

BOOMERANG



FROM THE DESK OF THE DELEGATE

Nikki O.

Area 28 Panel 70 Delegate, Grapevine Committee

Here it is October 2020 and Area 28 is preparing for the virtual Fall Assembly. This seemed like the perfect time to reach beyond our borders and bring in some articles from fellow AA's around our Region. This issue contains a broad mix of service experiences but a common love for Alcoholics Anonymous. I encourage you to peruse through, see what others are thinking, get a little history lesson and maybe a hint of humor. The Boomerang is around 50 years old and has been providing individuals, groups and districts with an opportunity to know what's going on in Area 28. The mayhem of area, regional and world in-person events being readjusted to virtual events has provided us with a nice opportunity to stretch and reach for more.....Happy reading...

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A Word (or two) from GSO's General Manager

Greg T.

Communication in this time of pandemic has provided an ongoing challenge for our Fellowship - a Fellowship founded on the direct sharing of one alcoholic with another. Picture Bill W. and Dr. Bob in masks, seated a socially-distanced six feet apart, focused in conversation with Bill D., "A.A. Number Three," who is seated at the edge of his hospital bed, a ventilator perhaps parked in the background. It's a 2020 version of A.A.'s famous painting, "Man on the Bed," yet I have no doubt that the A.A. message of hope would get through to our founders' new prospect in just the same way that it did in 1935.

For me, as General Manager of A.A.'s General Service Office, the question of communication occupies much of each day as we seek to assist in the Fellowship's ongoing efforts to carry the A.A. message to still-suffering alcoholics literally around the globe.

G.S.O. is home to 95 employees of A.A.W.S., plus a dozen more working for AA Grapevine. These men and women, both alcoholic and nonalcoholic, serve a worldwide membership of over two million alcoholics in myriad ways: answering letters, preparing bulletins, keeping prison inmate correspondence flowing, processing group contributions, providing new literature (and keeping older literature up to date), helping prepare for the General Service Conference and World Service Meetings, preserving A.A. history in print and digital archives, and maintaining the aa.org website, in three languages, with its 14 million yearly viewers. And, with the General Service Office still closed due to the pandemic, doing all this remotely has just added to the challenge.

But this is just a reflection of changes throughout the entire Fellowship. As Beau B., General Service Trustee and current chair of A.A.W.S. noted in the Summer 2020 issue of Box 4-5-9, "COVID-19 will not stop us from doing A.A. All the way up and down the A.A. triangle, you're seeing people adapting, finding a way."

The current crisis, Beau thinks, is helping us use the Traditions "to think about how we can do things, rather than as reasons why we cannot." Staying at home and attending online meetings may help us redefine singleness of purpose and give us more understanding of those with accessibility issues. Looking at a Zoom meeting in gallery view, Beau says, "We see a quilt of people - everyone in their own homes, the diversity of the members. There is a wall between us, yet not. When meetings end with a closing prayer, it sounds awful and ragged and yet I love it. I feel it as touching and spiritual."

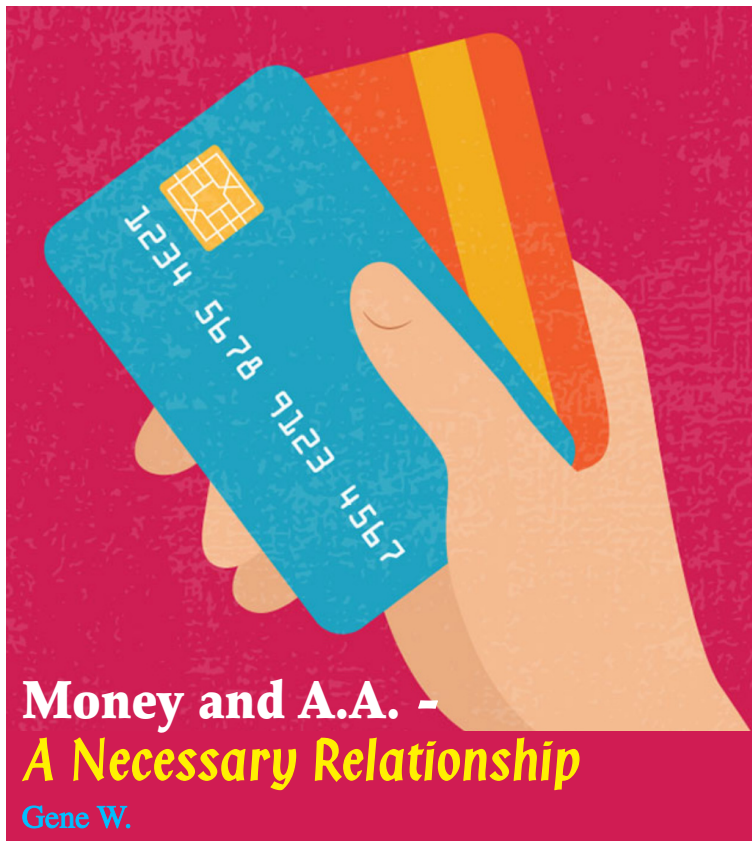
So, staying connected through this challenging time is critical for all of us in A.A., not only at G.S.O. but throughout the Fellowship. And, as Beau says in his closing remarks in Box 4-5-9, "I am not worried about A.A. being forever changed by this in terms of who we are as a people and what we value the most - carrying the message and helping each other. A.A. thrives in uncertainty. When times are soft and comfortable, we fight about comma placement. In times of trouble, people stand up and show up, and say, 'Give me a bucket and a shovel.'"

One area that has been especially rewarding recently is the Fellowship's Seventh Tradition response amid the earliest stages of this pandemic and, while literature sales understandably began to sink in late spring as meetings moved to online platforms, individual contributions to GSO rose to historic levels, with an all-time monthly high figure of \$1.1 million in contributions reached in July 2020. As noted by Leslie Backus, Class A (nonalcoholic) trustee and treasurer of the General Service Board, "The amazing thing is that whether at the local, the area or the intergroup level, A.A.'s have found a way to continue carrying the message. Our primary purpose is going strong. It is an awesome and humbling thing to watch."

As I expressed in 2015 when I started as GSO General Manager, there are so many vital interactions we engage in at G.S.O. - with board members, Conference members, group members and individuals, along with those outside the Fellowship: doctors, lawyers, corrections and treatment professionals - and it is our challenge to provide them all with dependable and meaningful guidance and to share freely the vast experience we have gained as a Fellowship. And we continue providing this communication, pandemic or not, whether we are working from our offices at 475 Riverside Drive or from our homes.

Ultimately, there's nothing more important to me than keeping Recovery, Unity and Service foremost in my mind - and in my heart - always, every day, one day at a time.

"One area that has been especially rewarding recently is the Fellowship's Seventh Tradition response"



We often hear the phrase "...we are self-supporting through our own contributions." Well just what is meant by that phrase and what are we supporting?

Alcoholics Anonymous was not created but rather has developed over time. In the beginning the philosophy of St. Francis of Assisi played a big influence in the thinking of our society. St. Francis thought corporate poverty to be fundamental. The less money and property they had to quarrel about, the less would be the diversion from their primary purpose. A.A. has adopted the wisdom of St. Francis as its own, declaring the principle of corporate poverty as a chief safeguard of our future.

A.A. has always had expenses, whether it is the cost of a pot of coffee, snacks, rent, literature, zoom accounts or other services. It is apparent that we need revenue to pay for these. We must not skimp when the basket goes around. Our groups, our Areas and A.A. as a whole will not function unless our services are sufficient and our bills are paid. Self-support begins with me, because I am part of us, Alcoholics Anonymous. We need to pay our bills at the group level; we need to support our Central Service Office/Intergroup, our Area Committee, and our General Service Board. If it were not for these entities, many of us and many new people would never discover the miracles of A.A.

Twelfth Step work is the lifeblood of Alcoholics Anonymous, carrying the message to the suffering alcoholic. That is the purpose of every single A.A. service whether its worldwide, area or local. Every service is designed to make more and

better Twelfth Step work possible. These services are essential to our continued expansion and our survival as a Fellowship.

It is suggested that individual groups, through an informed group conscience, adopt a specific contribution plan. The groups' expenses are taken care of first and then a "prudent reserve" set aside for emergencies. Typically this is 3 months expenses. For funds over prudent reserve, the group should decide to further carry the message by contributing to local District, Area Committee, Central Service Office/ Intergroup or the General Service Board.

The described A.A. service entities provide various services. The District through its groups' collective conscience uses the funds to pay for rent and coffee in the same manner as a group. It may decide to use funds to distribute literature to local institutions and to its members. It may use funds to conduct district functions. The Area Committee uses funds similar to groups and districts. It may reimburse its officers and committee chairs travel expenses in executing their duties. The Area Assembly has the responsibility of sending a Delegate to the General Service Conference informed how we feel about matters affecting A.A. as a whole. The CSO/Intergroup provides a phone service for twelve step calls and other inquiries. It sells A.A. literature and supports other A.A. activities. A.A.'s General Service Office functions as a storehouse of A.A. information, communicating with members and groups around the world; publishes A.A.'s literature; supplies information and experience to professionals and others interested in A.A. We must remember that A.A. belongs to us and we are responsible for supporting it. I was taught early on to always put something in the basket because I always found money to drink with and the typical dollar donation is not much compared to what I have received.



NERAASA 2021

NERAASA 2021: Virtually

Jeff B. / A44 P69 Delegate / N21 VHC Chairperson

Greetings from the NERAASA 2021 Virtual Host Committee. When I was just getting into Area service in 2007, I held my first position as the Newsletter chair for my Area, Area 44 Northern NJ. I didn't know what to expect but I was excited to be at a meeting of nearly 1,000 alcoholics who loved service as much as I did. I was not disappointed. There was no roundtable yet for Newsletters so we were able to have one added to the agenda that year. I've been attending NERAASAs ever since.

This has been quite the year! Although we, as a Fellowship, have embraced virtual technology, we have been in a flying blind 2.0 period in this new virtual world. We held our first virtual General Service Conference where we learned a lot about how to hold a virtual Conference.

Even though our Groups are starting to re-open both outdoors and indoors with social distancing, wearing masks and contact tracing (the "new normal"), many large gatherings are not happening yet. Due to the hotel commitments made by large gatherings like NERAASA, decisions need to be made about moving or cancelling fairly early to avoid significant penalties.

A number of events scheduled for early 2021 are being rescheduled and it appears that we may even have a 2nd virtual General Service Conference. With this in mind, the NERDs (Northeast Regional Delegates)

from the 18 areas in the Northeast met to discuss the upcoming NERAASAs for 2021 and beyond. The NERDs voted and made two decisions:

1. The 3 NERAASAs already approved for 2021, 2022 and 2023 were moved forward by one year each

2. NERAASA 2021 will be held virtually

Once the decision to hold NERAASA 2021 virtually was made another decision was required and two options were presented by an ad hoc committee of NERDs. Would the virtual NERAASA 2021 be bid for by the Areas of the Northeast as an in-person NERAASA would be or would the virtual NERAASA be hosted by a virtual host committee comprised of six Delegates from Areas where the Delegate will be rotating out at the end of the year giving them the necessary time to focus on NERAASA? The decision was made by the NERDs to have the Delegates from the six Areas form a virtual host committee.

What can you expect from a virtual NERAASA in 2021? The answer is, as with many of the other decisions being made in the flying blind 2.0 period, we will have to figure it out! That is the mission of the NERAASA 2021 Virtual Host Committee (N21 VHC) which is comprised of the current Delegates

from Area 11, Connecticut (John D.), Area 13, Washington, D.C. (Michelle G.), Area 30, Eastern Mass. (Jean K.), Area 44, Northern NJ (Jeff B.), Area 47, Central NY (Barb C.) and Area 49, Southeast NY (SENY) (Jane E.).

The N21 VHC has started meeting to figure out what this virtual Conference will look like and we have already made several key decisions. Our work is being guided by the NERAASA Guidelines with the philosophy that we want the virtual NERAASA in 2021 to be as close to an experience for the attendees as an in-person Conference would be. The first decision that was NERAASA 2021 will be Virtual! made was that the virtual NERAASA 2021 will be held the last weekend of February with the NERAASA.org website being updated to reflect that fact. The next important decision to be made will be how many days the event will be along with what Conference items the panels will cover and which roundtables will be held. Our Program chair, Michelle G., has provided the committee with a preliminary agenda which will be approved in the upcoming N21 VHC meetings. A few other key decisions to be made include whether to charge a registration fee and what the registration form will include. Registration forms will be virtual this year and filled out online. Stay tuned for the announcements as we make these decisions on behalf of the service members of the Northeast.

We are very excited and honored to be involved with the efforts to bring to fruition the first virtual NERAASA. We believe that this event will be as memorable as the other NERAASAs that I have been attending since that first one in 2007. We look forward to seeing you there!



Trivia Challenge

Trivia Question #1:

What was the name of the newsletter prior to the Boomerang?



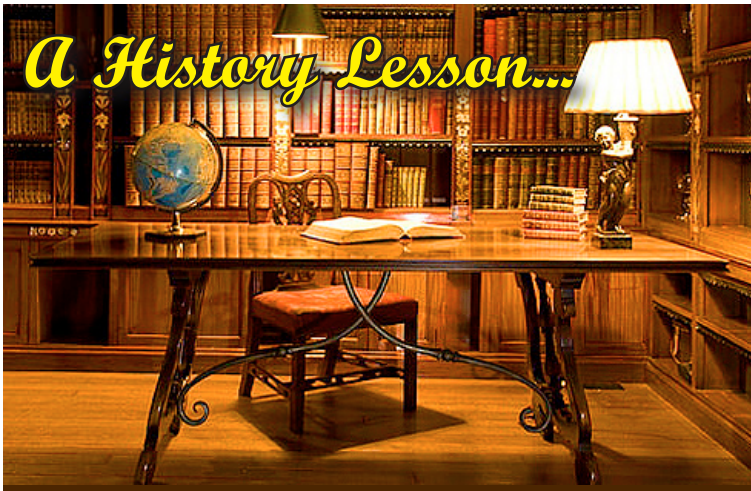
Trivia Question #2:

How many times is the word powerless used in the first 164 pages of The Big Book of Alcoholics Anonymous?

Trivia Question #3:

Three “rights” are protected by the Twelve Concepts for World Service: What are they?

A History Lesson...



The Area 28 newsletter has been in existence since the 1950's. In 1960 the newsletter changed its name to The Boomerang after a story about Bill W's first success at throwing a boomerang was shared.



HELP WANTED-APPLY NOW!

Seeking Committee Chairs for:

- Accessibility Committee
- CSO/Intergroup Liaison Committee

Both Committees need your help!
No Experience necessary, just a desire and ability
to fulfill the Assembly expectations is required.
Reach out to the Area Chair to discuss.

FMI:

<https://maineaa.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/Area-28-Service-Workbook-2020.pdf>



J. Gary L.
Bethlehem, PA
Past Northeast Regional Trustee

Step Four of the Alcoholics Anonymous program of recovery says, “Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.” Many of the folks I know in recovery - including myself - looked upon that “opportunity” with something other than enthusiasm. Some of us were even filled with fear and a stubborn resistance. But like most things in recovery - including coming into the rooms in the first place - once the step was taken, the reaction was, “What was I afraid of?”

Our literature recognizes this dynamic. The 12 & 12 in discussing Step Four states, “So when A.A. suggests a fearless moral inventory, it must seem to every newcomer that more is being asked of him than he can do.” But it goes on to say, “Once we have a complete willingness to take (an) inventory, and exert ourselves to do the job thoroughly, a wonderful light falls upon this foggy scene.”

The value of a personal inventory is important enough that it shows up again in Step Ten where we are asked to continue “to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.” Apparently, an inventory is not something that we do one time in Step Four and then forget about.

So, once we have realized how valuable (and not so scary) our personal inventory is, why are so many of us resistant to the idea of a Group inventory, a District inventory, or an Area inventory? Our literature persuades us of the value of the personal inventory. In discussing Step Four, the Big Book states, “A business which takes no regular inventory usually goes broke. Taking a commercial inventory is a fact-finding and a fact-facing process. It is an effort to discover the truth about the stock-in-trade”.

So, if that analogy makes sense for us personally, why not for our Groups, our Districts, and our Areas as well?

Our literature even goes so far as to help us out with how to conduct a Group inventory. The pamphlet The A.A. Group says that, “Many groups periodically hold a ‘group inventory meeting’ to evaluate how well they are fulfilling their primary purpose” and then goes on to suggest 13 questions that might be helpful in this regard. A.A.’s literature is based on 85 years of experience, strength, and hope as well as review and approval by our General Service Conference. Advice based on that solid a foundation is hard to ignore.

And while that same literature does not explicitly address the specifics of a District inventory or an Area inventory, Bill W. in AA Comes of Age says, “Just as each AA must continue to take his moral inventory and act upon it, so must our whole society if we are to survive and if we are to serve usefully and well.”

In that spirit, the units at the bottom of our service triangle - the General Service Board of Trustees, the A.A. World Service Board of Directors, the A.A. Grapevine Board of Directors, and even the General Service Conference itself - have engaged in inventories in recent years. The history of the Conference’s relatively recent inventory in particular - the first ever conducted, by the way - reflects how seriously we took this exercise. The planning itself lasted from 2009 through 2012, and the actual inventory lasted from 2013 through 2015. And this effort was deemed sufficiently important to the Fellowship that the results have been published in the free booklet, A.A. General Service Inventory (F-205). In the introduction to this work, there is a connection made between the massive effort involved in the Conference inventory and the personal inventory that each of us is asked to take in Steps Four and Ten: “An inventory, then, at the level of general service is a natural outgrowth of that which is done to maintain individual sobriety ...”

So, the lessons learned from all of this are simple: There is immeasurable value in an inventory, and if an inventory was valuable for me personally, it should be valuable as well for the Fellowship as a whole at any level.

Most of us understandably approach the idea of an inventory - personal or otherwise - with some degree of apprehension; however, when over that hurdle, many of us cannot even remember the basis for our fears. So, may our Higher Power grant us “the courage to change the things we can” - including our attitudes.



TRUSTEE-AT-LARGE/U.S.

Newton P.

My name is Newton and I am an alcoholic whose privilege it is to serve the U.S./Canada structure for another seven months as the lucky 13th Trustee-at-Large from the U.S. Since Area 28, along with each of the other 76 U.S. areas, has the opportunity this autumn to submit a candidate to be selected as my successor at the 2021 General Service Conference, I was asked by your Delegate, Nikki, to submit a brief description of the position for your newsletter.

Of the 14 Class B (alcoholic) members of our General Service Board, two are Trustees-at-Large, one from Canada and one from the United States, who serve four consecutive one-year terms which are staggered to ensure that there is always experience available. I am a Panel 57 Past Delegate from Area 51 (NC) who was elected at the 2017 Conference and the Trustee-at-Large/Canada, Trish L., is also a Panel 57 Past Delegate from Area 79 (BC/Yukon) who was elected at the 2019 Conference. Both trustees serve their full four years on the Trustees' International Committee, the less experienced as Alternate Chair for their first two years and the more experienced as Chair for their last two years. The Committee is responsible for suggesting policies and actions to the General Service Board which result in our A.A.

message reaching alcoholics overseas, especially in countries where there is little or no service structure, and reviewing the international travel of the trustees who are invited to other structures' national conventions, general service conferences and CPC or PI events. Befriending A.A.'s in service in Bolivia, Columbia, Cuba, India, Latvia, Peru, Poland, Portugal, U.A.E. and many other countries has been the greatest experience of my life. Like all other trustees, we also serve on one or two other trustees' committees on an annual basis. For example, I currently serve by assignment of our Board Chair on the Trustees' Nominating and International Convention/Regional Forums Committees. We also are normally assigned to participate in two Regional Forums each year, which schedule allows us to visit all eight U.S./Canada forums in our four years, to inform our fellowship of the roles of all in carrying the message worldwide. Additionally, when invited, we attend Area and Regional service assemblies and YPAA conferences.

The two Trustees-at-Large serve as delegates from the U.S./Canada in odd-numbered years to our zonal service meeting, the Meeting of the Americas (REDELA) in Central or South America, the 22nd of which is scheduled for Guatemala the first week

in October of 2021, if possible. The REDELA is not a forum to set policy but is an opportunity to share experience with other trusted servants within the zone. Like our General Service Conference, most of the work is done in committees, which are Policy/Admissions/Finance, Working With Others, Literature/Publications and Agenda, the latter two of which I was assigned to at the 20th REDELA in Costa Rica and 21st in Argentina. During the last four months of the worldwide pandemic, the REDELA delegates have met on Zoom several times to discuss common problems and solutions on such matters as unity, self-support, virtual conferences and international service.

Perhaps most prominently, the two Trustees-at-Large serve as first and second term delegates to the bi-annual World Service Meeting. The first World Service Meeting was held in New York City in 1969 and is now hosted in even numbered years alternating between our G.S.O. in New York and one of the other 62 G.S.O.'s. Like the REDELA, policy is not set for any particular structure but the meeting offers opportunities for communication among nations to encourage sound approaches and help expand A.A. services to reach the still sick and suffering alcoholic regardless of nationality and language.

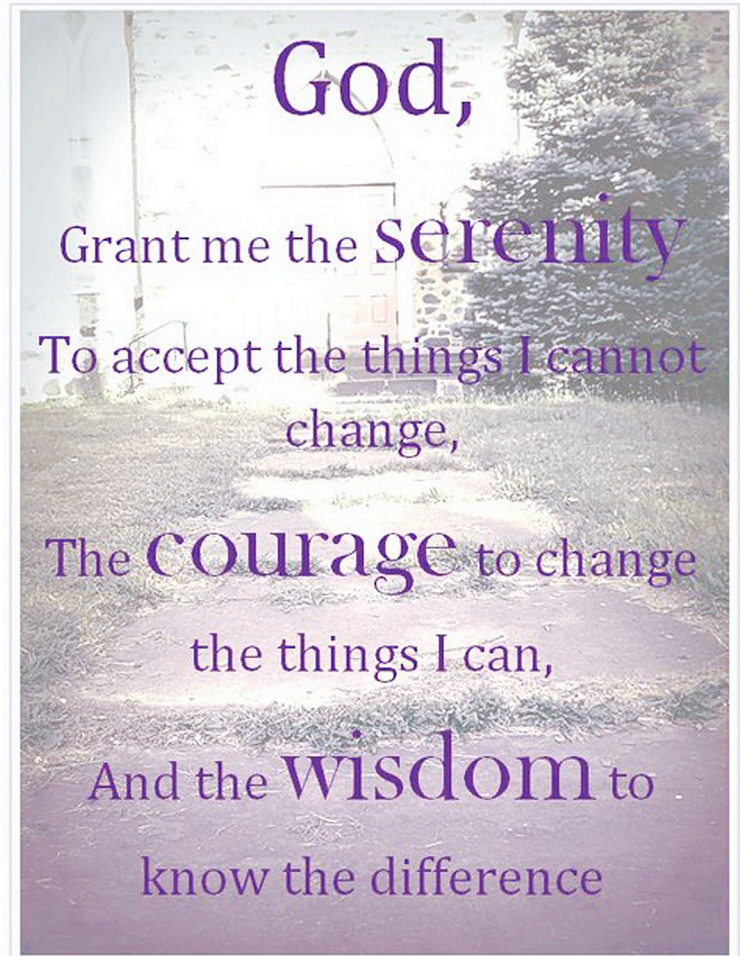
It was my great pleasure to attend the 25th World Service Meeting in October of 2018 in Durban, South Africa where 72 delegates represented 45 countries or zones with the theme of "Our Twelve Traditions: A.A.'s Future in the Modern World."

The 26th WSM was scheduled to be held next month in Rye, New York; however, due to the pandemic it will be held virtually at the end of November/beginning of December with the theme of "The Purpose of Our Service: Sobriety Within Everyone's Reach." During that meeting, the body will accept the bid of another structure to host the 27th WSM in 2022 (we hope)!

When my delegate called from the General Service Conference in 2017 informing me that my name

had been pulled out of the hat to serve, I could not catch my breath for hours. I still often feel unqualified for the responsibility of what a good friend aptly describes as the "ambassador for A.A. from the U.S. and Canada" yet I know that our Higher Power does not select the qualified, but qualifies the selected!

In Love and Service.



Trivia

The newsletter prior to being the Boomerang was called "Cornflakes". The name Cornflakes was used because you could read it at breakfast time and stay current with AA activities.

Life in a “Cashless” World

John D. Maine Area 28 Treasurer

The Northeast Regional Alcoholics Anonymous Service Assembly (NERAASA) was held this year on February 21-23 in New Hampshire. Six panels consisting of topics related to the business of the General Service Conference were presented during the weekend. Friday evening a panel titled “Life in a “Cashless” World” was presented with three topics:

1. How is the 7th Tradition being collected by Areas, Districts and Groups in the digital era?

This topic was discussed last year at our fall assembly in Portland. We had AA members from groups from the Portland area inform us how they receive digital contributions. Another resource I learned about at NERAASA is Technology in Alcoholics Anonymous (TIAA). This resource is an online community of AA members that support each other with technology information as it relates to AA. Good stuff, good places to go for quality information on how technology interacts with our 7th tradition in AA.

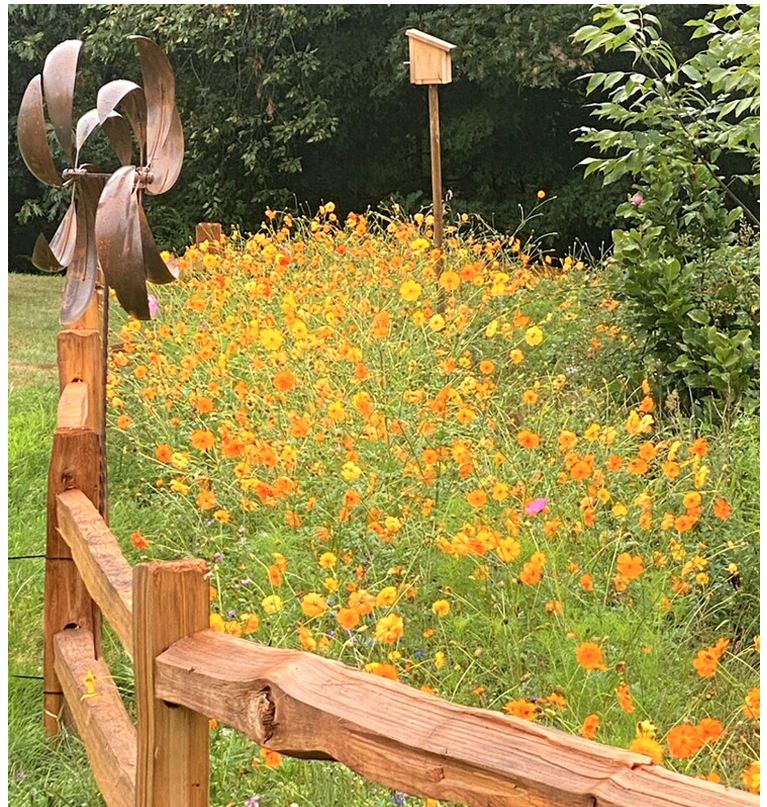
2. Do non-profit business accounting practices constitute contributions that run contrary to our tradition of self-support?

This one got my attention, mostly because I was having a hard time understanding it. From my perspective, as the area treasurer, our non-profit business practices consist of keeping track of income from districts, groups or our AA 7th Tradition. The other side is keeping track of our expenses. Because our income is greater than a threshold set by the IRS, we report this information on a non-profit tax return each year. Pretty simple concept, we have been navigating it for several years now.

The aspect of this that I wasn't understanding it is the value of services received from organizations other than AA. An example is when we have radio and TV stations donate air time for AA Public Service Announcements (PSA's). This air time is a valuable source of income for these businesses so how do we justify accepting these donations from outside entities and respect our tradition of self-support. PSA's, by the way have been provided to us at no cost by radio and TV stations since the 1960's.

Donations from outside businesses has been looked at by our General Service Conference. The 1989 conference approved the following General Service Board policy concerning discounts and subsidies:

“Whenever a discount or subsidy is that which would be offered to any other organization of similar size



requiring a purchased service or product of similar character and magnitude, for example, convention rates at hotels, it may be accepted. Whenever a discount or subsidy is partly or in total offered because we are Alcoholics Anonymous, it must be declined.”

This policy was amended at the 2003 conference and supported by the 1999 and 2004 General Service Conference. So the nutshell is when companies provide AA discounted products or services and provide the same to other organizations we accept with gratitude their appreciation for organizations, like us, that provide valuable nonprofit services.

3. Should we revise the pamphlet “Self-Support: Where Money and Spirituality Mix?”

I am not going to comment on this one too much other than to say it is looking, again, at the pie charts in the back of the pamphlet. I personally like this pamphlet but the decision of how much to distribute to AA entities is always the group conscience of any AA entity. This pamphlet has been looked at numerous times over our AA history.

Being the treasurer of the Maine Area has been a busy job. I have been showing up, making deposits, writing checks for our expenses and keeping track of it. I have been meeting some fine AA folks that have been supporting this process. NERAASA was certainly a fine example of an excellent resource to network and learn. Thank you for your support, I appreciate your trust.



How It Looks to the Alts

Peter B. A28 P70 Alternate Delegate

This February was my first NERAASA as Alternate Delegate. I got to attend the Delegate's roundtable and hear the second-year Delegates (Panel 69) as they reminisced about the fabled weeklong Conference: the crushing fatigue of the first days which yielded - around about Wednesday - to a revelation about the Meaning of Love and Service. That roundtable was on Friday night; on Saturday night Francis shoed us out, the Alts, to meet on our own. You may remember Francis as the wisecracking elf who conducted our Area elections last fall.

So, we reluctantly left the stardust and the Delegates to find a place to meet. All the breakout rooms were full, and we settled in the semi-darkness of a side lobby, flanked by Archives displays covered with sheets and CDs of NERAASAs past, covered with a bright tie-dyed print. I had never spoken to any of these people; a few I recognized from the milling around and events of the past 48 hours: a young mom with a tiny baby, an intense, young man who was a sharp dresser, a witty man with a round head. I was the oldest person in the room, and said little.

Six months later, these people are like my home group. I have spent more time with them than anyone but my wife and the people at work. I have also not been in their physical presence since that weekend in February. NERAASA was almost the last moment that life was normal. We sat shoulder to shoulder in a vast, tacky ballroom - 1,000 of us - and listened to Francis give the keynote speech, as intimate as a share. We gave him a standing ovation. We loved him then, and still do.

Then COVID came, with its lockdowns, and NERD was cancelled hours before Nikki and I were to drive down to

Massachusetts. Francis hosted a couple of conference calls, with us Alts in the audio background. Nikki, desperate for feedback on the Conference Agenda items, cobbled together a website and an Assembly. It was a teleconference, which now seems hard to believe - so 20th century! So quaint!

Zoom changed everything. The Northeast Delegates and Alts began to meet virtually, and pretty soon the Alts had their own meeting. We have met once a week for months now. First, we all told our stories, one each week, and now we talk about the issues for our Areas. I'm still the oldest person in the room, and maybe I still say the least - I find it awkward to speak up in a Zoom conversation - but I always attend. I know my presence is valued, and I learn a great deal.

The Delegates meet monthly, and the Alts attend, but rarely speak. It's enough just to watch the fireworks, as the Delegates launch into rants, venting their frustrations to Francis. It's not that they blame him; he is their link to the GSO. They're lucky to have such a link and they know it. We Alts are lucky, too - Francis often attends our meetings. He said once that he liked to attend meetings where he wasn't going to be called on - because then he could observe. You Alts are in that position, he told us; what you observe is important. Ponder it.

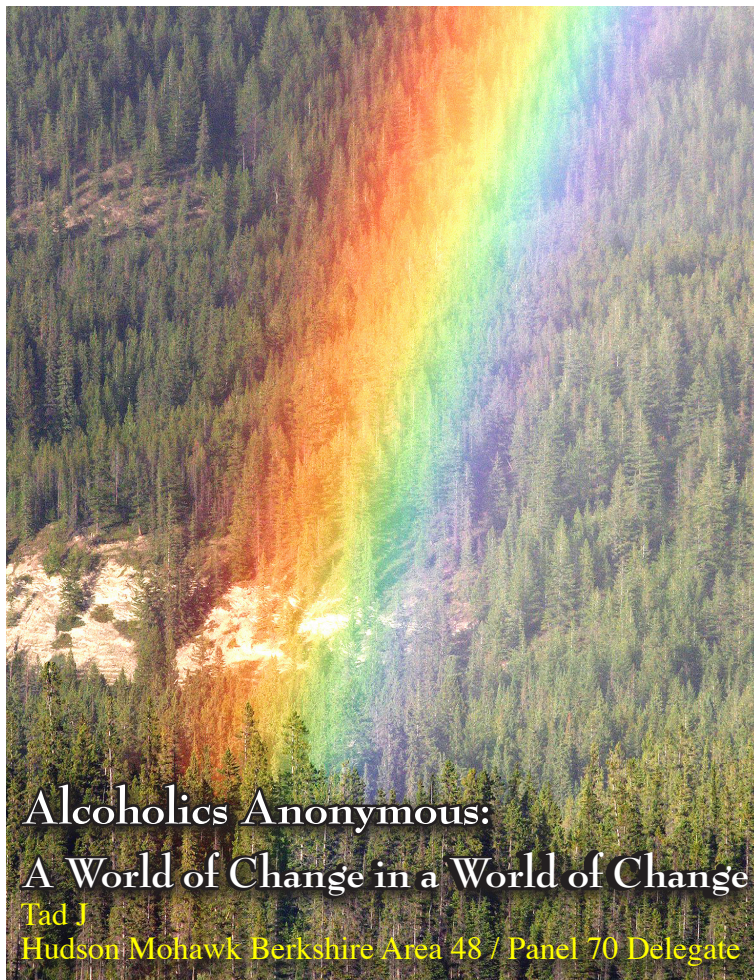
This month, the Northeast Alts launched a Conference-wide Zoom meeting of Alternate Delegates, inviting all 93 Delegate Areas: the US, Canada and the Caribbean. Fifty-four showed up at the first meeting; an hour was not enough time to even say "hello" in English, French, Spanish, and Hawaiian, and say a little bit about their Area. We will meet monthly, working our way through the hellos and into the issues.

All this has not been without heartache and disappointments. Francis never got to address 50,000 people at the Detroit Convention. Nikki never got her God moment in the Convention hotel on Wednesday night. For the Delegates, to be deprived of the Conference experience was a trauma. They have showed fortitude, working to turn an unsatisfactory experience this year into something better in 2021. And, ultimately, into something more substantial than A.A. has ever had.

I want to end with a question I heard in one of the Alt's shares on Zoom: "How do you repay a room full of strangers who saved your life?" The answer, of course, is Service.

Trivia

The word powerless is used in the first 164 pages only one time.



Alcoholics Anonymous: A World of Change in a World of Change

Tad J
Hudson Mohawk Berkshire Area 48 / Panel 70 Delegate

As we all know, things in Alcoholics Anonymous are often slow to change, and historically with good reason. Those that came before us developed our 36 Spiritual Principles over a period of years, with careful thought and small changes driven by experience. They have largely remained the same and are timeless.

How we meet and how we carry the message have also remained the same for the most part. We gathered in church basements, we reached out to the next sick and suffering alcoholic through hotlines, meetings taken into various facilities, and from one person to another. And we still do.

And then 2020 rolls in, bringing with it a major pandemic in the form of the novel coronavirus known as Covid-19 and our world turns upside down. The risk of a deadly disease causes meetings to close, access to facilities to be shut down, and personal contact to cease for the most part. Our world, and Alcoholics Anonymous must adapt and adapt quickly. We are blessed (and cursed) to live in a world of technology now and we have been able to jump into the world of virtual gathering in short order in order to maintain necessary contact. And while there have been online meetings for a while, thousands more meetings go online and all of a sudden, we can travel to meetings across the country and the world from the comfort of our homes. Those that have been uncomfortable with technology are

learning. We are going to any lengths. We can continue to conduct the business of Alcoholics Anonymous. In the matter of a few short weeks, our General Service Conference was moved to a virtual platform, albeit in an abbreviated form. In short, we have adapted and changed the face of Alcoholics Anonymous in a time frame previously unheard of.

What does all this mean for our future? Personally, I am convinced that we will continue to seize the opportunities that have come about, even as we hopefully move towards a resolution with the pandemic. As meetings find a way to meet in person again, virtual meetings will continue - to help with accessibility issues, reduce the need to travel long distances or in inclement weather, just plain convenience, and a host of other benefits. But how do those groups get their voice heard? How does their group conscience reach down the Service structure so they too are participating wholly in our Fellowship?

In Area 48, one of our trusted servants has come up with a proposal to form a virtual District to accommodate the online meetings that have started up and hopefully will continue. This District would have a DCM and the groups would have a GSR. They would participate in our service structure like the rest of the Districts, be welcome to come to Assemblies, and have voting rights. I see this as the initial step forward in being inclusive, after all, they too are alcoholics if they say so, according to our Third Tradition, and should be part of AA as a whole.

I reached out to the General Service Office to gather information, see if there was any history around this idea, and to simply raise the issue if it hadn't been already. I received an answer from Group Services stating that they met and discussed it just this week in a staff meeting, and that the Operations team will be meeting soon to discuss it as well, and bring it to the attention of the management. I see this as positive progress and they are recognizing that this idea will become real - if not now, sometime in the near future.

Here in Area 48, we may well have a new virtual District in about one month, should our Assembly approve the proposal in October when we meet to consider it. This certainly would be ground breaking in our Area and it may be happening elsewhere too - I know there has been much discussion in the Northeast Region, and most likely elsewhere too.

I am excited and encouraged that AA continues to grow and evolve as our founders foresaw, and that maybe, just maybe, things will move ever so slightly faster and continue to foster unity across our Fellowship as we find new ways to carry the message of Alcoholics Anonymous into the future!

Be safe, be sober!

Trivia

The three “rights” that are protected by the Twelve Concepts for World Service are Right of Decision, Right of Participation & Right of Appeal. (Concepts 3, 4 & 5)



Committee: noun: com-mit-tee: **A group of people appointed for a specific function, typically consisting of members of a larger group.**

Spencer R.

Jim is told by his sponsor that he needs to participate more in service work. So, he applies for the position of treasurer. They hold a group conscience and ask him “What is nine multiplied by four?”

He thinks quickly and says “Thirty-three.”

After the interview, he realizes his mistake.

He’s surprised when they inform him he got the job, despite there being four other candidates.

“But I got the wrong answer,”

he protests.

“Yeah, we know. But you were closest.”



Putting together a committee requires serious thought regardless of the size, scope or goal of your committee.

During recovery and service, there’s a good chance we will become the chairperson of a committee. Whether it’s for a local group or a larger regional or national event, we will find ourselves in the position of organizing a group of people to accomplish a goal.

Take your time organizing the committee! It’s easy to call your friends, family, sponsor and sponsees to join as this is quick, easy and familiar. However, it’s not always the best method to gather a committee.

Take into consideration the makeup of your group. Include all genders, ages, races and backgrounds. A diverse group brings a broad spectrum of ideas to your committee. Your friends and family may be perfect for the job, but think before you randomly ask people to serve.

If your committee requires expertise, it’s vital to seek it out. Following the 11th Concept, it’s important to find the best directors, staff and consultants for the job. That is easy to do with the diverse backgrounds found in AA. Seek them out!

While working with your committee, it’s a good idea to follow Concepts 3 and 4, making sure all who participate have a voice and allowing the minority opinion to be heard in the end. These are principles incorporated by our founders to insure the best outcome.

Finally, make sure you ‘pause’ before asking ‘just anyone’ to participate. Speak with your sponsor and ask for help. Take your time in the beginning to pick the right group rather than cleaning up a mess later created by people who are well intentioned yet not the right people for the task. You’ll be glad, the members of the committee will be glad and the Unity of Alcoholics Anonymous (Tradition 1) will benefit by above all!

Why did the ghost have to join AA?

He had a problem with BOOze



LEVEL AA

On the Level with Service at Any Level

J. Buck R., Area 12, Delaware

To begin, it's true what you've heard: Any and every AA member has the right to participate in AA – and that statement is part of our 36 principles (kindly check with your service sponsor and/or the AAWS Service Manual for details).

What I've been grateful to learn over my time in recovery and efforts in service (33 years of each), is that we need individuals of every shape and size to help carry the message of recovery in different ways. And while some of the jobs cost more time than others, every job requires a little bit of training; certainly my own experience says that in every case I always was given far more joy than I expected from doing a job that was never boring and always needed for the better good.

My first service job -- given after a few days of coming around the rooms -- was that of Meeting Greeter. I'd been to Las Vegas a couple of times and thought the hotel greeters were just terrific -- handshakes, hugs, a few well timed jokes -- it was wonderful just to arrive! But I was soon to find out, from various home group members, that the Las Vegas way of greeting was not what AA was about. "Just shake their hand, if they want to shake hands and let them in," was the instruction given to me. "Be a little more subdued," was another. And so, my first day on the job was successful, looking back on it, but I certainly had lots to learn -- and over time, by paying attention, I did.

The pecking order after greeter was that of assistant coffee maker, then to coffee maker. Back in the day the meetings I attended had 3 or 4 huge electric coffee makers, and while the meetings were conducted at 8:30 at night, every drop of every coffee pot was gone by 9:30 -- and these people were drinking a highly caffeinated beverage! I didn't understand how folks could drink this stuff, but I was a good little sober soldier and I did what I was told by the "old folks" who were kind, patient and very helpful.

As I recall there were evenings that people would tell me that the coffee was top-notch, delicious, first rate and fabulous. They knew -- at least they told me they knew -- that we bought our coffee on sale at very discounted grocery stores (also, there were no "sell by" tags on the cans in those days), the creamer was powder, the sugar was in a big jar and the cookies with "knock off" names were rotated week to week in until they were gone. No one seemed to die from the coffee and cookies -- and if people did die, they didn't tell us.

Within a few years I was a group treasurer, the church liaison, and the leader getter. Then one night after I got back from the men's

room, I was informed that I was the group's new GSR and my attendance at Area Assemblies would be helpful to me as well as to AA. I was in the big time!

I went to the Assemblies, was given a peel-on badge, a service manual and was introduced at my first gathering. I was overwhelmed with all the faces -- the clapping, the clamoring, the voting, the speakers at the microphones giving their opinions -- and the cookies were name brand!

Over the years what's happened is that herd has gotten smaller; when my class of GSRs started out in 1989 there were at least 35 to 40 new GSRs from all around the Area. There were about 5 of us that became DCMs and 2 of that group that became a Delegate.

I'm asked from time to time why the number of people at our Assembly has shrunk from years past -- it's certainly not because people don't believe in service. What I believe in my heart, and what I say from time to time if asked, is that I honestly believe that everyone has a place in our service structure whether it's in the group or outside of the group.

Sponsors are trusted servants, and our leaders -- GSRs, Inter-group reps, elected and appointed service workers -- are, too. What's been established in my mind is that we (that's "all of us") just have different things to do on behalf of the Fellowship, and we all have different means of carrying the Fellowship's message.

Lastly, many times during my involvement in service -- particularly outside the group -- I've noticed that the service structure has become, at least for me, a very helpful "behavior incubator."



For example, when the issues of policy and procedure are debated at the Area level, such as carrying the message to the still suffering alcoholic, or the selection process of trusted servants

-- it is my responsibility to reaffirm what I've learned and practiced in my step work with my sponsor, and if I need one, a service sponsor.

What I've learned in service -- such as unity, singleness of purpose, and primary purpose -- are considerations that I can add to my life outside the Fellowship, while allowing me to bring new ideas on how to best do what we do in the service structure.

I'm a very blessed man to have had the experiences I've had; and so the question that begs to be asked is this, "what can I do or what should I do with all that I've learned from and all I've seen and heard?" The answer is an easy one: pass it on.

Service & Me?

Jeanne L
Yarmouth, ME

I'm approaching 35 years of continuous sobriety. While some might choose to question the quality of my sobriety, I can assure you that I have not found it necessary to take a drink since 10/21/1985.

Not long after finally getting my first sponsor, she had me attend my first group business meeting. Somehow, I walked away from that meeting with the job of greeter! Oh my God! How could that have happened? I didn't talk to people never mind shake their hands! (no hugs please)

Not long after that I was voted in as secretary to the Saturday Morning Fire Station Group in Northborough, MA. Again, this job was way outside my comfort zone. A dear older group member took me aside after my first time opening the meeting. He suggested that I might slow down my reading of the preamble. Somehow this super sensitive, thin skinned and easily hurt alcoholic that I was, and can still be at times, did not get offended and disappear. In fact, I did relapse while the secretary and they didn't even fire me like I had secretly hoped they would.

AA service did for me what I couldn't do for myself. It gave me a reason to have to show up. It let people get to know me. It made me feel like maybe I had something worth while to contribute. When I moved to Maine three years ago, I knew that I needed to become part of AA here. I joined a group and volunteered at the next business meeting. A friend of mine that is very involved in service asked me to join the Roundup Committee. I said yes because that is what I've learned to do in AA not because I wanted to. If I want to live a meaningful life I must contribute. Believe me, I'd rather rest on my laurels but that does not stimulate growth. An old saying in AA is "if you're not growing, you're going." I don't want to go away from AA.

Thank you all who have participated in the Area 28 workshops! Your presence has been a gift.

• Look for more info on the Gratitude stories we will have in November.

• And the Service Manual workshop in the cold depths of January.

Keep trudging the road of happy destiny!



"A.A. is so great because anyone with a desire can join- unlike Al Anon, where you've got to know someone"