public relations policy and media relations are funneled through one, very well-informed source, thus protecting our anonymity and the anonymity of those who might wish to join our Fellowship.
- Services to groups and central offices, like publishing a national directory and shipping books and pamphlets, as well as helping new groups get off the ground with free literature and advice.
- Services to recovering persons with special needs, by making our literature available in Braille, audio file, ASL, and translations into more than 60 languages.
- Speaking of which, the Big Book has been translated into 60 languages and G.S.O. has helped A.A. groups start in over 180 countries around the world.
- Services to our military personnel overseas, who might otherwise not be able to attend meetings, with a correspondence service. They also reach out to sober people living in isolated communities, far from the nearest meeting.
- The A.A. Grapevine magazine is like carrying a meeting around in your pocket. This is a big help to sober soldiers overseas.
- A.A. cooperates with medical and psychiatric professionals from other countries, who want to learn how to cope with their societal epidemics of alcoholism.
- Regional Forums offered four times a year all over North America, allowing local members, like you and me, to meet and speak with our Class A [non-alcoholic] Trustees and staff members from GSO. These are free, by the way.

As our delegate carries our group conscience to the Conference in New York, let's remember these things and perhaps consider a contribution to your Area and the General Service Board.

-Your editor, Jeff

We welcome your service-related contributions, comments and questions. Send topic ideas or complaints to: newsletter@area54.org



OFFICER REPORTS

In the beginning there were many squabbles in Alcoholics Anonymous related to money. However, without these early disagreements we would not have the 12 Traditions. Bill first called them 12 Points to Assure our Future. Early on they were published in the Grapevine so that members could become acquainted with them.

Bill spent a lot of time going from group to group selling the members on these 12 principles. Later they were called the 12 Traditions (Spiritual Principles) and they were unanimously approved at the First International Convention in Cleveland in 1950.

In the beginning, meetings were held in the homes of A.A. members and friends. These members and friends provided sandwiches and coffee. There was no charge to the A.A. members. As the size of the meetings increased, the need for outside meeting places became necessary. Rent had to be paid for these places and members began to grudgingly pass the hat. Many stated that it was a Spiritual Program and should be free. However, members of A.A. would now have to start paying their own way.

In 1940 when times were hard or should I say money was scarce in A.A., The Rockefellers held a dinner for Alcoholics Anonymous and many of their wealthy friends were invited. A. A. folks, Bill included, got excited at the thought of all this money that would come pouring into A. A. They sat down to dinner with one A.A. member seated at every table. After dinner, Bill and the other A.A. folks and their supporters spoke.

Rockefeller said "It's (A.A.'s) power lies in the fact that one member carries the message to the next without any thought of financial income or reward. Therefore, it is our belief that Alcoholic Anonymous should be self supporting as far as money is concerned." Though this was not what Bill and the others wanted to hear it was clearly God doing for them what they could not do for themselves. A. A. would be Self Supporting through our own voluntary contributions.

We are to accept no contributions from outside sources. Only the members of Alcoholics Anonymous would be allowed to contribute to the program. If outsiders contribute they would want to give direction and perhaps want to run things because they have given their money. If I pay the cost then I am the Boss. We are self supporting through our own contributions.

It is not the amount that you give it is the fact that you give. So if your group can only afford to contribute \$5.00, send in the \$5.00. Your group has done its best. Today we don't have to be the best but we should do our best. One last point, everything has increased in cost during the past fifty years. However individual contributions remain constant at one dollar in the basket at meetings. Gasoline has increased from 25 cents/gallon to \$3.95/gallon and cigarettes from 25 cents a pack to \$6.00. Yet we still put just a dollar in the basket.

Calvin L., Area 54 Treasurer

DISTRICT REPORTS

Want your district's news published here? Send reports to newsletter @ area54.org

District 1 reports that the DCM was pleased to meet a special needs member with eight days of sobriety at a recent meeting. Member is hearing impaired.

District 6 announces their annual picnic coming up in May. The district recently elected an alternate treasurer to enable checks to be written when either of the other two signatories are not available. They report several new GSRs.

District 8 has 32 groups in the district, three groups have never been registered but are now signed up. The Finance service piece "F19" is appreciated wherever it is offered.

District 10 reports that it is hosting 2012 Unity Day in Brunswick. Dave W. was elected the new District Committee Member (DCM) and Otis W serves as the Alternate DCM and District Secretary.

District 11 reports that a new meeting has begun in Wadsworth on Wednesdays at 12 noon. May 29 they have an informational get-together planned. Doylestown and Rittman both have new AA groups.

District 13 reports that three new groups have been registered.

District 19A is updating their group information sheets.

District 20C now has a new alternate DCM to help with group updates.

District 24 reports that alternate DCM from 20C is serving as temporary DCM in this dark district to help list unknown groups.

District 29 reports that there are some new GSRs in her district.

District 32 reports that there are 12 groups in this district DCM is making updates to group information sheets in time for directory cut-off date.

DISTRICT and AREA COMMITTEE REPORTS

(Continued from page 3)

District 34 Reports contact with many of the group secretaries or contact persons for the update information. The groups Shine on Me, Step One East, Payne Avenue Group, Friends of Detox, which is a closed meeting and in serious need of support, located at the Harbor Light Complex on Prospect Ave., Ignatia's Way AA Group. Mistletoe, and League Park, both located at St. John Cathedral East 9th and Superior. I was informed the groups at St. John will be temporarily closed for about six to eight weeks due to asbestos removal. I expressed the importance of groups having a good GSR to all, and mostly everyone seemed to be interested in being represented at the General Service Level of AA. We talked about our monthly meeting at the Cleveland North Coast Multi-District, this meeting at Area 54, GSO and how everything ties together. and several other groups have relocated out of the district.

District 35 reports 22 group updates have been completed, three new groups registered and seven groups no longer meeting.

District 39 reports that many groups in the district have anniversary celebrations coming up.

The Cleveland North Coast Multi-District is looking forward to the busy year ahead. The assigning of the vacant DCM positions, the upcoming Workshop (service panel) on May 19th at 3000 Euclid Ave., 12:00 in Cleveland, are just a few things on our Multi-District Schedule. Also there is the commitment to host the Ice Cream Social at the Ohio State Convention followed by the Multi-District Picnic on August 4, at Forest Hill Park, Cleveland Hts. I am pleased to report that since our recent move to our new meeting location there has been several new GSR's in attendance.



Cooperation With the Professional Community

During this reporting period, your CPC Committee Chair has been busy designing a new display to be ready for the 37th Area 54 General Service Mini-Conference. It came to our attention last year at our mini-conference that the display currently in use has been passed down for many, many years. So, as your CPC Committee Chair prepares to rotate we want to pass on up-to-date materials. Since there are no CPC Agenda Items for review by this year's mini-conference other than the annual review of the CPC Workbook and Kit, it allowed us time to make updates.

Ordinarily, your CPC Committee is busy responding to requests for information about AA from some person or entity referred to us from GSO. However, no such requests have been received in recent months. We did receive a survey from a person who was conducting research on Alcoholics Anonymous for an educational document he is writing in pursuit of an advanced degree. We did not officially participate in the survey, as some of the questions appeared to be in conflict with our 12th Tradition.

- James T., *Cooperation with the Professional Community Committee chair*

Corrections

From Youngstown Area Multi-District Corrections Committee: Now meets on the 2nd Sunday of the month from Noon to 1:30 anyone interested in helping them please come to their next meeting in April

They reported a need for the 3rd edition Big Book for TCI for the purpose of the 5 Time Loser Story since the request we were able to gain printed copies of just the story for them.

This committee had reported that there donation cans are not doing so well so they have requested more groups to help with the pink cans. They currently have 35 little red Big Books they have low supply of pamphlets or other information for inmates. Update-Since reporting to the groups they had some great help from two groups in

their district and have since requested a large order of literature for the inmate both female and male plus we received a donation for the teen literature.

This committee is down to 3 very strong women that are attending their monthly meeting and they are the elected members the chair, treasure and literature rep.

Their volunteers for their facilities are going well they have 3 at TCI and 3-5 at OSP more waiting for approval. They have lost our representation in the women's side of CCA due to the sharing of religious material; I am currently in contact with them to get an AA volunteer back in there.

From Akron Corrections Committee: Eva reported to me that they are trying to contact Holmes County and Summit county jail to get meetings going at these facilities but at that time of the report their was no response from them.

Glenwood jail has 2 their orange can donations are fantastic and they have set up a Correction workshop on March 31, 2012 which myself and the chair from Youngstown Magi G along with Joel T and Bob D will be their.

At this time there is a strain on the relationship with Akron and Youngstown and it is in the process of being fixed.

- Tina C., *Corrections Committee chair*



Grapevine

"The Language of the Heart" e-book is now available. You will find the e book at the aagrapevine.org store. As need warrants, Grapevine will add new titles to the ebook offerings.

New Grapevine titles "Emotional Sobriety II" and "Step by Step" have been introduced.

The digital versions of the magazines were not sustainable as subscription based products. Grapevine thanks all the subscribers and hopes they continue with Grapevine Online and/or the print magazine.

Grapevine's new online subscription offers several products in its all inclusive subscription package. You will receive Audio Grapevine, the digital story ar-

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STEP TWO, INSIDE TRADITION TWO, INSIDE CONCEPT TWO

Pull up your wobbly stools and let us look at some more crazy stuff in our fellowship today! I sit around our meetings and hear:

“‘Ninety meetings in ninety days,’ or ‘fake it ‘til, you make it,’ and ‘keep coming back, it works if you work it,’ etc.

While these few are not the only phrases that prohibit recovery, we should not get labored down with each one. These phrases or words that are sure to keep any of us from working our program- are just “sound bites and heresies” that entertain those who have not gone back to the bottle.

These sound bites are the new “insanity of AA,” while offering no substance or sustenance to our recovery; they do give anyone an excuse not to be in recovery.

If we have turned our recovery program over to sound bites, then perhaps we need to look into how and why we did this damaging act. For if this is true then we have done an insane injustice to Alcoholics Anonymous by not protecting it from the evil and corroding influences caused by these sound bites and heresies.

Are these the thoughts of some wild “Big Book Thumper?” Perhaps, but before we condemn the author, let us see how he may be bringing some wisdom to the second step, tradition, and concept!

In step two, wisdom given to me by my first sponsor was, and still is, the dividing line between “doing it my way,” and admitting my way was the source of my problems. Seeking help from another source, while admitting I could not solve these bedevilmings, would change how “sanity could be restored.”

This spiritual concept would haunt me over and over again in my early recovery. Repeatedly, I would find myself frustrated with personal relationships at home or at work; yes, even in AA. This spiritual sickness, the need to do as I wanted, and the rest of my world would have to accept me, just as I was, could have ruined any hope for recovery, and keep me in my insane world.

I needed to embrace: physically, mentally, emotionally and spiritually the concept that without help from others, my recovery would not have the depth of the Big Book, but would consist of nothing more than sound bites.

Though progress was slow, O’Brian S., my first sponsor, who understood the spirituality of our program and by demonstrating its principles, taught me A.A.’s recovery program.

As we will witness and will be repeated many times during our discussion of the steps, traditions, and concepts how these spiritual principles welded me into something I could never have accomplished without his aid.

When the group elected me to serve them as their General Service Representative (GSR), I found myself smack in the middle of tradition two. For those of you who may not know, the long form of tradition two (2) in the back of the Big Book is shorter than the short form, (only AA can do this and have it make sense) the different versions were the result of dropping a significant statement from the original. The original states, “our leaders are but trusted servants; they do not govern.”

AAs everywhere were debating the value of the concepts, and there effects on AA at the “grass roots. Who or whom would govern AA? Did we need the Concepts since we had the Traditions?

During this time, my home group, along with the other groups in our districts, were debating the concepts and who should run A.A. . Throughout our area the same debate was raging. This home group of mine consisted of five people; Bill C. the Area Delegate, Joe T., the Districts DCM, myself as GSR, and two other members. The latter two held no particular views on the subject. Bill and Joe created a major problem for me. I did not agree with them. This difference between their views and mine posed a dilemma. The vote was two for- two against, one abstention. Who were the trusted servants of our group?

How were we to decide the vote?

My sponsor, (he was the abstention) who did not like any part of the service structure, gave me an answer that has carried me through all these forty-seven (47) years I have been in service.

O’Brian gently explained; “Ed, where does Alcoholics Anonymous get it’s authority to save our lives?” This life

saving authority, given from God, should be used within every area of our structure. It was not whether any person, group or entity is right or wrong, but who does that person, group or entity serve?

No one will ever know how that wisdom has helped me when I listen to servants at the mike!

With this dilemma coming from our group, we went to the assembly. The arena we debated in was less restricting than we have today. The debating process used in our area service structure was: The delegate sat with the area chair in the front of the room. The GSR’s and DCM’s would line up at the mike and ask questions. Each person spoke freely waiting for their questions or comments to be addressed.

After the discussion was over, a sense of the meeting was taken and if the delegate felt they needed more input, time was allowed.

The openness by which we debated our topics were similar to how the General Service Conference debated their topics with one exception; Bill W. wielded strong influence over the General Service Conference (GSC) and the Delegates.

He was campaigning amongst them for votes with regards to his twelve concepts! Neither our area delegate nor the area chair companied for or against either this topic nor any other.

Has the General Service Conference (GSC) lost its authority to govern AA- the answer is a clear yes. That is a statement, not a problem. Area 74 is not the only area to ignore tradition two, thereby, helping others to take over the GSC.

I have been saddened over these last forty-seven years to watch weak servants lose sight of O’Brian’s wisdom. Yes, we still have only God’s authority in AA, but we still have strong personalities that feel a need to dictate their wisdom, those who believe only they can serve well, thus grabbing power and authority; not knowing they are destroying AA. We must always be on guard against those self-appointed power-driven personalities. Our strength and authority comes from God; we are only caretakers of what He gave us.

This is a truth: The person sitting in a bar or at home, who may someday want this “life-saving” gift, will receive it, but

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MINI-CONFERENCE DELIBERATIONS

Cooperation With the Professional Community

1. The committee reviewed the contents of Cooperation With the Professional Community Kit and Workbook and made no recommendations.

Corrections

1. The committee recommends revisions to the pamphlet “A Message to Corrections Professionals” as presented. Proposed change: “While anyone may attend open A.A. meetings, **non-alcoholics may attend as observers**, but only those with a drinking problem may attend closed meetings.” (to be consistent with other AA pamphlets, such as *The AA Group*). Motion passed 62 – 8.
2. The committee considered remake of the 1987 video “It Sure Beats Sitting in a Cell” and made no recommendation. Additional considerations: to revisit at a later date because of the cost of production.
3. The committee reviewed the contents of Corrections Kit and Workbook and made no recommendations.

Finance

1. The committee recommends increasing the Conference delegate fee to \$1,500. Additional consideration: the trustees’ Finance committee investigate ways to decrease the cost of the Conference, such as a less expensive venue, a shorter conference and rotating the location around the country. Motion passed 66—1
2. The committee recommends increasing the dollar limit on annual individual contributions to \$5,000 and one-time bequests to

- \$15,000. Motion passed 70—7.
3. The committee recommends inclusion of the proposed Self-Support Kit in the Finance Kit. (Service material – no conference action required)

A.A. Grapevine

1. The committee considered list of suggested Grapevine book topics for 2013 and later, and made no recommendation.
2. The committee considered incorporating the service responsibilities and duties of the service position “Grapevine Representative” (GvR) into the Service responsibilities and duties of the “General Service Representative” (GSR) and took no action. Additional consideration: The GSR duties should not be changed to include GvR duties.
3. The committee reviewed the Grapevine Workbook and made no recommendation.

Literature

1. The committee discussed a suggestion for revision of the pamphlet “Circles of Love and Service” and made no recommendation. Additional consideration: the committee sent the pamphlet “Circles of Love and Service” back to the trustees’ Literature committee to be reviewed in its entirety by the publications department.
2. The committee discussed a request to add text from the dust jacket of the Third Edition of the Big Book, *Alcoholics Anonymous*, to the dust jacket of the Fourth Edition of the Big Book and made no recommendation.
3. The committee considered a request to add the A.A. Preamble to the front inside pages of the

Big Book, *Alcoholics Anonymous* and took no action.

Public Information

1. The committee recommends establishing an A.A. presence on Facebook for the purpose of providing information about A.A. to the public; this presence would serve as an informational resource only, with no interpersonal communication capabilities. Motion passed 47 – 18. Minority opinion felt that IP addresses are not protected and could expose personal information.
2. The committee discussed several requests related to adding language referring to current media to Tradition Eleven and took no action.
3. The committee reviewed the contents of the Public Information Kit and Workbook and made no recommendation.

Treatment / Special Needs / Accessibilities

1. The committee recommends developing a pamphlet for the alcoholic with mental illness and requesting the publications department return a draft pamphlet or a status report to the Treatment / Special Needs committee prior to the 2013 General Service Conference. Additional consideration: the pamphlet should address anxiety, schizophrenia, bipolar, dual diagnosis, post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), HIPPA laws, and sponsorship. Motion passed 55 – 20. Minority opinion we are delving into subjects outside our expertise alcoholism. Motion to reconsider passed 50 – 8. After further discussion, motion failed 43 —30 (did not achieve substantial una

MINI-CONFERENCE DELIBERATIONS

nimity)

2. The committee reviewed the contents of Treatment Committee Kit and Workbook and made no recommendation.
3. The committee reviewed the contents of Special Needs / Accessibility Kit and Workbook and made no recommendation.

Archives

1. The committee recommends changing the Composition, Scope and Procedure of the Conference Committee on Archives as presented. Motion passed 39 — 3.
2. The committee reviewed the Archives Workbook and recommended that page 38 be revised to include the use emerging technology, such as digital photography, to reproduce fragile or brittle archive items. (Service material requires no conference action.)

International Conventions / Regional Forums (Group Services)

1. The committee reviewed the 2025 International Convention Site-Selection Procedures and removed all references to “rain” and modified the Minimum Site City Criteria (5a) from “Covered stadium (or suitable facility) with a minimum seating capacity of 65,000 (can include the floor) or an open stadium with a proven statistically minimal possibility of rain, available for the specified dates.” to “Stadium (or suitable facility) with a minimum seating capacity of 65,000 (can include the floor).” Motion passed 51 — 2.
2. The committee recommends adoption of the Guidelines for Site Selection for the 2025 A.A. International Convention July 2-5, 2025 as amended.

General Service Board motion on AA Grapevine Inc.

The General Service Board asks for GSC support to develop a plan to restructure the current AA Grapevine, Inc. corporate and governance structure, while retaining the Grapevine’s independent editorial voice. The plan, may, among other things, address the separate corporate existence of AA Grapevine, Inc., as well as issues of governance and operations. The plan will be designed to increase unity, better reach and connect the Grapevine to the broader Fellowship while addressing financial stability. The plan will be submitted to the 63rd General Service Conference for approval prior to implementation.

Motion passed 51 – 4.

Floor actions

Establish an individual contribution plan for the AA Grapevine Inc., limited to \$5,000 annually and \$15,000 for one time bequests. Objection to consideration of the floor action was defeated. Motion was defeated 16 – 44.

Add the AA Preamble to the front inside pages of the Big Book, Alcoholics Anonymous. Objection to consideration of the floor action passed 48 - 9.

NOTES TO ASSIST THE READER:

Q. Why do some motions say that the committee had no recommendations?

A. When agenda items are considered in committee, the committee may decide to not forward a recom-

mendation to the floor of the mini-conference. This decision is based on numerous considerations; the project may be too expensive, there may not be a widely expressed need by AAs for the project, or the conference committee just felt that the idea did not have merit at this time, to name just a few reasons.

Q. What is a floor action?

A. A floor action is a motion made by a single member at the end of all other deliberations, usually to reconsider a motion which did or didn’t pass. Concept V states that:

“Throughout our structure, a traditional “Right of Appeal” ought to prevail, so that minority opinion will be heard and personal grievances receive careful consideration.”

Members should make floor actions only when they feel that a grave error has been made by the Conference which will affect AA as a whole if not remedied. *It is not meant to serve as a ‘second swipe’ at a motion by a conference member who didn’t get their way the first time.*

Q. What is “substantial unanimity”?

A. Substantial unanimity represents a vote in favor of a motion by more than 2/3 the conference members.



FOR NEWCOMERS TO SERVICE

"I'm soooo confused," I exclaimed to my fellow home group member, Alan W., as we drove back from our area assembly in Mantua, Ohio. Mantua may have been chosen for our area's gathering because it was mutually inconvenient to the several larger cities around it, but I digress.

Alan called himself a DCM, which I came to learn stood for District Committee Member. It was part of the "alphabet soup" thrown at me at that gathering: GSR, DCM, PI, CPC and a variety of new terms like delegate and trustee. I was so completely lost! Alan referred me to that new book I'd received called *The AA Service Manual*. He answered my questions but reiterated his request that I read, and re-read that book. I did read it but with great difficulty, even though I was a former technical editor, because it had been modified here and there dozens of times (a process writers call "bleeding" a document). It had morphed into something that lacked true organization and consistency of style. Fortunately in 1999 it got a complete rewrite and is now much easier to understand. While reading the *Concepts* section any doubt that Bill W. attended law school quickly dissipated. I found that section tough reading but worth the effort.

I was really inspired by the Twelve Concepts that complete the Third Legacy. Around my area we say the Steps protect us from alcohol, the Traditions protect AA from us, and the Concepts protect us from AA. These are the checks and balances we have to ensure that each of us has a voice that is listened to and that no faction can easily take over control of our organization. And Bernard Smith's explanation of "Why We Need a Conference" is a continuing source of strength and inspiration to me when our process for change seems ponderously difficult and slow. Further, I came to learn that that strange thing called a GSR stood for Group Service Representative and is really my group's AA-local-to-worldwide-liaison—but then GSR is easier to spell.

Alan had come from another district that had a heavy gay/lesbian population and was a strong proponent for creation of the AA pamphlet addressing the problems faced by those with this sexual orientation. Because of the controversial nature of this specific topic, and resistance in general by many of us to special interest pamphlets of any sort, it took more than twice as long as normal for this item to get approved. Throughout this process I learned firsthand from Alan that one need not be a delegate or trustee to get desirable enhancements to our program. Any member can start the Conference Approval process or make suggestions that do not require Conference approval.

My education in service did not start with my area. In treatment my counselor told me to get a sponsor, get a home group, and get a job to do at that home group. I understood this latter request. Having a task to do at my home group would get me there when the snuffles, or the living room couch, were telling me to stay home. So I became the group's coffee maker. In a sense this treatment facility counselor, and AA member, was my first service sponsor.

Then along came Drew who chaired the Central Office's Correctional Facility Committee and had just made an impassioned plea to the Central Office Representatives to join in this effort. I congratulated him on his effort but explained that, since I had never had any real legal trouble, I couldn't help (or

at least that was my excuse.) "Bob," he sighed, "these people don't need to know how to get into trouble. They have figured this out for themselves. What they need to know is how to stay sober one day at a time and you can share your experience about that." Thus began several years of regular visits to the local workhouse. This was at both times the most exasperating and most rewarding service I've done; it was rare to learn that you had made a difference in people's lives who were incarcerated, but, when it happened—and it did happen—what a difference!

And also there was Pat who had worked with me at one time. He now chaired the Treatment Facilities Committees for the area and enlisted my help making presentations to some of the local treatment facilities. Pat was asked by our delegate if he would edit our area newsletter. In good AA style he told her, "No I can't, but Bob can." I got a recovery sponsee who was a very good writer to help me. I was heavily edited in turn by the delegate at first, but lighter later as I learned the terms used in service. Teaching speeds the learning process.

As the year's passed I proceeded down the service triangle and got elected to several area officers' jobs and eventually delegate. I started asking a past delegate for advice more and more often, eventually telling him, "You do realize you're my service sponsor." A lot of service sponsor relationships start in that informal way. I've received help from GSO staff members, trustees and others as I've trudged this road. All were service sponsors—some formal, more informal.

As I got to know my way around service, others asked me to help them. I try to get to know their strengths so that I can see how they might best fit an area need. There's always more than enough service to go around and we seem to have a service need to fit every willing member. The text associated with Concept IX in the Service Manual stresses, "We must continuously find the right people for our many service tasks."

One task that often seemed to fall upon me was matching a service need with a willing, able servant. In a perfect world we would have a chance to understudy a service position before getting it but hereabouts that's more the exception than the rule. We tend to get offered jobs we are clueless about, having only the willingness and ability to learn them. That's where a service sponsor can be particularly helpful as both a source of information and of encouragement.

Service sponsor itself was a job like that. Until recently there was nothing substantial written about it. We had only the examples of our service sponsors and those others we viewed to go by. Now we've incorporated a few paragraphs about it into the pamphlet *Questions and Answers on Sponsorship*. In time we might expect that section to evolve further.

And that's about all I can think of to offer right now. I have to e-mail this to a couple service sponsees who are talented writers before I submit it to the *Grapevine*. Just as in service work, together we can make this better than I alone can do!

Contributed by Bob M., South Euclid, Ohio

The preceding article appeared as a web-only feature on AAGrapevine.org

WITH GRATITUDE FOR THEIR SERVICE JOURNEY

In November, 2011 the Akron Multi-District hosted the annual Area 54 Gratitude Sunday celebration. Five past delegates were invited to share their gratitude on the journey of service. Here are some excerpts from their talks.

Bob McK., delegate 1997-1998, shares:

November 1st, 1984 I left a treatment center with 3 instructions: get a sponsor, get a home group, and get something to do at that home group. I understood the third, it would get me there when illness or sloth might otherwise keep me home, and it gave chance to partly pay back AA.

Gratitude in AA is a verb. Truly grateful alcoholics are doing something about it—being of service. Service in AA, as Bill W. defines it, is anything, *anything*, that helps carry the message to the still suffering alcoholic. Most of my service opportunities lay within General Service but not at first.

I got a home group, the only group in easy walking distance. I became its coffee maker—a job I kept for over 5 years. Getting a sponsor was tougher. I wanted someone just like me and didn't realize they did not come that way. I had slogans like "life's a bitch"; they "live and let live." So I eventually went to Paul, the secretary of that home group, and told him, "I need a sponsor. Can you find me a sponsor like maybe you?" Paul told me three things. Don't drink, go to meetings, and get out of the Heights. He wanted me to get around and explore AA. I've been successful at all three.

Al W. regularly attended that home group and introduced himself as a District Committee Member or DCM. He talked of area assemblies and made them sound attractive. About a year sober I talked of going and my sponsor said I could be the Group Service Representative or GSR. Al became my service sponsor.

I wrote this story about service sponsorship some years ago and a couple months ago the AA *Grapevine* magazine published it as a "web exclusive" titled "Pass It Down." It's in the "service" section of their "stories" tab on their web site: aagrapevine.org. You can read it

there, however reading the whole thing requires that you subscribe. [or see pg 7 in this issue] Our most senior past Regional Trustee challenged each of us present at the Regional Forum earlier this month to get just one more subscriber to the Grapevine. Is anyone out there willing to be mine? The *Grapevine* reaches lots of us in places of the world where meetings cannot and that may be as close as your local jail.

While it has not recently financially supported itself, a less than 10% increase in subscriptions would make it so.

Our delegate Joyce K. was looking for a replacement editor for our area newsletter, the *Northeast Ohio Recorder*. She asked Pat G, a fellow who'd worked with me at a large company, and in good AA style Pat said, "No I can't, but Bob could." And shortly thereafter I was one of 4 people at a meeting to break up a large district. We broke it into 4 pieces and each of us was "elected" a DCM. Around that time I overheard Al telling someone, "Bob's going to be a Delegate someday." I laughed 'cause I knew you had to get elected to be a delegate and I was never a people pleaser. Indeed I have to work often to take Dr. Bob's suggestion to "guard that erring member the tongue, and if we must use it, let's use it with kindness and consideration and tolerance." But in AA they give you a job and, if you do it well, appoint or elect you to another. Thus I became registrar which then was also mailing secretary. This meant I had to ask for help to get the mailing out on time and surprisingly to me I got it. I regressed from that to Treasurer and then to Area Chair, which I could also do since you play by my rules: Robert's Rules. But Chair was then also Alternate Delegate which is a simple job until someone gets sick. Our Delegate George O'N. needed open heart surgery leaving me with much of what would otherwise be his job. So in 1996 I stood and got elected Delegate. Those were two amazing years involving much work mitigated by some intense fun. I formed friendships with folks across two countries, the US and Canada, some of which have continued until today. Also In 1996 Gail L., the then

Akron AA Archivist, got me involved in AA Archives which has continued ever since.

From my start in 1984 I was given another way to express my gratitude for this program which has saved my life. They passed a basket around and I tossed a buck in it. I learned that a whole dollar became the rule locally around 1975. Some years ago I realized I needed to toss in at least two dollars to equal the buying power of that 1984 dollar and have done so since, more at my home group. It takes \$4 now to equal the effect of that 1975 dollar those very grateful earlier timers tossed in.

AA has had to curtail some services in this down economy and when AA stops services people die of alcoholism that might otherwise be helped. The spiritual principle of our traditions is sacrifice; sacrifice characterized by anonymity, which is sacrifice of credit, and self-support, which means sacrifice of money. I needed to give more than a dollar just to feel I'd made a meaningful contribution. And since my home group cannot sufficiently pay my way for the essential AA services beyond the group, I participate in General Services Birthday Plan plus give a personal donation to my Central Office.

Gratitude for what I have, versus fretting what I have not, keeps me happier. My educational background was in the hard sciences. We never understood what the philosophers were asking. The glass was entirely full. It was half full of water and half full of air. Aren't both important? A few years BCE Rabbi Hillel asked three questions, "If I am not for myself, then who is for me? If I am only for myself, then what am I? If not now, when?"

Dan M., delegate 2003-2004, shares

As you see, there is a gap between Jeff and I. That seat was filled by Alice H. from Saybrook, Ohio, who served her term courageously knowing that she had terminal cancer the entire time. I always think about Alice because she was sober much longer than I, and was always there for the new person.

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WITH GRATITUDE FOR THEIR SERVICE JOURNEY

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By the grace of God and the fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous, I have not had a drink of alcohol since August 28, 1983. For that fact alone, I am grateful. If that were all that ever happened to me, I would die a happy person. Fortunately, I found Alcoholics Anonymous. When I walked into my first meeting of AA, I was the same selfish, self-centered person that was drinking the night before. Brining into that into the meeting is not a good way to live. I sat around the rooms, staring at walls hoping the meeting would get over. I knew I had to be here, but I did not want to be here. Fortunately, I met a whole bunch of people in AA that were so grateful for the life they had, that they reached out their hand to me, and helped me to realize the life I could have. These people were active members of AA.

Right away, making coffee, picking up ashtrays and chairs, and standing at the door. If you did not get there in time to stand at the door, you went around the room and shook everyone's hand, and then stood at the door. This is the kind of AA I was introduced too. People were kicking me out of bars, and my family wanted little to do with me. However, these people brought me into their life and introduced me to their families. These were grateful alcoholics carrying the message of sobriety. Looking back, I cannot imagine how cleaning ashtrays, picking up chairs, or setting up the room, whatever was necessary helped me stay sober. However, for the first time in my life - I fit in. I felt I needed to earn my seat in AA.

At that time, service at the group level was my service in AA. I can appreciate today why service at the group level is the some of the most important work that we do. We can work at the general service level, maintaining the literature, and carrying the message to non-alcoholics and professional. Intergroups can create schedules and steer people to AA. However, if the door is locked when a newcomer shows up, we have failed. The group-level work you do is the most important work. That is why I continue to work at the group level as well. In early sobriety, I did not feel I had much to offer. There are jobs for everyone, even people who do not like to talk and

need more time to open up.

My first introduction to general service did not go well. During the early years I stayed active at the group level, planning dances, and attending conferences. I grew in the fellowship and worked the twelve steps. When I was eight years sober, I read the book *AA Comes of Age*. The book introduces how our Traditions developed through mistakes that our founders and early members experienced. The book also introduced me to our Third Legacy and the Twelve Concepts for World Service. At this time, I was so grateful for my life in AA, that I wanted to do anything I could to insure AA was here tomorrow.

General Service, however, seems to be a secret in NE Ohio. I set out on a path to locate the AA Service Manual. Today, that would be as simple as logging onto <http://www.aa.org>. I resorted to buying a copy in a used bookstore. I finally began attending the Area Assembly meetings, attending Area events and the Mini Conference. I went with a different attitude this time. I eventually learned that Geauga County was a district and set out to locate the long-time district committee member (DCM), who had not attended a meeting in years. I asked if him I could have a shot at it, and he wished me all the luck in the world because he never convinced anyone of its importance. The main thing I wanted our groups to understand was how their group is linked to AA, how self-support was critical to carrying the message domestically and internationally.

My first job in service was DCM for district 21. In 1996, I stood for mailing secretary and was drawn from the hat. Drawing from the hat occurs when there is no clear 2/3 majority for anyone candidate. When I was drawn, I wondered "What did I just do?" This first Area officer job made me realize how important commitment is in taking a service position. Area officer positions cannot be completely explained in the shorts amount of space allotted in the *Area Guidelines*.

Just as being general service representative (GSR) shows an AA member how their group is connected to AA as a whole, Area officers begin to see how

our Area is connected to AA as a whole. The four delegate Areas in Ohio work together to plan the Ohio State Convention, and the fourteen delegate Area in the East Central Region work to plan the Conference of Delegates Past and Present and the East Central Region (ECR) Convention. These conventions rotate each year through the five states in the ECR and the fourteen delegate Areas. The connections become more important for the delegate and alternate delegate because these will be the people we serve with at the General Service Conference (GSC). I am proud to say that delegate from the ECR are some of the most well prepared delegate at the GSC because of these partnerships and training opportunities.

Participation in the Area Committee, whether as a DCM, a committee chair, or as an Area officer, are learning opportunities that allow us to use some of our existing skills or learn new ones. All members are "delegates in training." While not everyone will have the opportunity to serve at the GSC, every GSR in NE Ohio has an opportunity to experience the Conference on a small scale at the Area 54 Mini Conference each spring.

When I stood for delegate, I finally felt ready. I had been adequately prepared through my experience and I had the support of many other members. I served my time as delegate as a member of the Literature Committee. This committee has a considerable number of issues to address both years. We spent long hours in committee and put good recommendations on the Conference floor. My Conference experience was rewarding and unique, I will never forget it. I shared the experience dozens of times at district meetings and regular meetings.

When I rotated out of being a delegate, I did not retire. In Area 54, we use the committee systems to engage past delegate and keep their experience at the Assemblies and Area Committee meetings. A great deal of time went into to their training; letting them fall by the wayside would be foolish. It also allows the delegate to repay the fellowship for the opportunities they had during the training period.

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WITH GRATITUDE FOR THEIR SERVICE JOURNEY

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I will be forever grateful for what AA has given me. When I crawled through the doors 28 years ago, I did not even want to live. Today, I want to live and I have been given a purpose. That purpose was explained by the late Bernard Smith, a non-alcoholic trustee of the General Service Board, when he stated:

"We may not need a General Service Conference to insure our own recovery. We do need it to insure the recovery of the alcoholic who still stumbles in the darkness one short block from this room. We need it to insure recovery of a child being born tonight, destined to alcoholism. We need it to provide, in keeping with our Twelfth Step, a permanent haven for all alcoholics who, in the ages ahead, can find in A.A. that rebirth which brought us back to life. We need it because we, more than all others, are conscious of the devastating effects of the human urge for power and prestige which we must insure can never invade A.A. We need it to insure A.A. against government, while insulating it against anarchy; we need it to protect A.A. against disintegration while preventing overintegration. We need it so that Alcoholics Anonymous, and Alcoholics Anonymous alone, is the ultimate repository of its Twelve Steps, its Twelve Traditions, and all of its services.

"We need it to insure that changes within A.A. come only as a response to the needs and wants of all A.A., and not of any few. We need it to insure that the doors of 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 insure 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."

Our purpose is as guardians of our Traditions, insuring that members understand their importance and by teaching their application at the group level. My purpose is to share what I have learned and to do anything I can to insure AA

will be here tomorrow, not only for myself, but for the new person.

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Jeff Y., delegate 2007-2008, shares:

Within five or six weeks of getting sober, I was introduced to service before I knew that's what it was called. The 'music of AA' enveloped me at my first meeting and thereafter continued to nurture my soul back to health. It was the laughter and ease with others that first attracted me to you; that certain indescribable something in your eyes.

Cleaning ash trays was my first taste of service. It was something to do with my hands during that awkward period of early sobriety. The old-timers reminded us that we should leave our meeting rooms looking better than we found them; I still recommend that today.

My first assigned job in AA was making coffee at a small Wednesday night meeting in Toledo. The secretary had announced at the end of the meeting that they were going to have a group conscience meeting after the closing prayer. Curious about these other AA activities, I didn't want to be left out. As she asked for a coffee maker for the next month, everyone around the tables suddenly became fascinated with their shoelaces. The secretary caught my eye and asked if I would be willing to make coffee.

"Sssurre... How do you make coffee?" After the giggles died down, she assured me, "Don't worry, sweetie, we'll teach you how." Boy, you guys must've been desperate for help! I felt like I belonged when I got that commitment. People would be upset if I didn't show up - I'd better earn my keep now.

Later on, I was introduced to intergroup and general service. As a newly minted GSR, I showed up for my first assembly only to find that they were having area-wide DCM elections that day. I was the only GSR from my district who was there besides the DCM who'd had that district for many years, so I 'rotated' into DCM after half an hour being a GSR. That DCM appointed himself my service sponsor but failed to mention that fact to me. After

hounding me, encouraging me, yelling at me, one day I'd had enough.

I yelled back, "Red, why are you always picking on me?" "Picking on you??" he asked, "I'm trying to help you grow. I see something in you worth building on. If I didn't think you had something to offer back to AA, I'd ignore you."

I was active in the Young People's movement at the time and learned a lot about principles and personalities at their monthly business meetings. At an intergroup meeting back then, I heard the following chestnut: "If you like everybody in AA, you're probably not getting to enough meetings - If everybody in AA likes you, you're probably not doing enough service..."

My job took me to Detroit where I was taken under the wing of Pam Reising, our current trustee. She was area chair back then, I think.

Bob McK. convinced me to attend assembly here in October 2002. No one was willing to stand for Mailing Secretary & Registrar. Tina H. (delegate Panel 51) in her frustration, asked if "Anyone at all was willing to serve?" Bob encouraged me to raise my hand but I had no real idea what was involved. I served under Dan Mix and Alice Heath for the next three and a half years. Serving as Alice's alternate, when she passed away following shortly after her second conference, I asked the past delegates what I should do now. They told me that I was to serve wherever and whenever the seated delegate could not attend. That pretty much resolved the issue then and there.

As your delegate, I witnessed the Minority Report of 2007 while serving on the Trustees Committee at the General Service Conference. Seven of the twenty-one trustees exercised their Fifth Concept Right of Petition and Appeal after the Board failed to take up the issue of succession planning for GSO. Plenty of other issues surfaced along the way including whether the General Manager of GSO should rotate after a set period of time. We engaged in some lively debates on the floor those two years. I forged a lifelong bond with 92 other delegates. I held the original 1962 minority report from Bill in my hands, courtesy of your

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WITH GRATITUDE FOR THEIR SERVICE JOURNEY

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archives at GSO. I got to live and integrate the Concepts into my sobriety in a deeper way than I ever imagined. That appreciation and knowledge would serve me well in my next assignment.

Shortly after rotation, I was approached by a trustee of another Fellowship to gauge my interest in applying for their board as a 'Class A' trustee. Everything I've experienced up to this point in service convinced them that I would be a good fit for their board. The past three years, I've served as a non-debtor trustee on the General Service Board of Debtors Anonymous. I've been embraced by a fellowship whose members never fail to thank me for my service every time I meet them. I'm the one receiving the gifts of gratitude, patience, and tolerance. My fellow trustees are a joy to serve with.

I continue to be active in my home group and I sponsor many in recovery and service. Each new commitment allows me to learn and grow. Collectively, they've made me the grateful AA I am today.

I'm grateful to my sponsors, to our past delegates here and the 2400 other delegates who went before me going back to 1951. Grateful for the foresight of our founders and the non-alcoholics who helped us protect AA from our own egos. We all get a chance every day to make a small difference in the life of some alcoholic; hopefully I'll leave AA no worse off for my presence.

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Dan F., delegate 2010-2011, shares:

My sobriety date is April 4, 1990. My home group is the Serenity Big Book Study in Firestone Park. My first service opportunity came at eight months of sobriety when I became a group secretary for the Fellowship Group in Cape Coral, Florida.

I have served AA in three states – Florida, Pennsylvania, and Ohio. I've been a DCM in each of these areas.

The word GRATITUDE is a noun, meaning: a feeling of thankful appreciation for favors or benefits received, a warm appreciative response to kindness.

The first time I was grateful to God and those who taught me how to live life

one day at a time was when I had an overwhelming desire to drink and I know now that was my first acid test in sobriety. I clutched my bronze medalion my home group gave me at three months of sobriety. I lost count as to how many serenity prayers I said in that decisive moment but in a very short period of time the desire to drink disappeared. That confirmed in my mind what everyone shared with me that the God that I had walked out on years ago was now keeping me and would keep me sober.

One week later our home group secretary chose not to be an AA member anymore and the group chair asked me if I wanted the service position. I told him I didn't think I could do the job and he shoved the group binder into my ribcage and exclaimed, "We will help you." From that day on I've been in one service position or another until our mini-conference ended this past April.

I thank God and am grateful. Starting with going into a detox center in Ft. Myers; going to my first assembly in 1995 as a new DCM across the state of Florida to carry the collective group conscience of eight groups in my district; moving home to Pennsylvania where I grew up and rounding up nineteen GSRs and their alternates to re-light a dark district. I went to the hat in two area elections. I became your area chair and alternate delegate that way. All I could exclaim was "Thank you God and what do you have in store for me now?"

On October 19, 2008, I stopped at Dr. Bob and Annie's grave on the way to my last election for a service position. Most of you in this room elected me your delegate for the next two years. I attended a General Service Board weekend as the Delegate Chair of the Finance Committee for the 60th General Service Conference. I had now been given the opportunity to live the "upside-down triangle" that I looked at all the time in my service manual. I still flash back to walking up on the dais and approaching the podium to report the Finance Committee's sharing. I had to present the agenda items we discussed and voted upon in committee. There were 134 of

us who were present to vote for the 'whole of AA' in the US and Canada. God was right there with us.

And, finally, I'm grateful to my panel of officers, the past delegates in Pennsylvania and Ohio who were there before me. Andy T., who is not with us anymore, told me "walk into that room at the hotel in New York City by yourself... look at the podium with the three flags on it... look up at the banner that tells you where you are going to be the next seven days... say to yourself 'you finally made it'." My ego deflation kicked in again at that moment and I realized that the thoughts and feelings about AA from members back in Ohio were here with me also. God then – and now – has made me grateful for my service journey!

STEP 2>TRAD 2>CON 2

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only if we stop demanding something we have not earned. O'Brian taught me; we were granted this gift only by letting other members take care of our recovery, letting our GSR carry our gifts to other groups, listening to our DCM and making sure they understand the importance of Principles only, and finally demanding our Delegates protect the sanctity of Concept Two.

Do we offer that service with a life saving and caring heart that AA extended to us?

We may be insane for believing in God, but do we have a better option at this moment! Sound bites or unprincipled garbage, words or phrases not coming from our "program of recovery" will detract us from the principles laid out in our recovery plan. We can sit more stable on our three-legged stools. Personally, I need to thank O'Brian and all of you for giving me this life saving program.

Contributed by Leonard D., Ishpeming, Michigan

DELEGATE PRESENTATIONS AT THE EAST CENTRAL REGION FORUM

The biennial East-Central Regional Forum was held in Miamisburg OH, the weekend of November 11-13, 2011. This "travelling GSO road show" was attended by 350 AAs including seven trustees of the General Service Board, two GSO staff members, the publisher of the AA Grapevine and the Chairman of the GSB, Ward Ewing. During the weekend, several presentations were given. Here is a small sample of what the assembled group of AAs heard.

How to Be a Better GSR and/or DCM

In Area 23 we weren't buying as fact that A.A. service refrain, "you'll understand your service position once it's time to rotate out," particularly when it came to general service representatives. However, that group is arguably the least knowledgeable about what service in Alcoholics Anonymous is, means or entails. So we did what any self-respecting alcoholic would do, we stole the idea of GSR school from the state of Ohio and claimed it as our own. But to be fair, we did put a Hoosier twist on it to make it more our own.

Four years ago at an informal meeting of area officers and standing committee chairs, we thought about all the things that had been confusing to us as GSRs, then built a curriculum around providing answers. I'm not so sure we really started out this way, but what happened is, to use marketing terms, we created a "package deal" and "sold" it to districts around southern Indiana. Here's how it works.

The area co-chair is the designated GSR school principal. His/her job is to schedule five three-hour GSR schools per year. So that travel isn't an obstacle for attendees, "schools" are spread out geographically across southern Indiana. The area asks districts to host the event and as an incentive, covers \$50 of the district's hosting expenses; prepares all publicity and handout materials, and arranges and pays mileage for speakers. It is the district's responsibility to provide an appropriate venue, distribute the publicity and

get people to attend, and provide coffee and snacks.

We developed a standard syllabus for every GSR school and to ensure consistency of information and continuity, every area officer, standing committee chair and past delegate was to become familiar with the information presented. Over time this process has allowed the area to accumulate a large pool of available presenters.

From the beginning our goal was to provide clear, practical information and resources to GSRs, with emphasis on practical "how-to" rather than just sharing experience, strength and hope. That approach has seems to serve both GSRs and the area well. The three-hour school is divided into five topic areas: 1) Be prepared; 2) Responsibilities of the GSR; 3) What to expect at area assemblies; 4) The 7th tradition and; 5) the AA structure.

As for being prepared, we go so far as to offer concrete suggestions as to how to organize the myriad of paperwork they'll be getting as a GSR... the area map, roster, calendar, assembly minutes, treasurer's report. We review



the area structure booklet and guidelines, introduce them to the AA Service Manual and Box 459. Attendees learn in a general way what's in each publication and how they can be used as tools for service work.

We have found it to be of utmost importance that GSRs understand as much as possible upfront both the good and bad news about their new service position. We have frank conversations about how much of a time commitment district meetings and assemblies require, what their role is in both instances, and that the position is a two-year commitment. We don't beat around the bush when it comes to chal-

lenges they may confront, like how to give a report to an otherwise indifferent home group; how to ask the home group for reimbursement for service expenses, how to go about carpooling, saving receipts and sharing hotel rooms. It's clear from facial expressions that new GSRs are relieved to know financial assistance from the group is not an embarrassment.

We let them know what to expect at each of the six assemblies, so that they're not blindsided. They know they'll be assigned to an area committee and what all that entails. We go over the "rules of the road" for going to the microphone to speak. But more than emphasizing every rule or regulation, we remind them that just like when they came to their first AA meeting and nothing made much sense, that as long as they keep coming back, AA service will become more understandable.

After the first year or two we added a section about the 7th tradition. We found many GSRs had no idea about how group money gets divided, if it gets divided, when it gets divided and who the recipients are. This is where past delegates or our finance committee chair

have added so much depth to the discussion. We hand out finance kits to every attendant with addresses of the various service entities filled in and leave extras for the DCM to disseminate. A comment we always hear is, "I had no idea so much is involved in the 7th tradition." We segue from the 7th tradition to the service structure and what all happens at the General Service Office. As part of the discussion we hand out copies of what all GSO does and how the money is spent.

Our area group registrar attends each GSR school armed with lists of the registered groups in the host's and surrounding districts, new group registration forms and forms to update group information... which she does on the spot. Members of the area Grapevine and literature committees attend with a limited inventory of books and pamphlets for sale which is helpful for rural groups who need small orders of literature. Area archives bring an abbreviated display for the event. It all gives attendees a flavor

ECR FORUM

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of what they can expect at assemblies.

Each 45-minute segment is followed by a question and answer period which is always quite lively. We get so many great questions. But for me, the best part of GSR school comes at the close of the day. We have this goofy little graduation ceremony, passing out "I'm a GSR school graduate" buttons while humming "Pomp and Circumstance." And don't you know, that for some sober alcoholics, this may be the closest they've ever been to their own graduation from anything. It's all done in good spirits and great fun.

As with so many things in Alcoholics Anonymous, what we hadn't imagined when we started this GSR school is that, as an area, we are getting so much more than better-prepared GSRs. The school generates interest from people who had never considered being involved in AA service. It's informative for DCMs and keeps them on their toes as well. It gives area officers and committee chairs the opportunity to gain speaking skills and learn more about service themselves. But most of all it builds a spirit of unity and fellowship among all of us in service.

INTERGROUP REPORTS

Akron Intergroup will be hosting a corrections workshop at the Paradise Club in Cuyahoga Falls. Founders' Day registration forms are available online.

Ashtabula Intergroup hosts a fund-raising golf outing every spring. The office sells all Conference-Approved literature. Dick W has been elected the intergroup chairperson; Tim H elected intergroup secretary.

Cleveland Intergroup reports that "March Madness" in Cleveland means it's fund drive month. The Intergroup Dinner Dance has been suspended due to lack of interest. Send your group's representative to the advisory committee meeting.

I am responsible ...

When anyone, anywhere, reaches out for help. I want the hand of A.A. always to be there. And for that: I am responsible.

SPECIALS NEEDS NO BARRIER TO SERVICE TO AA

I first met Jill S. as a newcomer in AA, whom I admired as well as was inspired by her willingness to reach out her hand to others new in AA. The service work that she does though faced with her physical challenges over the years that she performed with no complaint though obviously in pain at times yet managing to smile as well as being witty and humorous makes her a model of one who is giving back to the program that which was so freely given to her. Here is my interview with Jill S.

Q: What is your sobriety date?

A: 12/15/81

Q: Why did you start doing service work?

A: Friends were involved and I followed.

Q: May I have a brief history of service positions you've held?

A: I've served as Secretary and Treasurer at Wooster Friday Noon; Intergroup Representative – Wooster Thursday Morning Early Birds; GSR – Orrville Sunday Night; GSR - Wooster Monday Night; DCM – District 10; GSR – Wooster N.U.T.S. meeting; Committee Treasurer for Big Prairie Conference for 13 years; 12-Step Weekend Committee; 12 Step workshop Committees; Help with starting many of the meetings in District 10.

Q: How do you feel about service work or what do you get personally by doing so?

A: I like to refer to myself as a "service junkie" – the more I do the better I feel. I like the good feelings I get from helping others; Therefore do more – feel better and the good feelings keep on coming. Pass it on - it comes back.

Q: Do you have any future plans to do service work in A.A.?

A: I'll continue on with District 10, Area 54, and wherever God leads me. My hand, heart, and services are there for him and his work, anytime, anywhere, and for anyone.

Contributed by Otis W.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

(Continued from page 4)

chives, Web exclusives and daily original stories.

The new Grapevine online includes: 5 previously unpublished members' stories each week, access to the Grapevine Story Archive, and access to Audio Grapevine the monthly audio version of GV magazine.

The AAGV board acknowledged with gratitude receipt of ICYPAA's purchase of 600+ online subscriptions to some of their attendees from their 2011 conference. Net total cash orders are ahead by \$153,000. GV continues to adhere to its strategic direction featuring more digital offerings, expanded engagement and awareness measures, coupled with significant overhead reductions.

- *Steve B., Grapevine Committee chair*

Treatment

We are looking forward to the Mini-Conference. We are Bridging the Gap in Treatment facilities. New contact people continue to develop in the districts. All requests for transitional assistance were fulfilled for those leaving treatment.

While there are two new committee members, we still need help on the Committee, though.

- *Gary C., Treatment Committee chair*

Special Needs

As chairperson of Special Needs, I have encountered a whole new side of recovery with the help of the fellowship.

I have put a committee together, and in doing so, we have gotten active in various parts of Area 54. Bill H. found out about ASL at Akron U. And, we have gotten in touch with the Director of Greenleaf, a community support agency for the hearing impaired, and talked about setting up a timeframe to try to get signers at AA meetings in and around the Akron area.

The committee has continued its efforts to make contact with other districts regarding special needs of AA members.

- *Roosevelt T., Special Needs Committee Chair*

UPCOMING EVENTS

Ohio, Regional...and Beyond

Elsewhere in Ohio

May 12—Columbus, OH
Ohio State Convention Planning Mtg

July 20-22—Beachwood, OH
56th Ohio State Convention

Aug 12-13—Independence, OH
OYPAA Convention

Nov 10—Columbus, OH
Ohio State Convention Planning Meeting @ 10 am

U.S. and Canada

Apr 22-28—New York, NY
62nd General Service Conference

Sept 9-11—Saratoga Springs, NY
EACYPAA Camp Out *Contact Rob: 518-860-7614*

Oct 4-7—Cocoa Beach, FL
National AA Archives Workshop

East-Central Region

August 10-12—Mt. Vernon, IL
East Central Region Forum



By the time you read this the Mini-Conference will have ended and the group conscience of all of Area 54 will have been heard and various proposals either moved forward or rejected. Each of you who are active in General Service are Delegates in training and I hope that the Delegate who will be attending the Conference ten years from now is reading this today and entertaining the possibility.

While it is six months away, it is not too soon to start thinking about the election Assembly in October. The strength of the Area stems from its active members, and we need a constant influx of “new blood” to step up and serve as officers in the next Panel.

Every one of us, in fact probably every Delegate who has ever served started as a GSR for their home group. I am certain that like me, they took the job feeling that they didn’t know what they were doing, and were apprehensive about stepping out into the larger arena of districts and the area.

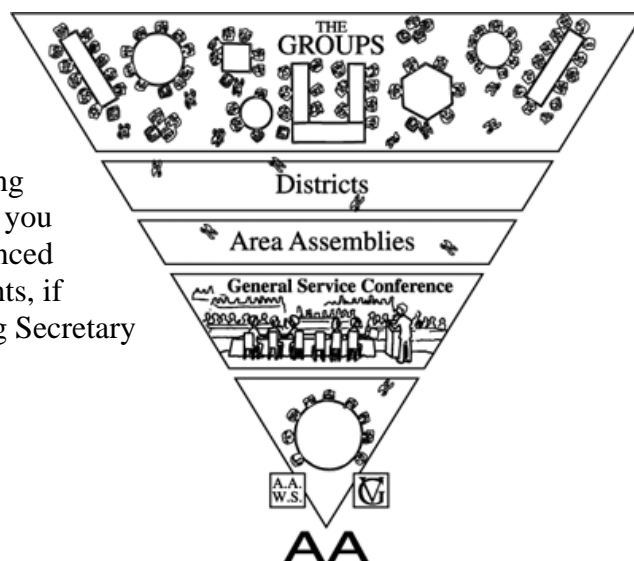
Then some become a DCM, feeling they don’t know what they are doing and apprehensive about the job. Perhaps the next step is as a committee chair, then an officer.

Every service job I have ever held in AA I felt going in that I didn’t know what to do, was scared I would look bad or embarrass myself, and grew into the job with the love and tolerance of those who had preceded me. Every service job I have ever held I finally really knew what I was doing when it was time to rotate.

So goes the wonderful world of service in AA. So I hope that everyone who is eligible will prayerfully consider standing for an office. You will get all of the help you need, and when you are done will be grateful for how such service work has enhanced your sobriety. Make sure you meet the attendance requirements, if you are not sure where you stand, contact our Area Recording Secretary Jamie B. and she will be happy to tell you.

See you at the next Assembly and Unity Day!

Jay M. – Area Chairperson



RECOVERY, UNITY AND SERVICE

These are the Three Legacies of our AA experience. Our leaders are but trusted servants, they do not govern. God, as He may speak in 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, GSR's 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.

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 Visit us at <http://www.area54.org>