

# The Northeast Ohio Recorder

January, February, March 2016

<http://www.area54.org>

Volume XXIV, Issue 5

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

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

## A Word From Our Delegate

Greetings and Salutations to all! My hope for you is a Happy Holiday Season and a Peaceful, Joyous and Prosperous New Year. May the sun shine warmly upon your face, may the wind blow gently upon your back and may our path rise up to meet you. May the year 2016 be filled with Abundant Blessings for you and yours.

In September I attended the National Alcoholics Anonymous Archives Workshop which was held at the Double Tree in Independence, Ohio. What an awesome learning experience. "The primary purpose of those involved in archives work is to collect and preserve the message of Alcoholics Anonymous." Bill says "We are trying to build up extensive records which will be of value to a future historian... It is highly important that the factual material be placed in our files in such a way that there can be no substantial distortion..." I am grateful that our GSO, Area, Districts, Groups and Intergroup/Central offices have people who have dedicated themselves to this great responsibility. I encourage groups to write and/or update their histories to be included in AA history.

Recently I attended the East Central Regional Forum, which was held in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. There were Presentations, Workshops, Ask-It-Basket and General Sharing Sessions. Regional Forums provide an opportunity for communication with some members of the General Service Board, A.A. World Services, Inc., A.A. Grapevine Corporate Board, G.S.O. and Grapevine Staff. It is an opportunity to communicate/question both hired hands and trusted servants of A.A.

I was asked to be moderator for a workshop and the topic was "Singleness of Purpose." One question for discussion was "Why all this insistence on Singleness of Purpose?" The general consensus was that A.A. has been successful helping alcoholics to recover for 80 years with Singleness of Purpose. It was also mentioned that another organization (Washingtonians) was established in the 1800's to help alcoholics. However they began to get involved in other causes and disappeared from the scene. Bill states "Since recovery from alcoholism is life itself to us, it is imperative that we preserve in full strength our means of survival."



Gratitude Sunday is where we come to come together to break bread, fellowship and celebrate this way of life. The

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Akron Multi-District hosted our Area 54 Gratitude Sunday this year. There was much delicious food and desserts for our consumption. It was hard to choose what to put on your plate as there were so many choices. Plates overflowed and fellowship abounded as our Gratitude Sunday was well attended. We heard messages from two DCM's and two GSR's expressing their gratitude for Alcoholics Anonymous. The Akron Multi-District did a GREAT job of hosting Gratitude Sunday and we are most grateful.

The year 2016 will be a very busy one for our Area. In February we will have our GSR School. In January we will be accepting bids for our May Unity Day and

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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. Gratitude in A.A. is a noun AND a verb. The old-timers 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.”

All groups have a right to a say in how A.A. operates. You express that right with the election and participation of a General Service Representative (GSR). But without that voice and vote, the A.A. 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 a GSB 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 \$20 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](mailto:newsletter@area54.org)



## Area Officer Reports

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the Open House Picnic in June. The November Gratitude Sunday bid will be put forth later in the year.

Our Mini-Conference will be held April 1-3, 2016 at the Double Tree Hilton in Independence, Ohio. This is the Conference where each group has a vote on items that will be voted on at the General Service Conference. Your group's voice will be heard at the Conference, if you send a member. In addition we will have a General Service Office staff member Clay R. who sits on the Public Information Desk and General Service Trustee/AAWS Director William N., both who will give reports. I encourage all members of A.A. to attend this conference.

Also our Area will be hosting the 60<sup>th</sup> Ohio State Convention August 19-21, 2016 at the Double Tree Hilton in Westlake. There will be Speakers, Panels, food, fun and fellowship. I encourage all A.A., Al-Anon, Alateen and OYPAA members to attend this Convention. Hope to see you at one or both of these Events.

**Calvin L., Panel 65 delegate,  
Area 54 — Northeast Ohio**

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Happy New Year to all in Area 54:

One of my objectives is to begin my year by looking at and following some of the things alcoholic anonymous is teaching me to believe. These are a few of my beliefs:

I believe - That I can do something in an instant that will give me a heartache for life.

I believe - That it's taking me a long time to become the person my Higher Power wants me to become. Sometimes quickly, sometimes slowly – it will happen if I continue to do the right thing)

I believe - That I am responsible for what I do, no matter how I feel.

I believe - That either I control my attitude or it controls me.

I believe - That sometimes when I'm angry I have the right to be angry, but that doesn't give me the right to be cruel.

I believe - That it isn't always enough to be forgiven by others. Sometimes I have to learn to forgive myself.

I believe - That no matter how bad my heart is broken the world doesn't stop for my grief.

I believe - That our background and circumstances may have influenced who we are, but we are responsible for who we become.

I believe - Two people can look at the exact same thing and see something totally different.

I believe - That credentials on the wall do not make you a decent human being.

I believe – That the Promises will come true when the talk is changed to the walk... by being honest and humble and always ready to learn. It doesn't matter if a person has thirty years of sobriety or thirty minutes... we are all students and we are all teachers.

I believe - That we will have a spiritual awakening as the result of the Twelve Steps of Alcoholics Anonymous. That is "Gratitude"!!!

How exciting to know that life's lessons are unfolding. How wonderful that each day inspires new growth.

Yours in Love, Service, & Gratitude,

**Jamie B.  
Area 54 Alternate Delegate**

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Thanks to the Akron Multi-District for the great job hosting Gratitude Sunday. I appreciated the abundance of food (Yum Yum) and the excellent panel. I was glad to see so many folks in attendance.

I am looking forward to the Ohio State Planning meeting December 6<sup>th</sup> in Brunswick. I know you are reading this after the fact. But I ask everyone try to attend these planning meetings. Announcements will be at the Assemblies. I have asked folks to put it on their calendar and find ways to help host the convention August 19, 20 & 21, 2016. The committees include Entertainment, Program,

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## Area Officer Reports

*(Continued from page 3)*

Hospitality, and more. "Working with Others Through Sponsorship" is the theme. Many volunteers are needed.

Not to confuse you but the 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday in January at 2 pm will be the first planning meeting for the Mini-Conference coming up April 1, 2 & 3, 2016. This is not an April Fool's joke. The theme is "Our Spiritual Way of Life: Steps, Traditions and Concepts". All members of A.A. are encouraged to attend this conference. Please bring a friend. See you on January 24<sup>th</sup> at 2pm at the Double Tree Hilton in Independence.

Several people tell me that they really enjoyed the Mini-Conferences and liked being a part of the business of A.A. as a whole. Those same people may not be GSR's nor have the time for more activity in service but they attend. This is a great opportunity for fellowship and to be on the ground level of what happens at the General Service Conference in New York. Obviously, I find this exciting. I just want to remind you that the members and the groups are the "bosses" of A.A." This Mini-Conference gives the membership the opportunity to tell our delegate how you feel on the upcoming Agenda items that will be voted on at the General Service Conference. I know we all have opinions so be there.

I recently read the Keynote Address of the Chairman at the General Service Conference in April 2015. I was totally impressed. He summarized the key issues and challenges ahead for A.A. One was that the biggest challenge for the future years is Singleness of Purpose. I summarize his comments this way: How can we be **inclusive** and keep A.A. about alcoholism and help the new person who comes to us. Several other issues included diversity, finances and more. I encourage you to find the 2015 General Service Conference report. Read the whole keynote address and the other Special Reports (including a report on Safety in Meetings) and the actions of the Conference.

Happy New Year and see you all at the Assembly Sunday, January 17<sup>th</sup>, 2016 at 2pm at the 12 Step Club in Brunswick. Check out the 2016 Schedule and Area Events on the website: <http://area54.org>.

Thanks for the opportunity to serve you.  
**Susan R., Panel 65, Area 54 Chair**

How grateful I am to be able to share with you this thing we call recovery. I apologize for not writing as often as I should. I'm still learning how to manage all of the things I have to do in my professional and personal life, along with all of the things I have to do is your trusted servant. I'm so grateful that you have allowed me to be a part of this awesome fellowship serving as a treasurer.

Before I go any further, I want to give a shout out to all of those many, many groups that are sending donations. Regardless of the amount, it is greatly appreciated. Your donations go far in helping us carry the message throughout the area and the state. So if your group has not already donated, please think about sending donations to all of the four entities which the area is Included because they would be appreciated by everyone.

This past year has been a learning experience for me. It keeps reminding me of what I think I know and the longer I stay involved, I realized I know only a little. In this experience I'm learning new things, tech-wise skills and I'm also learning new business skills. Besides that I'm really learning new people skills. There are times I'm inside my head and I will hear Mary B. or Ola P. sharing something that I need to put in place and I'm learning how to do that today, I am so grateful. Also, I appreciate a lot of our literature, books like "AA Comes of Age" or "Dr Bob and the Good Old-timers". These books shares about the early beginnings and how service structure and other things got started. These readings helps me appreciate this fellowship even more.

As this year races to an end, I really encourage everyone to enjoy the life they are living right now. Embrace the lessons or blessings as opportunities to learn and grow. Find time to do something for someone (and don't tell). Just live your life One Day at a Time.

Love and Service,

**Shyrl B.**

**Area 54 Panel 65 Treasurer**

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As Mailing Secretary, it is my responsibility to coordinate the items for mailing and execute the steps necessary to accomplish the mailing process.

Items for mailing are submitted to me in advance for each of the 5 mailings each year (January, April, June, September and December). The items are sent to the printer, and after I receive the addresses from the Registrar, I take

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## Area Officer Reports

the envelopes to the Presort Printer . I am also responsible to arrange the location and host district for each mailing date for a folding party. Each mailing totals some 1,200 pieces, so it is great to find eager participants to host the folding parties, as well as volunteers to participate in the folding parties.

The behind-the-scenes work that goes on—the meetings with the PreSort people, the emails with the printer, the PreSort people, the arguments with the Post Office, the time spent with the printer, the time spent with the PreSort people, the picking up and dropping off—stuff that no one knows about, that is where I find my personal rewards.

Asking others how to do my job was a humbling and rewarding experience. Asking, "Can you help me? I don't know where to start?" And it amazed me to think they took the time to show me! When I asked for help at the general service meetings to get the folding parties scheduled, I got the whole year filled in short order. It has been very rewarding to be able to go into different districts for the folding parties and meet people from different home groups. It gives me an opportunity to meet new people and share our stories. I also enjoy sharing my experiences about Founder's Day, Dr. Bob's House, Ignatia Hall. I am surprised at how many people have not been to Akron to see these sights or have not experienced Founders' Day.

I want to thank everyone for all their help and look forward to next year. In love and service,  
**Ron O., Mailing Secretary**  
Area 54, Panel 65

### Let's Go Green!

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

The *NE OH Recorder* you're reading now is 8 pages long—that's the page limit to keep postage weight within our budget and so that it can be folded to fit in an envelop. But we have so much more Area 54 news for you! The web version of the last issue of *NEOHR* was 14 pages packed with experience, strength, and hope.

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

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

Expanded Content (13 pages!) and a Color-Enhanced version of this newsletter is now online at <http://area54.org/NEOHRRecorder.html>

### ***A reprint from the March 1961 issue of Area 74's newsletter, "Now and Then" :***

John Donne, an old English poet, once wrote that no man is an island, separate and independent from the rest of the world, but that all of us are part of the same large body of mankind. He went on to say that if something happened to any one of us, all of us are in some way affected. And if someone dies — "Do not ask for whom the bell tolls. It tolls for thee."

The same is true for us in AA. Sometimes we think that our own little AA group is the only thing that matters, and is all we need to keep our sobriety. This is not true. No group could exist for very long without the help and guidance and services it receives from the whole world-wide structure of Alcoholics Anonymous. AA is like a vine with one root and many branches. If blight attacks one part of the vine, or if the root is cut, the whole thing dies. Each part is dependent on every other part.

That is why it is important for every group in our Area to be active in Area affairs. That is the only way we can be active, and a healthy part of AA as a whole. It is the only way your group or mine can avoid the likelihood of ending up as a dead and withered leaf on the vine.

The General Service Board is pleased to announce the appointment of Greg T. as the new General Manager of the General Service Office, effective October 1, 2015.

Greg has been A.A.W.S.'s Publishing Director since 2013. Greg comes to this position with 35 years of experience in leadership positions in corporate publishing and non-profit management. He has a strong professional background in the book publishing field, both editorial and managerial. He is a published author and is active in a variety of professional and community associations. Since 1986, Greg has been continually involved in service and has served on the A.A. Grapevine Editorial Advisory Board, A.A. Grapevine corporate board as director and chair and as a General Service Trustee on the General Service Board. Sober since July 11, 1986, Greg is active in his home group and in step and service sponsorship.

Please join us in welcoming Greg as our General Manager.

Sincerely,  
Terry Bedient, Chairman  
General Service Board of Alcoholics Anonymous

### Corrections

This has been a very interesting year for me. I've contacted people throughout the U.S. for suggestions and ideas. I have contacted a dark District to get them active. I pray next year will be very busy and rewarding for me. Yours in Service Marilyn H.

## Literature

In the past month \$57.40 of books and literature has been sold. Gratitude Sunday will be held November 22nd, 2015. All books and literature will be stocked up for that day. If you need any books or literature, feel free to contact me at any time. If you are interested in joining the Literature Committee, you can see me after the meeting and we'll get you signed up. Thank You.

In Love and Service,  
David W.  
Literature Committee Chairperson

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### Group Services

The Group Services Committee acts as liaison between Area 54 General Service and Inter-



group & Central Offices to foster cooperation. Group services assists new GSRs at the Area Assembly by providing a post-meeting orientation. Group Services implemented a GSR School program to enhance the understanding of General Service at the area level.

The GSR School Workshop is held the third Sunday in February at the Brunswick 12 Step club. This workshop is open to all GSRs, incoming and outgoing and to all interested A.A. members. It is the aim of the workshop to provide correct information and to assist new GSRs in becoming comfortable in their new role.

Throughout the year, the committee is available to bring the GSR School Workshop to any District upon request. On December 13, 2015 the committee traveled to District 10 (Wooster), to do a presentation. In addition, the committee upon request can arrange for a service panel to visit your district or home group.

If you would like to schedule the workshop or a service panel, or for any questions and concerns, you can email us at: [groupservices@area54.org](mailto:groupservices@area54.org) or phone 216-408-0289.

I am responsible.....  
Ola P., Group Services Comm.  
Chair

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There's an old saying that "one man's cake is another man's poison" and it's a sure thing that we don't all enjoy the same things. But we still feel that those groups which don't attend our Area conferences and those members of any groups, who never take in an outside meeting, are missing some of the best fun in AA. To us they seem like people who live in a big house, but spend their entire lives in one room, never venturing into the rest of the house to get acquainted with the others who live there.

AA friends are something special -- they've gone down that same dark road we travelled and we understand, respect, and love each other more because of it. Some of our AA friends we see only once or twice a year, but there's a bond of kinship between us that time and distance cannot erase. As we look at a map or hear the name of some city, the picture of a smiling face flashes into our mind and the thought comes — "that's where so-and-so lives,\*" that's part of what those stay-at-homes are missing. We wish more of them would wonder out of the confines of their solitary group and see what the rest of the AA world looks like.

*Reprinted from the June 1962 issue of Area 74's newsletter, "Now and Then"*



**UPCOMING DATES FOR THE AREA AND BEYOND**

**NOTE THE DATE**

**January 17, 2016**  
Area Assembly  
**GV Lit sales  
2:00 pm**

**January 24 and February 28**  
Mini Conference planning meetings  
@ DoubleTree Independence  
**2:00 pm**

**February 12-14 — Milwaukee, WI**  
Conference of Delegates Past and Present

**February 21**  
Workshop  
**2:00 pm**

**March 4-6 — Perrysburg, OH**  
Area 55 NWOH Mini-Conference

**March 11-13 — Mt. Sterling OH**  
Area 53 CSEOH Mini-Conference

**March 20**  
Area Assembly  
**2:00 pm**  
*(and MC planning snow date)*

**March 18-20 — Dayton OH**  
Area 56 SWOH Mini-Conference

**April 1-3**  
41st NEOH Mini-Conference  
@ DoubleTree Independence OH  
**GV Lit sales**

**April 17**  
Area Assembly  
**2:00 pm**

**April 17-23 — New York, NY**  
65th General Service Conference

**May 7—Columbus, OH**  
Ohio State Convention Planning Meeting  
**11:00 am**

**May 15**  
Unity Day—Delegate's Conf. Report  
**Lit sales  
2:00 pm**

**June 10-12**  
Founders' Day at Univ of Akron  
**GV sales Saturday only**

**June 26**  
Area Open House Picnic  
**TBA**

**July 17**  
Area Assembly  
**GV Lit sales  
2:00 pm**

**August 12-14—St. Charles, IL**  
East Central Regional Conference

**August 19-21—Westlake, OH**  
60th Ohio State Convention @ DoubleTree Westlake

**September 8-11 — Concord, CA**  
National AA Archives Workshop

**September 18**  
Area Assembly  
**2:00 pm**

**October 16**  
Panel 67 Elections @ Assembly  
**GV Lit sales  
2:00 pm**

**November 5 — Columbus, OH**  
Ohio State Convention Planning Meeting  
**11:00 am**

**November 20**  
Gratitude Sunday  
**GV Lit sales  
TBA**



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

## RECOVERY, UNITY AND SERVICE

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

### Confidential Contact List

#### Your Trusted Servants Committee 65

**Calvin L., Panel 65 Delegate**  
3571 Riedham Rd  
Shaker Hts, OH 44120  
(216) 334-4594  
delegate@area54.org

**Jamie B., Alternate Delegate**  
3254 Redwood Rd.  
Cleveland Hts., OH 44118  
(216) 548-5410  
e-mail: altdelegate@area54.org

**Susan R., Area Chairperson**  
PO Box 8, 50 N. Maple St.  
Orwell, OH 44076  
(216) 407-6049  
e-mail: chair@area54.org

**Shyrl B., Treasurer**  
PO Box 10344 (M)  
Cleveland, OH 44110  
(216) 702-0572  
e-mail: treasurer@area54.org

**Tina C., Recording Secretary**  
29 South Maryland  
Youngstown, OH 44509  
(330) 318-9168  
e-mail: recordingsecretary@area54.org

**Ron O., Mailing Secretary**  
1232 Iona Avenue  
Akron, OH 44314  
(330) 388-8316  
e-mail: mailingsecretary@area54.org

#### Committee Chairpersons 2015-2016

<b>Archives</b>	Michael R. 11311 Shaker Blvd. #135 Cleveland, OH 44104	(216) 322-7005 <a href="mailto:archives@area54.org">archives@area54.org</a>
<b>Archivist</b>	James T. 19104 Maple Heights Blvd. Maple Hts., OH 44137	(216) 773-0207 <a href="mailto:archivist@area54.org">archivist@area54.org</a>
<b>Corrections</b>	Marilyn H. 703 Lincoln Street Wooster, OH 44691	(330) 749-0110 <a href="mailto:cf@area54.org">cf@area54.org</a>
<b>Cooperation with the Professional Community</b>	Mary Ann K. 1779 Madison Avenue Wooster, OH 44691	(330) 347-7070 <a href="mailto:cpc@area54.org">cpc@area54.org</a>
<b>Finance</b>	Roosevelt T. 400 Locust St., Apt. 804 Akron, OH 44307	(330) 459-1559 <a href="mailto:finance@area54.org">finance@area54.org</a>
<b>Floor Management</b>	Dustin S. 1223 N. Howard Street Akron, OH 44310	(330) 524-5833 <a href="mailto:floormgmt@area54.org">floormgmt@area54.org</a>
<b>Grapevine</b>	Tim H. 1944 Jefferson-Eagleville Rd. Jefferson, Ohio 44047	(440) 415-2960 <a href="mailto:gvchair@area54.org">gvchair@area54.org</a>
<b>Group Services</b>	Ola P. 4480 Granada Blvd. #22 Warrensville Hts., OH 44128	(216) 408-0289 <a href="mailto:groupservices@area54.org">groupservices@area54.org</a>
<b>Hispanic Community</b>	Wellington R. 209 East 216th Street Euclid, OH 44113	(216) 287-6009 <a href="mailto:hispanicliaison@area54.org">hispanicliaison@area54.org</a>
<b>Literature</b>	David W. 452 North Buckeye Street Wooster, OH 44691	(330) 234-6973 <a href="mailto:literature@area54.org">literature@area54.org</a>
<b>NE OH Recorder Newsletter</b>	Jeffrey Y. 1076 Woodview Rd Cleveland Hts., OH 44121	(216) 496-7594 <a href="mailto:newsletter@area54.org">newsletter@area54.org</a>
<b>Public Information</b>	Robert M. 1367 Grantleigh Rd. South Euclid, OH 44121	(216)970-2333 <a href="mailto:pi@area54.org">pi@area54.org</a>
<b>Registrar</b>	Jim S. 104 Sexton Street Struthers, OH 44471	(330) 261-6256 <a href="mailto:registrar@area54.org">registrar@area54.org</a>
<b>Special Needs</b>	Gary C. 1530 Victor Ave. Youngstown, OH 44505	(234) 228-8394 <a href="mailto:specialneedschair@area54.org">specialneedschair@area54.org</a>
<b>Treatment Facilities</b>	Michael S. 429 N. Hawkins St. Apt.313 Akron, OH 44313	(330) 957-1942 <a href="mailto:tf@area54.org">tf@area54.org</a>
<b>Website</b>	Dan M. P O Box 173 Chardon, OH 44024	(440)853-6768 <a href="mailto:info@area54.org">info@area54.org</a>

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



## General Sharing Session, August 2015 General Service Board Meeting, NYC

The topic of the third quarterly General Sharing Session was 'A.A.'s Primary Purpose: Reaching the Alcoholic Who Still Suffers." Bill F., regional trustee, and Bill N., general service trustee, presented on the topic. John Fromson, (non-alcoholic) Class A trustee, chaired the session.

Bill F. shared on the subtopic, "What more could we do?," and noted that he has often asked himself, "What more can I do to help?" He added that, the Big Book, Alcoholics Anonymous, recommends that we "find another alcoholic to work with," but that is not our challenge as a board of trusted servants. Bill is skeptical of the suggestion that A.A. growth has leveled off. In his view, A.A. is such that a survey is impossible or improbable at best. He added that Tradition Five says our primary purpose is "carrying the message to the alcoholic who still suffers:" Simple and to the point.

As an A.A. group, his group does not stray from their primary purpose because, he said, we follow the other eleven Traditions to the best of our abilities and the rewards are great. Bill described how each Tradition plays a role in

the group and suggested that the Twelve Traditions are interwoven like a strong basket. Its weave adds strength as at some points there is a double weave. This underpinning of many reeds adds to its sturdy nature. Bill said he has no answer to the question, "what more could we do?" But, he noted, we are not alone in asking ourselves that question. Many organizations are doing exactly the same. What he discovered is that there are plenty of alcoholics to carry the message to.

Bill N. shared on the subtopic, 'Are our literature and communication tools effective in helping groups and members reach the alcoholic who still suffers?' Bill started by saying that it is possible to answer such a yes-no question with a yes-no answer. He noted that this is a very sensitive subject inside A.A. and he welcomed both feedback and criticism. He cited a talk Bill W. gave in Toronto in 1965 on a panel entitled, "Our Responsibility to A.A.'s Future': In this talk, Bill W. said, "Our first concern should be for those sufferers of alcoholism that we are still unable to reach." Bill W. was concerned about one

thing, and that was how A.A. could reach those it was not reaching yet.

Bill expressed great concern about the diversity of our membership compared to the make-up of the population of the United States and Canada. In his view, outside issues have affected our effectiveness, and our great literature has been the great equalizer. In his experience, there was a time when he was in favor of burning all literature except the Big Book. He believed that this literature made people feel different than others or unique. Today, he feels that the Big Book is for people in A.A., and the other literature for those thinking about joining A.A. or declaring themselves a member- two very different purposes.

Bill believes A.A. that we should carefully evaluate how a particular communication method or technology will help us carry our life-saving message, making sure that any new technology we embrace falls within our great 12 Traditions.

Bill added, in closing, that the Internet and other communication platforms have become

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# General Sharing Session, August 2015

## General Service Board Meeting, NYC

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the primary ways people communicate, but these platforms are also sources people turn to for information. He remembered a Class A trustee say a few years ago "A.A. has a choice to make, does it wish to be relevant in today's society? And if it does it better be in the places where people today look for help."

After the presentations, John Fromson, the moderator, invited comments and sharing on the topic. An appointed committee member commented that when we don't reach out or welcome people, we lose the stories that will attract still other alcoholics. Her group has a hospitality break for members to go and talk to someone new - not talk to their friends.

A director spoke about a Regional Forum workshop on anonymity breaks on social media and the internet and asked "what opportunity are we missing when we don't have a presence on social media?" He feels there is misinformation about A.A. on social media, because we don't have a presence there. An appointed committee member talked about his contact with the committees for the Interna-

tional Conference of Young People in A.A. (ICYPAA) and the Miami YPAA who are doing A.A. work on social media, but are having trouble coming to a group conscience about whether to continue. One reason they cited for the lack of group conscience was fear due to recommendations from the General Service Conference regarding social media. A trustee followed up by asking how we can insure that AA.org comes up in search engines.

Another trustee referred to a change in attendance an annual district event after a "secret" Facebook page was created for it. Attendance was usually about 50, and it jumped to 600. An appointed committee member expressed concern that sometimes A.A. moves so slowly that we miss good opportunities, sometimes procedure slows us, sometimes fear slows us. But we also should remember that not all alcoholics have online access-we still need paper.

An appointed committee member mentioned that the ethnic diversity in A.A. does not mirror the local community and noted the need for

literature and A.A. contacts for newcomers who speak other languages. A director noted that A.A. wants to welcome every alcoholic, but expressed concern that some members negatively judge newcomers who are alcoholics but also used drugs, and that too much focus on one Tradition might be blocking us from following another.

A trustee told the story of someone he was sponsoring who had gone back to drinking, and how she felt rejected when she returned to A.A. He encouraged us to do all we can to help a member who has strayed from the fold. John, the moderator, thanked the participants and closed the General Sharing Session with the Serenity Prayer.



## East Central Regional Forum Presentations, November 2015

### SPIRITUALITY – HOW AND WHY

Just before I came into the Program, I became a disgusting, crying drunk. I'd call different family members, to share that misery. Since they didn't have caller I.D. then, some unfortunate family member had to pretend to listen to me tell that same story about my abusive childhood, awful marriages and so on. One night a sister told me to talk to God the way I was talking to her. I was drunk but I do remember asking Him, "Why was I born in the first place?" What I didn't know, I was really asking God, "What is your will for me?" A few days later, she said I called to tell her I decided to change my life. I must have been in a blackout; because that was 30 years ago and I still don't remember having said that. I went to a Treatment Center after that.

Walking into my first A.A. Meeting, I saw something on the faces of the members and wanted what they had. Combined with all that happened up to that point, now I can label what I felt. It was my first spiritual experience. I really don't know if I would have gone back out without that spiritual experience; but I do know, I stayed because of it. I started praying, on a semi-regular basis, at this point.

It was during my second year when a man in the program gave me a meditation tape. I was learning to relax and clear my mind. I would read

the thought and meditation for that day and meditate on it. I was waiting for God to reveal some hidden message in the reading. I didn't realize I was internalizing the message and growing in character. At my sponsor's house one day, while waiting for her to return, I picked up a pamphlet from her table. The title read, "Why do you keep meditating on things your eyes can see? There are ghosts in your house".

I became uncomfortable while reading the article and decided not to read a passage before I meditated. Sometime later, I started to experience flashbacks. With help from our outside friends, prayer and daily meditation and fellowshiping with my A.A. family, slowly a terrible event was revealed that many of my character defects were related. I believe then, as I believe now, the God of my understanding removed my last excuse for drinking. After six years, that event became important only because it could be used to help someone else. At this point, I knew God wanted me to be sober and He was returning me to sanity. Forming a relationship with the God of my understanding became paramount in my life. That power returned that I had chased away with alcohol.

For the first ten years of my sobriety, I attended a weekly progressive Step Meeting. I prayed and meditated a lot. In retrospect, I was open and willing, to apply the Twelve Steps in my life. I realized that God worked through people. I

listened to others. I heard people say things I needed to hear. About eleven years of sobriety, I asked my sponsor why a member hadn't asked me to sponsor them. She said it was because I was too honest. So, I was rigorously honest. I loved going to meetings. I knew I was growing spiritually. It had to be coming from all of the things I was doing.

There were just a few small problems, however. Just because I walked through the doors of Alcoholics Anonymous didn't mean my episodes of depression and feelings of persecution magically disappeared. The "committee" didn't permanently adjourn. Emotionally I was so damaged. I found refuge and comfort with my relationship with God and talking to my sponsor. I believe that's why I stayed sober.

As the years progressed, I realized much of my spiritual growth came from every day life experiences. This demanded rigorous honesty, openness and willingness. The word "rigorous" means meticulous or painstaking. I have to say more than, "I told a Lie." I had to tell every detail connected to the lie, including my motive. I had to remain open to the possibility that what I thought to be truth was not the truth. I must be willing to act on this new truth and to sincerely thank the person who helped me to grow, regardless of how that person revealed that truth.

Spiritual growth was also obtained through adversity. I gained a

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great deal during a time in sobriety that I wanted to give up. I didn't want to drink. I wanted to give up on life. I heard spoken to me, "God's love is all sufficient." I didn't get overjoyed, but I didn't want to give up. It was a period of time which lasted over five years. Throughout that time, God sent profound blessings. My heart and eyes had to remain open to those blessings. At this stage of my spirituality, I communed with God. I was sick and couldn't go to meetings for two years; but I stayed in fit spiritual condition. Thanks to His undeserved kindness. That's how I stayed sober. If not for the fellowship, I would have not met the God of my own understanding and not grown spiritually to where I needed to be, to get through that awful period of time.

In the last eight years, I have served A.A. at the Area level in some capacity. God pushed me out there. Although I really needed it, I was reluctant at first. Now that we understood each other, I knew He was sending me a life boat and it was to my benefit to get in. Every time I get distracted, God reminds me that I asked, "What is your will for me?" So I knew I was going on another adventure.

I trust my God today. Even with my personality flaws, I'm free from the bondage of self. I don't fear people anymore. I know a power greater than myself did for me what I could not do for myself. I live in a spiritual realm.

Throughout this presentation, I have told you how I think I grew spir-

itually. As I was preparing this, I kept asking myself, did I really put that much effort into it? God may have done something tricky we don't know about. Anyway, if you don't put anything in, you won't get anything out. This I know. I also included why we should grow spiritually. Many of you knew that already.

Fancy words and trying to impart profound wisdom isn't necessary. It is our presence that inspires people. It's what many new people see upon entering their first A.A. meeting. They look at our faces and want what we have.

Graciously contributed to the North-East Ohio Recorder by

**Betty M., Panel 65, Area 33—  
Southeast Michigan**

From her presentation at the East Central Regional Forum, Milwaukee WI

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## Concept 3—The Right of Decision

I confess, I have trouble sitting through lectures, regardless of the topic presented and without regard to who's presenting it. Like many alcoholics, I just don't like being "talked down to", or lectured for that matter. But, I DO love a good story. And on this preference, much of AA's success has come to pass. So what story can I tell to explain Concept III, the "Right of Decision"?

At first, I tried to understand the Concepts by reading them, which didn't work at all. Yes, I "learned" them, meaning that I could repeat what they said, and much of how they were explained in the service manual. However, the understanding I sought was still missing. In other words, I had no story to tell that would let me explain to you (and to those who elected me) what exactly it was that I had learned. It makes no difference whether I'm discussing the Concepts, or the Steps, or the Traditions: without action there is no experience; and without experience there is no understanding. Understanding, at least for me, never arrives before I start taking action. Let me give you an example.

When I attended my first General Service Conference, I arrived with an understanding of how Area 19 felt about most of the Agenda items. I gained that understanding as a by-product of Area 19's Delegate's Pre-conference Forum and discussion of agenda items. I had notes on my laptop to which I could refer as those items came up at the conference and this proved useful, but not always as originally intended. After I returned from GSC, I was asked by one of the more involved attendees at the Pre-conference Forum, "*So what happened with the 12 & 12 & 12?*" Area 19 was very much in favor of having the Steps, Traditions and Concepts brought together in a single volume. But, I had to tell this member not only that it didn't pass, but also that I had voted against it. "*Why would you do that? I remember that we wanted that single volume. We voted yes, you were supposed to vote yes. What*

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*happened?"* was the understandable response to my exercise of the Right of Decision.

I had to explain that when the agenda item came up, I had planned to vote yes, not just because it was the sentiment expressed at the Forum but also because I agreed with that sentiment. But then the discussion started at GSC. Initially, the Delegates going up to the mic expressed the same thoughts and opinions that Area 19 had expressed. And I still fully intended to vote yes and believed that we had thoroughly discussed this item.

Then came the first voice to speak against "us". I remember thinking just that- he is against "us". I listened to what he was saying; I had no choice, how else could I find the flaw in his thinking? But as he proceeded, I found myself agreeing with his points as well as his reasoning. I'm condensing his objections here, but essentially, his argument was based on an analogy with the three legacies: 1-The 12 Steps stand alone as the foundation of our first Legacy-Recovery; 2-The 12 Traditions stand alone as the foundation of our second Legacy-Unity; 3- But, and this is a big "but", the 12 Concepts do not stand alone as the foundation of our third Legacy of Service. While the Concepts ARE vital to Service, many AA members perform 12 step service work without reference to, or, more often than many of "us" would like to admit, even knowledge of, their very existence. By the time I grasped this argument, the estimated cost of \$150,000<sup>00</sup> for print-

ing and manufacture served only to confirm what had become obvious to me and many others. As a result, I felt I had no other option but to change my vote. With this experience, the idea that as Delegate I represent the whole of Alcoholics Anonymous, and not just Area 19, came into much sharper focus.

Trust is earned. Area 19 believed they could trust me to vote the way they wanted me to vote based on the information and discussion we had at our Preconference Forum. However, when I told them I had changed my vote I could sense their disappointment, if not their outright disapproval. But, when I explained the new information I had received, and the more thoroughly informed discussion that took place at the Conference, they supported my actions, and, by inference, my judgment. I earned their Trust and as a consequence, I felt more a "Trusted Servant", than merely a servant.

As Delegate I am not the only one that has "The Right of Decision". The Third Concept tells me that "insuring their effective leadership, it is here suggested that we endow each of these elements of world service with a traditional "Right of Decision". "Insuring their effective leadership" reminds me that I have to remember how easy it is to "trust" when I get what I want. When a committee of which I am not a part, makes a decision with which I do not agree, am I able to "trust" that, based on all the information available to them, they made the

best decision for Alcoholics Anonymous? Am I able to accept that I am but a small piece of a great experience, spiritual in nature?

I can think of no better conclusion to this presentation than to end with the words of Bill Wilson as written in our service manual: Our entire AA Program rests squarely upon the principle of mutual trust. We trust GOD, we trust AA, and we trust each other. Therefore, we cannot do less, than trust our leaders in service. The Right of Decision we offer them is not only the practical means by which they may act and lead effectively, but it is also the symbol of our implicit confidence.

Graciously contributed to the North-East Ohio Recorder by

**Tommy Lamela B.**

**Panel 65 Area 19 Delegate**

From his presentation at the East Central Regional Forum, Milwaukee WI

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