

The Northeast Ohio Recorder

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"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."

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

A Word From Our Delegate

My Gratitude for Service

As the 2013 year draws to a close, it signals the near completion of my first year serving as your area delegate. It is for me also, a time for reflection, remembrance and giving thanks to God for the precious gift of sobriety and all of His many, many, blessings. One of many such blessings has been the privilege and honor to serve as an area delegate, which incidentally, has its own sweet rewards. The most significant of these rewards for me however, is the avenue that it provides for major spiritual growth. Gratitude is an action word, and I am forever grateful to have this opportunity to be a trusted servant and to grow spiritually. If I were to use one word to summarize my deep and abiding gratitude for the fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous, it would be "love". For it is love that has been the one constant, sustaining and all prevailing factor throughout this amazing journey.

I have had the very fortunate pleasure to experience while on this journey, many mountain top moments, also known as spiritual experiences and revelations. On these very unique occasions, God has opened the eyes of my heart and allowed me to see something that I did not or could not see before. On one such occasion, I was made aware of the significance of the number three relating to my journey, as more than the triangle that link our three legacies of recovery, unity and service. It became clear to me that since my beginnings, A.A. members, grouped in threes, were responsible for linking me to the whole of A.A. First, there was the counselor, who planted the seed of AA (recovery) and linked me to my sponsor (unity), who linked me to my co-sponsor (service).

The co-sponsor linked me to the Area General Service by informing me that our home group needed a GSR, there I was linked to a service sponsor, and not long thereafter, I was linked to a mentor. All of this is just so spiritually amazing to me because I did not seek out these people; I know that God placed them in my life, in that season. Added to my fascination about all of this is the way God placed the mentor into my life. While attending a workshop at Brunswick, the topic discussion was "where do you see yourself in future general service positions." My answer, I thought was simple, "I see myself at the General Service Conference in New York". Someone I had not yet met, (the mentor) applauded my answer. I am forever, so very grateful, that in response to that expressed desire, God chose a young man who became the areas next Panel 57 delegate. Not only did God cause him to hear me, but assigned him to teach me and explain the duties and responsibilities that came with the position of Delegate. Over the next several years, he carried out this task, ever willing to pass on what had been so freely given to him. These are the circumstances which confirmed true for me, the following statement, "when the student is ready, the teachers will appear." Additionally, they served to re-affirm what I have always believed due to my religious upbringing, that the number three is clothed in spiritually. For those who share the same religious beliefs, the number three has an immense spiritual value as it is symbolic of the greatest expression of love and sacrifice the world has ever known.



Many of our members, as do I, believe that we of Alcoholics Anonymous are at the foot of the cross where the ground is level. Personally, I take this to mean that, as such I have surrendered any delusions of my uniqueness to God as I understand Him, and thus, am now ordinary. The lyrics to one of my favorite songs say it best: "God uses ordinary people, people willing to do as He commands, people willing to give their all, no matter how small their all might seem to be, for the little becomes much when placed in the Master's Hand". My gratitude for General Service is a direct result of the many, many, many wonderfully awesome people that God continues to place in my path. People who consistently shower their love, admiration and encouragement upon each other,

and upon the whole of Alcoholic Anonymous.

Finally, my most recent mountain top moment brought about new revelations that add to my ever growing Gratitude List; First, that constant and conscious use of the spiritual tools now at my disposal, will allow this imperfect person to enjoy a contented and more often than not, peaceful existence in an imperfect world. Second, I no longer see myself living outside the dream of being loved, accepted, admired, and fitting in. Today, one day at a time, I now live inside the dream, I am loved, accepted, admired and I fit in, right here, in the fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous and the world around us as well.

God, I love Alcoholics Anonymous and I love all of you.

May God's blessings continue to fall fresh upon each of you and yours!

In Loving and Grateful Service

Ola P. – Delegate, Panel 63, Area 54

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GRATITUDE IN ACTION

In this issue of the *Northeast Ohio Recorder*, we focus on Gratitude for our recovery through unity and service. Our delegate, Ola P. shares her recovery journey into service and the many people who helped her along the way. Calvin L, your alternate delegate, reflects on the reality of money support for our 12-Step work. He cites one of my favorite quotes from Bill's writings, "Right then and there, Ebby established the principle that A.A. in action calls for the sacrifice of much time and little money."

Action is the key word here. Page 14 of our Basic Text reminds us, *For if an alcoholic failed to perfect and enlarge his spiritual life through work and self-sacrifice for others, he could not survive the certain trials and low spots ahead.* Gratitude in AA is a noun AND a verb. The oldtimers taught me "Don't just tell me about your gratitude, show me..." and "Your actions speak so loudly, I can't hear what you're saying."

Our other area officers weigh in on this topic, too. Area Chairperson, Jamie B., addresses the ever important idea of unconditional love. Jim S, area mailing secretary, shares his love of action with a report on his trip to the recent regional forum in Ft. Wayne, IN. Shyrl B, area recording secretary reminds all groups that without a voice and vote, the AA group is powerless to participate in A.A. as a whole; "Every A.A. member has a right to be involved with how A.A. is run through the well-informed group conscience."

Speaking of which, our area conscience is best informed when YOU participate in the structure of Northeast Ohio A.A. Before we know it, spring will be slowly pushing winter's icy blast back from our doors and it will soon be time for the Area Mini-Conference.

WHY SHOULD I ATTEND THE NORTHEAST OHIO MINI-CONFERENCE?

Here are just a few good reasons why everyone, whether you are involved in General Service work or not, is encouraged to attend the Northeast Ohio Mini-Conference.

Exercise your voice and vote in A.A.-as-a-whole. Don't let others make decisions for your group! Express your opinion on the items of business that will be discussed and voted on by your elected delegate at the General Service Conference in New York City at the end of April. The mini-conference provides a forum for understanding the issues concerning the future of A.A. that will be decided, on your behalf, whether you choose to participate in General Service or not.

Learn about service beyond the church basement steps.

Every service job in A.A. is important. Ranging all the way from the Twelfth Step itself to a 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. An A.A. service is anything whatever that helps us to reach a fellow sufferer, whether sponsorship of a new member or sponsorship of A.A. in a new country just getting started.

Why can't we just 'keep it simple'? These services, whether performed by individuals, groups, areas, or A.A. as a whole, are utterly vital to our existence and growth. Concerning any given service, we ask one question: "Is this service really needed?" If it is, then maintain it we must, or fail in our mission to those who need and seek A.A. 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 ... our growth since early times are directly traceable to this cluster of life-giving activities.

Meet your new Regional Trustee and a staff member from your General Service Office in New York City. Oh, and your delegate will be there, too. He'd like to meet you and hear your views on the pressing agenda items of the day. He will carry your ideas and the conscience of the whole area to the General Service Conference.

Meet other A.A.'s who are interested in service beyond the group level. Having trouble at your home group? Other General Service Representatives (GSR) and District Committee Members (DCM) have already faced those same difficulty and have great ideas to share with you.

See how your generous contributions are being used to help carry the message. New literature has been released in recent months, new public service announcements and DVDs, too. These will be shown or will be available for sale.

Where else can you go for \$16 and get three days worth of sobriety, service and fellowship? Come find out what you've been missing.

~Your editor, Jeff

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



Alternate Delegate's Report

In November 1934, Bill W. received a visit from an old drinking buddy named Edwin T. nicknamed Ebby. He came by to share his experience, strength and hope with Bill. In August of 1934 Ebby, a hopeless alcoholic accepted the fact that his only hope to stop drinking was in a conversion experience. He found this conversion experience in the Oxford Group. He was therefore honor bound to share this experience and he chose his friend Bill W. also a hopeless and destructive drinker. In this meeting the seeds for Alcoholics Anonymous were planted. Bill drank after this meeting but continued to think about what his friend Ebby had shared with him. Soon afterward after landing in Towns Hospital once again, Bill had a Spiritual Experience. Ebby shared his spiritual experience with Bill. He gave freely of his time and talent. Ebby had to spend a nickel for the phone call and a nickel for the subway ride. Bill received freely but it cost Ebby money to share the experience with Bill. Spirituality and money began to mix. Bill states "Right then and there, Ebby established the principle that A.A. in action calls for the sacrifice of much time and little money."

In our early beginnings, meetings were held in the homes of A.A. members and friends. These members and friends provided sandwiches and coffee free of charge. There was no charge to the early A.A. members. However as the size of the meetings increased, the need for outside meeting places became necessary. Rent had to be paid for these outside places and members began to grudgingly pass the hat. Many stated that it was a Spiritual Program and should be free. It is indeed a Spiritual Program, but it is not FREE.

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 or supporter seated at each table. Then after dinner Bill, the other A.A.



folk and their supporters spoke. Finally 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 Alcoholics 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. There is a certain feeling of accomplishment and satisfaction when you pay your own way. Financially supporting the Program of Alcoholics Anonymous that you believe in because you know it works because you have been the recipient of the Miracle of Recovery in Alcoholics Anonymous.

Thus A.A. is run by Alcoholics for Alcoholics and supported through the contribution's of Alcoholics only. Whenever, an Alcoholic puts his money into the A.A. basket. He is guaranteeing our Spiritual way of life. Not only for himself but for future Alcoholics who stumble through the door. We keep the doors of AA open by making sure the bills are paid at the Inter Group office, District, Area and General Service Office. We keep the doors of AA open by giving our time, talent and treasures for the benefit of others.

Alcoholics Anonymous is a Spiritual program. We are guided by our Spiritual principles known as the Twelve Steps and the Twelve Traditions. Practicing these Principles causes a Conversion Experience, Personality Change, Psychic Change a change of attitude and action a Spiritual Experience. We learn about this at meetings. We have to go to a meeting place.

The Group had to rent the meeting place. The Group had to buy the coffee, cream, sugar, cups, stirrers and doughnuts. The Group had to buy books, pamphlets and the Literature Stand. A Group member had to come and set-up the meeting. There is a financial cost associated with all of these items. It cost money to deliver our Spiritual message of recovery.

Money and Spirituality have always mixed in our A.A. basket. Freedom is not free. In the book Language of the Heart it states "When we are generous with the hat we give a token that we are grateful for blessings and evidence that we are eager to share what we have found with all those who still suffer." Let us continue to keep the doors open for the next Alcoholic in need of recovery. Freedom from the bondage of alcoholism is Spiritual but it is not free!

**Love and Service,
Calvin L.**

Area Officer Reports

East-Central Regional Forum Report

Well, I just got back from the East Central Regional Forum in Fort Wayne, Indiana. I was blessed to ride with my service sponsor, Bob M., an Area 54 Past Delegate and Jeff Y., also a Past Delegate. Your present Delegate, Ola, your Alternate Delegate, Calvin (my roomie), Jamie B., your Area Chair Person and your Recording Secretary, Shyrl B. were there, too. We got our heads filled with information (almost too much information) about things big and small happening in our Fellowship.

As a first timer, I attended an orientation session before everything got underway. Then there were 5 sets of presentations, 15 separate presentations in all, each set followed by question and answer sessions. There were also 6 ask-it-basket/ general sharing sessions and 10 workshops. Wow! From the moment orientation started, there was an air of open, honest communication, the kind you can only find in AA. I've been describing the weekend as a Home Group meeting on steroids!

We had 8 people come in from New York to share what is happening at A.A.W.S. Our East Central Regional Trustee, Bill F., was unable to attend, so Past ECR Trustee, Pam R. took over his duties for the event. One of the presenters was Robert W., our U.S. Trustee-at-Large, with a presentation on AA around the world. Most of his report was about his trip to Ecuador for the REDELA Meeting of the Americas, which is a meeting of the 33 countries that make up AA in this part of the World. AA is alive and well in Ecuador – And so is surfing!

There were presentations on The Grapevine, La Viña, G.S.O., A.A.W.S.,

and the financial situation. Delegates from Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Michigan, and Wisconsin gave presentations and held workshops on everything from Sponsorship to La Viña and the Grapevine; from “How Does an Item Get on the GSC Agenda?” to “Fun, Service, and Sobriety”. Ola did a presentation on the 11th Tradition (published in the last issue) that was very thought provoking, very touching, and very well received.

Saturday night found me at the La Viña workshop which was entirely in Spanish (I don't speak a lick) and then the Grapevine workshop where Ami, the Executive Editor of the Grapevine made me a Recording Secretary for what transpired in the workshop (sponsors aren't the only ones who can get us to do things we wouldn't normally want to do!)

Sunday morning finished up with Past Trustees from the ECR sharing some of their experience, strength and hope, and then closing remarks from your Chairman of the General Service Board, Terry Bedient sharing his gratitude for what AA has given him. Terry is one of those nonalcoholic Trustees; the bottom of that upside down triangle that represents our Service Structure.

There were 396 total attendees and 229 first time attendees, like me. The whole weekend could be summed up in two words: Love and Service. All of the presenters, the AAs who shared and asked questions and all of the people in the workshops shared a sort of single, directed purpose: how to serve the next alcoholic coming into AA for help. We all shared a faith that we were there for that reason. We all shared a directed, purposeful Love for AA and a shared Gratitude for this gift AA has given us, also a desire to pass this gift on in the best possible way. Grat-

itude, from the Chairman of the Board all the way up to the DCMs and the GSRs who were fortunate enough to be there, all expressed a Love for AA and a Love of Service – which is Gratitude in action.

- In Love and Service

Jim S., area mailing secretary

Unconditional Love

The Alcoholics Anonymous program constantly teaches me how to accept life and people as they are. I understand a little more (just a little) of what the saying “And more will be revealed” suggests. I am discovering what unconditional love for others, is really all about.

Unconditional love is enlarging the self, and is an act of will. It is not an emotional reaction or a feeling; it is an act of mental and spiritual will. It is extending oneself in the service of the spiritual growth of oneself or another independently of reward or the behavior of others.

Unconditional love causes you to see what has really caused a situation and to see through other appearances to the true needs of self and others, without criticism of self or others. It causes you to see the basic good in yourself and others. Unconditionally loving people see their own errors and joyfully self-correct them. In particular, they are inclusive, and maintain love and goodwill towards both the apparent “victim” and “oppressor” in a situation.

They seek to radiate their inner harmony and joy, peace and healing in any situation – without conditions or expectation of reward, and inde-

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Area Committee and DCM Reports

Area Committee Reports - Area 54 October Assembly (Oct. 21, 2013)

Dark Districts Committee-Dan F. - attend LMSD annual picnic and spoke briefly about my recovery and service work. I also attended Akron Multidistrict. I am palling to attend the GSR school on Youngstown on November 7.

Special Needs—Roosevelt T - had our first meeting on September 29; we discussed the signage boards and decided to create a pamphlet to further elaborate on ways to carry the message to AA's with special needs. We currently have three hearing impaired meetings.

Treatment—Gary C—Putting a list of treatment facilities in the areas together for the Bridge the Gap. We have 348 from bridge the gap and treatment.

CPC—read by Bob D - did the conference, Ohio Justice Alliance for Community Corrections in Columbus with three other area committee members. The conference theme was Reducing Recidivism and Promoting Recovery. All four Ohio areas shared in staffing the booth. Area 54 provided literature and meeting schedules from all areas.

Archives—James T—The committee has conclusive information on how Bill got to the Seiberling estate, he caught the bus. The committee stands ready to assist in any capacity the body would deem appropriate.

Corrections—Tina C - had a great time at the Alliance conference. The Youngstown Corrections workshop is

being finalized next month and flyers will be printed and distributed.

Finance -Terry H - remind everyone that we have anniversary/ birthday/ donation envelopes at every assembly

Newsletter—Jeff Y—Deadline for January issue of NEOHR is November 24. Be sure to check out the "enhanced" version on the website.

Group Services- Diane K- giving a GSR workshop on November 7 in Youngstown on the first Thursday at 6:30pm. We would appreciate support for the workshop and the Group services committee. The committee has lost a few members because of committee issues.

Hispanic Liaison—Wellington R - a Meeting is scheduled to resolve some concerns in the Hispanic community and general services.

Grapevine -Bob D- Subscriptions are down. It started as a newsletter in 1944 and has evolved into the magazine it is today. Please support. Additionally, check out Grapevine Online.

DCM Reports

Gary C—#13-putting together a list for committee in groups in district.

Vincent W—#4 meeting that has been gone for 15 years because the meeting place has been torn down.

Hillis J- Trying to bring unity to the Multidistrict and encouraging groups to contribute to area. We are also planning a GSR workshop on November 7.

Gene A—#40-Had three groups to donate. I had health issues resolved and I expect to make it to more meetings in the district.

Gary— #11- We have two new GSR for the district, Wadsworth women and Lodi Wednesday. We are having a difficult time getting more GSRs to show up. Lodi Wednesday is having 63rd Anniversary on November 23, 2013.

Dan F — #62-The alternate had to relocate because of illness, so I'm looking for a new alternate. Barberton Monday had it 33rd Anniversary on October 14. I visited the Dry People Clun and found that there were two groups that GSRs. I left contact information.

John #23/39-Meets on the third Sunday of the Month at 9am. We like to thank Ola P for her general service presentation.

Mike R—#45 not much has changed, still going around to meeting encouraging them a appoint a GSR, so the group will not be in the dark.

James A- met with the assistant manager of the Sahara club and was informed that there is about 30 groups that meet there. A suggestion was given to have a meet and greet with secretaries of the groups. There is a room available at a cost of \$10.00 for three hours.

Nelson M—#61-I have more people in my district asking about general service. Maybe down the road, there will be more involved.

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Area Committee and DCM Reports

Area Officer Reports

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Intergroup Liaison's Reports

Central Office Archives Bob McK—October 24, 2013 is the next advisory committees at the Cleveland central office at 1701 Reserve Square for groups that are in the meeting schedule

Cleveland District—Genny M—If your meeting is scheduled in the meeting booklet, please send someone from your group to attend. If you know of new meeting that wants to be in the booklet, they should attend. Next Secretary Workshop will be held in January 2014 in the Lakewood area. 40 groups were represented at the last workshop in September 2013.

Lorain Intergroup Report - Donna L – currently updating our 12th call list. We are also working to maintain committee stability by creating a portfolio of specific duties for each committee. We are also working on getting meeting schedules printed in English and Spanish. We sent Akron Intergroup a thank note for their donation

Youngstown Multidistrict—Putting on a gratitude dinner on November 16, 2013 at the Mahoning Country Club In Girard Ohio. Tim H. from Louisville KY is the lead at 8pm. Donation for tickets is \$18.00

Ashtabula Intergroup -Tim H—We sell AA approved literature and non-conference meditation books. Thank you Akron Intergroup for supporting our small intergroup office. We have a new office manager Ruth H and a 24-hour hotline where you will always hear a live person.

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pendently of the thoughts, feelings and actions of others.

They are group conscious and do not react by immediately taking sides. They serve the cause of peace and goodwill, and can often find ways to a fair solution of conflict that are not available to emotionally charged people.

The Forgiveness Process can be seen to be a process which moves us towards this goal of unconditional love. Unconditional Love = Acceptance – Understanding – Appreciation. Like a triangle of love!

For me, this will not be an easy goal to achieve. (No one said it was easy!) I believe the more I practice these behaviors, the more comfortable and/or habit forming they will become. My ultimate goal is to become a better person; overcoming my prejudices, resentments, vanities, illusions and any other blocks to my own joy.

Being involved in AA and Service has given me the tools and knowledge of how to become a better person and work towards that goal.

Yours in Service Always,
Jamie B., Area 54 Chairperson



Is your group's voice being heard or it is silent?

Today I want to share with you some thoughts about our groups in the overall structure of AA. In the secret service manual (aka *A.A. Service Manual*) in chapter one, there is an overview of how our fellowship conference structure works. While the principles of Traditions speaks about be-

ing not being organized, we do have “service centers,” “boards,” and “committees” that help groups carry the message to the still sick and suffering alcoholic. The conference structures start with **THE GROUPS** at the top and the trustees and boards at the bottom. We the fellowship or the groups in the fellowship “hold the ultimate authority” of AA in our collective hands. Every A.A. member has a right to being involved with how A.A. is run. How? Through your group's conscience. Every A.A. group should have a representative that takes it group's conscience to district, and area. The Area's thoughts or conscience is carried to the General Service Conference through our delegate. There is a lot more to this and the information can be found in the *A.A. Service Manual*. It may be a “dry read”, but it gives details how this structures works. So go ahead and peek at it. So again, I ask, is your group voice being heard or is it silent? Does your group have a GSR that represents your group and carries your group's voice throughout the structure? Is your group informed about what is going in our fellowship? As you read and reflect, I hope you will confidently say yes to both questions. However, if you cannot, please get with your home group and elect a GSR. Exercise your right as a member of this fellowship and get involved with general service work. Let your group be heard and have a voice in A.A. as a whole.

In Love and Service,

Shyrl B., Area 54 Panel 63
Recording Secretary



Step Ten inside Tradition Ten inside Concept Ten

“When we are wrong” is not a subjective phrase! It doesn’t refer to being a little bit wrong, somewhat wrong, occasionally wrong, or the best “partially” wrong; it states, flat-out, when I am wrong, I must at the first opportunity, take responsibility for my error.

The connection between this Step and its corresponding Tradition and Concept isn’t difficult to understand when we look at the Tradition first.

It may be one thing to admit wrongdoing in a private or semi-private place, but to do so in the public arena is quite another.

Those first giants of our service structure were keenly aware that the public would be watching us with a skeptical eye, as well they should have. Our track record as reliable trustworthy people was not an accepted state of affairs at that time; nor do I believe that belief has changed much since the creation of Alcoholics Anonymous.

Our Steps have given us a recovery program that enables us to become trustworthy reliable citizens. The Traditions and Concepts allow us to step out into the world safe in the knowledge that we can add value to a troubled world. We need to first take it slow, progressing one step at a time. Like those pioneers who took baby steps learning this new way of life. Then they could offer it to a world of skeptics. We too will make mistakes because of our humanness, but let us learn these lessons in private or small gatherings. Let those who are more experienced with our service structure go out into the world.

Two of the first principles A.A. taught me dealt with respecting and giving dignity to our program of recovery. We should take care to safeguard these precious “tools of spiritual growth” laid out for us. Our pioneers preserved this program for us; we need to safeguard it for those who will come after us.

Nothing disturbs me more than the violations we seem to show with regards to Concept Ten. Every A.A. member has the right to ask any and all questions pertaining to our service structure, but not to question the right of authority we

Step 10. Continued to take personal inventory, and when we wrong, promptly admitted it.

Tradition 10. Alcoholics Anonymous has no opinion on outside issues; hence the AA name ought never be drawn into public controversy. (long form) 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. Concerning such matters they can express no views whatever.

Concept 10. Every service responsibility should be matched by an equal service authority — the scope of such authority to be always well defined, whether by tradition, by resolution, by specific job description, or by appropriate charters and bylaws.

give others who serve our structure! To those we have asked to serve, we must give the authority to serve, but the “scope” of that authority shall be “well defined.”

We need to understand the group, the district, the area, and all of our service structure has clearly defined authority. As an example, where do we find the authority of our groups to act and function as a single entity within our structure? Who runs A.A. at the group level? I have been asked to leave meetings because I was quoting from our Big Book, and I have been asked to leave meetings because my opinions were “not accepted” by some members of that group. In both cases, where did the authority of the groups actions come from?

As we grow in A.A. we learn to accept the responsibility we have been assigned; then learn the duties and perform the tasks! We will then be judged on how well and with what dispatch we performed those tasks. If the area did not hold me accountable, it was their failure not to have judged and held me accountable to the task they had given me. The area needs to look at the 10th Step to correct their errors of judgment.

If I did not accept their judgment and refused to honor my irresponsibility, I would be wrong. I should not be allowed to serve the area until the deficit in my service performances is corrected including a 10th Step where necessary.

A talk with my sponsor about most decisions I make concerning A.A. is important. He, better than anyone, could see my ego getting in the way of avoiding responsibilities concerning the duties that you, the area, have given me. After consulting with God and accepting my sponsor’s wisdom, the area will be better served by my decisions. The correctness of that process means less 10th Steps, and better understanding of Tradition and Concept Ten.

When Step 10 is worked inside our group, our district, our area, and our committee structure we all learn. Making mistakes is not an option, we all err; but can we learn from those mistakes? Can our program of recovery help us to grow; allowing us to become better servants, therefore, better examples of what to do and what not to do?

My roll of errors far outweigh any virtue God might have graced me with. You in A.A. have taught me to listen to your wisdom but has it happened? Only God can judge that. Within our area, can we listen to each other - accepting our own errors of judgment? Do we want to step back and take a long look at what we are doing to our program of recovery? A program so freely given by virtue of a loving God and excellent stewards, or should we stay saddled to the place we find ourselves today? Can we listen to those whom we might disagree with and learn the structure we want that finds wisdom from all its servants. Can we “pause when agitated,” praying God will bring a solution to those problems we cannot solve? Step Ten, coming before Tradition Ten, teaches us to see our own errors first. Tradition Ten, coming before Concept Ten, teaches humility. Taking baby steps in service, “Abandon yourself to God

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What does it mean to be a trusted servant?

This topic must be a serious item in our AA program because we address this quite directly in both our Traditions and in our Concepts. First, Tradition two clearly states that “our leaders are but trusted servants, they do not govern”. Then, in at least three separate Concepts, our trusted servants are again addressed. If you want to follow along, look at Concepts II, III, IV and X. I’ll address the Concepts first, since they are probably less familiar to at least our newer members.

Our Service Manual includes many suggestions and thoughts as to what makes a trusted servant and what is expected of a trusted servant. In Concept III, Bill writes that “For example, knowing that theirs is the final authority, the groups are sometimes tempted to instruct their Delegates exactly how to vote upon certain matters in the Conference. Because they hold the ultimate authority, there is no doubt that the A.A. groups have the right to do this.” And, a bit later, Bill writes, “Nevertheless, the “instructed” Delegate who cannot act on his own conscience in a final Conference vote is not a “trusted servant” at all; he is just a messenger.” At the conclusion of the essay on Concept III, Bill then wrote. “Our entire A.A. program resets squarely upon the principle of mutual trust. We trust God, we trust A.A. and we trust each other.” Further, In Concept IV we are reminded that all of the members of the Conference have a right of participation and that instructed Delegates are agents and order takers rather than trusted servants. Next, in Concept X, we are reminded that “when delegated authority is operating well it should not be constantly interfered with.” That is to say, as I understand it, that if we are generally pleased with the functioning of our service entities, and then we should continue to trust our trusted servants.

Next, I thought it might help to look at the words and their separate meanings. Trust is a word most of us understand and servant is an equally understandable concept. Let’s take them from the last word first. I think servant is a clearly understandable concept, one who serves as opposed to one who directs. As a servant to my group, district or area I am there to perform the duties that my group assigns to me to implement and they expect that I will perform the assigned duties without complaint and yet as thoroughly as instructed. However, as a servant, I am also expected to think and use my experience to do the assigned jobs in a manner that is best for the group. Since none of us can predict the future, my instructed duties assume that I do this work in a certain set of normal or regular circumstances. If the circumstances change, then I am similarly expected to adjust and yet still do the job.

Now, there might be times when I will have the time to return to my group, report the changed circumstances and get new directions to meet the new conditions. Then, too, there might be times when I will not have the luxury of time to return to my group with this new information and so I will have to act in a manner which is best for the situation and then, when back with my group, report the actions which I took on their behalf

based on the added information or changed situation.

This is where the trust comes in. My Group trusts me to be fully aware of their opinion and directions, and, at the same time they are willing to allow me to listen to new ideas, added facts and changed situations to make an even more informed decision. I am reminded of something told to me a long time ago while discussing the 11th step. I was reminded that “my will for me is exactly what God’s will for me would be - IF I had all the facts.” Of course, the problem is that none of us ever have all of the facts, so even an informed Group Conscience, at its best, is probably lacking every fact and idea relating to that subject.

In April 1959, Dr. Jack Norris wrote this in the Grapevine. *“Our life is full of paradoxes, seeming contradictions that go deep into the heart of things. The last part of AA’s Tradition-Two is one of these: Our leaders are but trusted servants. . .they do not govern.”* *“How often we find an answer to our own problems as we serve someone, or a group. As we become successful in this service, we are given positions of leadership among our fellows. And then something happens to us. We begin to feel that we know all the answers. We are hurt and resentful when anyone questions our wisdom and authority, and everyone suffers. Jesus said, Whoever would be great among you must be your servant.”* *Let us be thankful that AA has had as its founders men who saw and lived by this wisdom, and built it into the structure of the fellowship. May we be vigilant to do our part, each of us, each day, to keep this tradition of leadership at the center of our own lives and of the group we serve.”*

So, for me, I think I understand and respect the trust placed in me by my group and my Area to carry their informed conscience and respect their wishes and concerns. I am obligated to voice their thoughts and opinions, and I am equally obligated to hear the thoughts and opinions brought by ALL OTHERS as we strive to find the best answer to the issues at hand. I have found that there are times when my group and my Area have reached conclusions which are contrary to the better good. I am trusted to follow my conscience and vote for the Best, and I am trusted to inform my group and my Area just exactly what I learned and why I voted in a manner contrary to the wishes expressed when we originally discussed the item. At the 63rd General Service Conference, for example, my Area clearly supported the idea of A.A. publishing a 75th Anniversary replica of the first printing, first edition of the book, Alcoholics Anonymous. Then, at the General Service Conference and once I heard all of the discussion, for and against the proposal, I became conflicted enough on the subject that I decided that I could vote neither for nor against the proposal. I heard many thoughts for honoring our history, and thoughts against our fellowship delving into the trinket business. I heard objections from those who spoke and read languages other than English wanting a version in their language. I heard questions as to the potential confusion that a new member might suffer when presented with two very different versions of our book. As a result, I was quite comfortable in reporting to my Area that I did not vote as they wished, I explained my reasons and my decision was respected. What more can a trusted servant do?

Talks from East-Central Regional Forum

(Continued from page 9)

Thank you for the opportunity to serve and I wish all of you the best as we “trudge the Road of Happy Destiny.”

Mark E., Panel 62 delegate, Area 56—Southwest Ohio

OUR THREE LEGACIES ~ “Recovery, Unity & Service”

Alcoholics Anonymous formed from the act of one person helping another, and evolved out of principles borrowed from the Oxford Group, Bill W. brought forth our 12 Steps of Recovery in the midst of writing the Big Book. Recovery begins with our 12 Steps, which have saved countless lives for over 78 years. So Our First Legacy of “Recovery” is no doubt the foundation of Alcoholics Anonymous.

By the mid 1940’s, the membership of AA had been increasing for several years, some of the groups were implementing too many rules, other problems surfaced like anonymity breaks, the growing fellowship quarreled over structure, purpose, and authority, as well as finances and publicity. This was threatening to AA as a whole. It was clear that if we continued down this path we; ourselves could cause the collapse of AA. In July of 1945 Bill W. published an article in the Grapevine about the demise of the Washingtonians 100 years prior, he started addressing similar issues and thus began a series of articles published in the GV. It was but the beginning of a long process of articles (Twelve Points of Tradition) that became known as our 12 Traditions of Alcoholics Anonymous, our Second Legacy of “Unity”. The 12 Traditions were adopted unanimously by several thousand AA’s attending the very first International Convention, celebrating the 15th anniversary of Alcoholics Anonymous in Cleveland, Ohio in July 1950.

By 1950 it was clear to our founders that something/someone had to take their place. And eventually after much consideration, Dr. Bob gave Bill W. his blessing to move forward with the General Service Conference idea. His last words to Bill were; “Remember, Bill, let’s not louse this thing up. Let’s keep it simple!” (AA Comes of Age, p.214). That allowed us to move forward with the Conference on a trial basis for four years, and in 1955 at the second International Convention in St Louis, MO (AA’s 20th anniversary). The body voted unanimously to adopt “A Resolution” offered by Bill W. (pS99 General Service Manual combined w/Twelve Concepts for World Service) This Resolution authorizes the General Service Conference to Act for Alcoholics Anonymous and to Become the Successor to its Co-Founders. And it was out of the Conference Charter that our 12 Concepts evolved, AA’s Third Legacy of “Service”.



In Bill’s own words:

“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. And World Service is the heart of our Third Legacy.”

“Our Twelfth Step--carrying the message--is the basic service that AA's Fellowship gives; this is our principal aim and the main reason for our existence. Therefore, AA 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 will die.

“Hence, an AA 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 AA's General Service Headquarters for national and international action. The sum total of all these services is our Third Legacy.”

~ AAGV July 1955, Bill W.

I typed in the word “Recovery” in the Grapevine Digital Archives, and it brought back 5,180 articles. “Unity” uncovered only 648 articles, and “Service” lists 3,973. But when I combined our Three Legacies ~ “Recovery, Unity, & Service” there are a mere 63 articles published throughout the history of our GV. I must say it was quite difficult writing this presentation due to the research I was doing, I kept getting sidetracked by so many interesting articles. This led to this being a few weeks’ behind schedule. I repeatedly edited this not wanting to leave anything out but found I had to.

I can never get enough of our program, and the more I read or research, the more amazed I am at the Miracle of Recovery, Unity, & Service!

I wouldn’t be standing here today if it wasn’t for the AA volunteer that carried the message behind the walls, to me as a suffering alcoholic. He brought me hope, as well as the tools in which I was able to rise up from a very deep and dark pit of my own hell, and brought me back to life through a Spiritual Awakening. With God’s help I was able to recover from that seemingly helpless state of mind and body, and for that I am forever grateful!

It was through our First Legacy of Recovery that I was able to venture forward in this new freedom. And through our Second Legacy of Unity with the help of my home group I was able to realize a true humility. And through our Third Legacy of Service, I am able to reach out and offer help to others! I know for me I have to combine all aspects of this program, which equals “Love & Service”. With this I am able to maintain a healthy, happy attitude and outlook. I need the Whole Program of Alcoholics Anonymous. I need to practice “All of Our Principles” in my life. Thanks you for letting me Share!

Kenny K., Panel 62 delegate, Area 34 - W. Michigan / E.UP

OUR PRIMARY PURPOSE

Each Alcoholics Anonymous group ought to be a spiritual entity having but one primary purpose--- that of carrying its message to the alcoholic who still suffers. So as a member of an Alcoholics Anonymous group my primary purpose, and likely my sole purpose, is to carry the message of recovery to still suffering alcoholics. Why I do this is because it is the only thing myself and others like me have found to insure immunity against drinking. And I am a person who has put a lot of effort into different methods to quit drinking. It's also true that if our Alcoholics Anonymous group falls away from its primary purpose it too may ultimately die.

How do we carry this message? Well, we show others precisely how we have recovered from alcoholism. We have found that in the Big Book of Alcoholics Anonymous, through the guidance of those who have done this work before us. And in showing others exactly as I was shown, I am giving them the same opportunity that was given to me, years ago. And at the same time I am paying respect for those that took the time with me when I appeared to be a hopeless case doomed to die from this disease.

And then you ask, where will we find these people? If our Home Group is healthy, their friends and our friends will send them to us. And healthy would mean that we adhere to our Primary Purpose of helping alcoholics. And also by having a knowledge of our remaining Traditions. And by using them to guide our Group.

Some of us go to treatment centers. I and a lot of my friends bring meetings into jails and prisons, where it starts easy because our potential members are put in front of us, but can become difficult because many of them are so damaged that we really have to work to gain their trust, to show them what Alcoholics Anonymous is, what Alcoholics Anonymous is not, what alcoholism is and that there really can be hope for them.

It means too, that I have to show them what alcoholism is and what it would look like in their life, and if what they suffer from is truly alcoholism. And if necessary guide them to where they need to be. Because we do have a Singleness of Purpose. Remember Bill Wilson used words similar to this, Let us not think that because God blessed us with the ability to help those that suffer from alcoholism that we should then be able to give help to others.

I got a first-hand look for our need of Singleness of Purpose in what appeared to be very innocent dialogue one night. A young man was doing an AA talk and related to consuming a substance giving him the ability to drink all night long. It appeared as though we all were

nodding in the fact that we had had that experience. All of us except a friend of mine. He had a blank look in his eyes, and it was obvious that this wasn't his experience. Here was a man suffering from alcoholism and feeling different in an AA meeting. We are here in common because of the one thing that nearly killed us all, and to share with others the common solution to overcome this disease.

“‘SHOEMAKER, stick to thy last’ ... better do one thing supremely well than many badly.” That is the central theme of this Tradition. Around it our society gathers in unity. The very life of our fellowship requires the preservation of this principle.

When Bill wrote “Problems Other Than Alcohol” in 1958, he made clear our singleness of purpose: “Sobriety—freedom from alcohol—through the teaching and practice of the Twelve Steps is the sole purpose of an AA group. Groups have repeatedly tried other activities and they have always failed. It has also been learned that there is no possible way to make non-alcoholics into AA members. We have to confine our membership to alcoholics and we have to confine our AA groups to a single purpose. If we don't stick to these principles, we shall almost surely collapse. And if we collapse, we cannot help anyone.”

This, from the trustees of Narcotics Anonymous: “One of AA's greatest strengths is its single-minded focus on one thing only: By limiting its primary purpose to carrying the message to alcoholics, avoiding all other activities, AA has done that supremely well—and they have paved the way for Narcotics Anonymous by freely giving us their Steps. The simple fact is that both Fellowships have a Sixth Tradition for a purpose—to keep from being diverted from our primary purpose. Each Twelve Step Fellowship must stand alone, unaffiliated with everything else. We each have a separate unique primary purpose.”

In *AA Comes of Age*, we find this powerful statement: “We think we should do one thing well rather than many things to which we are not called. Our society gathers in unity around this concept. The very life of our fellowship requires its preservation. Together we have found a substantial remedy for a terrible malady. As a fellowship we know we must not be diverted. It is our experience as alcoholics that makes us of unique value on our sector of the total alcoholic front. We can approach sufferers as no one else can. Therefore, the strongest kind of moral and ethical compulsion is upon us to do this and nothing more. We shall direct our energies where they count most. Most emphatically, then, AA has but one single purpose: To carry its message to the alcoholic who still suffers. This is our basic objective, our real reason for existence.”

It's our only reason for existence.

Rich H., delegate Panel 62, Area 20—N. Illinois

An Interview with Ward Ewing

Retiring GSO Board Chair, Ward Ewing reflects on his time at the helm of Alcoholics Anonymous

[an interview with Joe C., Toronto, Ontario, Canada]

Published on May 26, 2013

At the 63rd General Service Conference of Alcoholics Anonymous, April 21 to 27, 2013, after 11 years as a nonalcoholic Trustee, Ward Ewing stepped down as AA's Chair of the Board. Taking over for Ewing, fellow non-alcoholic Trustee, Terry Bedient is a Fellow of the American College of Healthcare Executives, Vice-President of the Medical Society of New York and is a trustee of the New York Lawyer Assistance Trust, which oversees substance abuse programs for attorneys and judges.

Reverend Ward Ewing, in his role as Chair Emeritus for the General Service Board will be only a phone call away, should AA World Service need to consult him. "Before I worked for AA," Ward tells us, "I was the head of a theological school in Manhattan. I am an ordained Episcopalian minister (Anglican Church in Canada and UK)."

Bill Wilson formed the original A.A. Board of Directors with 21 Trustees.

Class A (nonalcoholic) Trustees made up 14 of the positions and seven were Class B (alcoholic). As Alcoholics Anonymous matured, the mix of Trustees reversed to 2/3 Alcoholic Trustees. Nonalcoholic Trustees bring leadership, connections and expertise in areas such as corrections, medicine, media or, in Ward Ewing's case, spiritual/religious acumen.

No matter what fellowship we call home, as we transition from recovery to service, we appreciate that the Steps and Traditions of every fellowship were adopted from, or in reaction to, Alcoholics Anonymous. *Rebellion Dogs* spoke with Ward about his tenure as AA's Chair, some of the accomplishments on his watch and some of the rough waters that face the next Board of Directors.

What are the advantages to Chairing the A.A. World Services Board for a non-alcoholic Trustee?

"Class A trustees have one foot in—one foot out. The Board has faced a couple of really tough conversations over the last few years. Alcoholic Trustees and Delegates line up pretty quickly on one side or the other of issues. I really don't have a commitment to one outcome or another, as a Class A Trustee. I have come to understand that my job as the Chair is to facilitate group consciences, not to present and push an agenda. By the end of the first year I learned that the authority comes from the group conscience. To facilitate that consensus, I think it is to my advantage that I am not predisposed to any particular outcome.

"Jim Estelle is a Chair Emeritus for the General Service

Board (Chairman of the Board 1993 to 1997). Recently he spoke on another topic and he was reflecting on how people assume that, because he isn't an alcoholic, he doesn't really understand the Traditions and the Concepts so he can talk about them, shooting from the hip and if people don't agree with him, they just dismiss him." Ward laughs. "That's a lot of freedom."

"I do believe that the Board exists to serve the fellowship; the fellowship really does make the major decisions and the board sees these decisions through. At the Board I often heard that there are no emergencies in AA. When urgency creeps in, there is a feeling that we have to get this or that done. The system of building a substantial majority is compromised. Anxiety violates our democratic process. The program is happening at the local level, and, with respect to what is going on in New York, there's time to get it right. Being a nonalcoholic helps me to help the Board and/or the Conference take the time to find its substantial majority.

The press has a hard time honoring anonymity. A nonalcoholic face of A.A. is acceptable to the press and doesn't violate our Tradition of anonymity. That's another gift Class As can bring to the fellowship."



Ward, do you think you were brought in for your religious prowess?

"One concern on both sides of the Canada/USA border is the issue of religion and spirituality. I am part of institutionalized religion—I wouldn't call it organized religion because we aren't very well organized—but I am a part of that world and AA is clearly not a religion. Religion has a set theology and liturgy and there are professionals who run the organization. These professionals have the answers and their job is to persuade others to accept and believe what they believe. Frankly, it's all in the head. That's religion and I am not against religion; I am one of these professionals paid to encourage people to be religious and I hope some are, but it doesn't belong in AA.

"Spirituality is something everyone has. We wake up with it in the morning. It is love and hate, anger and joy; we are spiritual beings because we are affected if people love us or hate us or ignore us. In a spiritual program we have no creed or specific theology or rituals. Now there are some rituals in AA and I think we have to be careful about these. In the South they almost always end meetings with the Lord's Prayer but when they did that at the world conference in San Antonio in 2010, I was surprised and frankly I was a little shocked. Again, I consider myself reasonably religious and I want you to be religious but don't try to make A.A. religious. The line between religion and spirituality has to be maintained strongly in this fellowship.

"Religion is taught at the head level, 'Here's the book and

(Continued on page 13)

An Interview with Ward Ewing

(Continued from page 12)

here's what it means and this is what we do here.' Spirituality is shared, not intellectually but at the level of the heart. What changes people's lives is one suffering alcoholic hearing their story coming from another alcoholic's lips and a story of despair becomes a story of hope. Too much talk of God in the group can be a barrier. We are all spiritual beings on a spiritual journey but we all in different places. Our job is to help each other see where we are in their spiritual journey and to help see where our strengths are on this journey and how we each can grow. It is not our job to tell another that our way is the better way. God doesn't need my protection and I am not here to tell you or anyone how to manage your spiritual journey—I have a hard enough time managing my own."

Ward pauses for a moment and continues, "A new pamphlet is coming out about the spiritual journey including stories of atheists and agnostics. Some people are very upset about that but I am very excited. What some of us miss, who have theistic faith, is the spiritual qualities of those with no such faith. They have a story to tell and spirituality is communicated through stories. That's why this pamphlet isn't about what to believe or not believe. It will be people sharing their stories."

These are stressful, challenging times for any organization. What lies ahead for A.A?

"According to printers, A.A. is one of the USA's largest publishing companies. I can't see that being the case 20 years out or even ten years from now. We sell one million Big Books each year. Then there's the Grapevine. Is it really AA's meeting in print if less than 10% of the fellowship subscribes to it? We are enthusiastically marketing the digital version and features of Grapevine.

"I am someone who has many years of congregation leadership. I think AA does a fabulous job in regards to dealing with the whole spiritual relationship to self-support. In this age of wealth becoming so concentrated, A.A. continues to limit personal contributions or bequests.

"When I was first interviewing as a Class A Trustee I got my first surprise. In the interview process I was asked if I had any questions and I said yes I do. 'With any board I have ever been on there is an expectation to make contributions (financial) which I am willing to do but I am curious to what extent I would be expected to contribute. Can you tell me how much you would expect me to contribute financially to AA?' 'Yes,' they said, 'we can tell you how much—zero. We don't accept contributions from non-alcoholics.' That blew me away. They explained that the Seventh Tradition is an expression of thanksgiving for the health and new life that one has received from the fellowship.

"With the goodwill we have in A.A. we could go gang-

busters if we wanted to start building endowments. AA isn't about making money. We would absolutely destroy the connection between spirituality and the financial end of this fellowship.

"I am getting ready to give a talk to a church about what the church can learn from AA. I can't wait to tell them, 'Limit contributions.'" Ward laughs. "They are going to shake their heads, 'How can you even talk about something like this?' But if they want to treat contributions as an act of gratitude then you don't fund-raise in the same way.

"Of any organization I know, AA does the best in connecting the spirituality aspect of the program with the financial aspect. The challenge now is that currently only 40 to 45% of our income comes from group contributions. The rest is from literature sales. We have people studying this and talking about it right now. In an era of electronic Big Books and so on, no one is predicting that revenue will increase instead of decrease. But I have a sense that if the fellowship is well informed the money will be there. We've been talking about it at Regional Forums and in this economic downturn our reserve fund is increasing. This year we'll be at about 11 or 12 months of operating expenses and that's our prudent reserve. If we hit our target we will be reducing literature prices. The fellowship has always been supported by its members but I must say we also enjoy very competent management. Looking forward, money isn't an area I have a lot of concerns with."

As Ward Ewing handed over the reins of the lowest job on A.A.'s inverted triangle of service, he reminds us that it is the groups, not the General Service Office that runs A.A. GSO serves the will of A.A.—never dictating to the groups or members. Ward cautions us to avoid being dogmatic in our rituals and not to fear whatever the future holds in store.

At the time Ward Ewing talked with Rebellion Dogs his final duty of Chairing the 63rd General Service Conference, unfortunately, the spirituality pamphlet which includes stories of atheists and agnostics was not approved by AA's trusted servants.

Sadly, the idea of officially saying to the world that our Godless brothers and sisters are welcome equals among us isn't a change that 21st century Alcoholics Anonymous is ready for. Bill Wilson, when A.A. was only 25 years old, said to us in the July 1965 Grapevine, "Let us never fear needed change. Certainly we have to discriminate between changes for the worse and changes for the better. But once a need becomes clearly apparent in an individual, in a group, or in A.A. as a whole, it has long since been found out that we cannot stand still and look the other way. The essence of all growth is a willingness to change for the better and then an unremitting willingness to shoulder whatever responsibility this entails."

<http://rebelliondogspublishing.com/wardewing-2011>

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, 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.

Confidential Contact List

Your Trusted Servants Committee 63

Ola P., Panel 63 Delegate
4480 Granada Blvd. #22
Warrensville Hts., OH 44128
(216) 408-0289
delegate@area54.org

Calvin L., Alternate Delegate
3571 Riedham Rd
Shaker Hts, OH 44120
(216) 334-4594
e-mail: altdelegate@area54.org

Jamie B., Area Chairperson
3254 Redwood Rd.
Cleveland Hts., OH 44118
(216) 548-5410
e-mail: chair@area54.org

Susan R., Treasurer
PO Box 8, 50 N. Maple St.
Orwell, OH 44076
(216) 407-6090
e-mail: treasurer@area54.org

Shyrl B., Recording Secretary
PO Box 10344 (M)
Cleveland, OH 44110
(216) 702-0572
e-mail: recordingsecretary@area54.org

Jim S., Mailing Secretary
104 Sexton St.
Struthers, OH 44471
(330) 261-6256
e-mail: mailingsecretary@area54.org

Committee Chairpersons 2013-2014

Archives	James T. 19104 Maple Heights Blvd. Maple Hts., OH 44137	(216) 322-7005 archives@area54.org
Archivist	Tim H. 1944 Jefferson-Eagleville Rd. Jefferson, Ohio 44047	(440) 415-2960 archivist@area54.org
Correctional Facilities	Tina C. 29 South Maryland Youngstown, OH 44509	(330) 318-9168 cf@area54.org
Cooperation with the Professional Community	Christine M. 8905 State St. Kinsman, OH 44428	(330) 876-0258 cpc@area54.org
Finance	Terry H. 2961 Essex Rd. Cleveland Hts., OH 44118	(216) 406-4089 finance@area54.org
Grapevine	Bob D. 50 N. Maple St., PO Box 8 Orwell, OH 44076	(216) 408-9020 gvchair@area54.org
Group Services	Diane K. 5 Chippenham Court Rocky River, OH 44116	(440) 333-5432 groupservices@area54.org
Hispanic Community	Wellington R. 209 East 216th Street Euclid, OH 44113	(216) 287-6009 hispanicliaison@area54.org
Literature	Jerry P. 856 Comanche Trail Macedonia, OH 44056	(216) 870-1131 literature@area54.org
"Recorder" Newsletter	Jeffrey Y. 1076 Woodview Rd Cleveland Hts., OH 44121	(216) 496-7594 newsletter@area54.org
Public Information	Quinsetta M. 23301 Lori Drive Bedford Hts., OH 44146	(216) 253-6315 pi@area54.org
Registrar	Patricia R. 180 College Park Drive #C-3 Elyria, OH 44033	(440) 365-7416 registrar@area54.org
Special Needs	Roosevelt T. 400 Locust St., Apt. 804 Akron, OH 44307	(330) 459-1559 specialneeds@area54.org
Treatment Facilities	Gary C. 1530 Victor Ave Youngstown, OH 44505	(234)855-0833 tf@area54.org
Website	Dan M. P O Box 173 Chardon, OH 44024	(440)853-6768 info@area54.org

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