

"We..." E.P.G.S.A. Newsletter

2/15/17

Edition 1, Volume 2

From the Current Delegate

by Paul M., Delegate

"Connecting with our Fellowship As A Whole."

What's Happening at the General Service Office

The General Service Board (GSB) held its recent meeting over the weekend of Jan. 28th. They discussed

vacancy due to the death of a member.) The slate is: Chairperson Bill N., President Greg T., Vice Chair Richard B., VP Eva S., Treasurer Richard P., Asst. Treasurer Donald M., Secretary Nancy D.

"GRAPEVINE...in 2016 there was an increase of 2,100 subscriptions."

57 proposed agenda items and accepted 55 of them for the agenda of the 67th General Service Conference. I expect the agenda items and background information to be released to the fellowship by February 15, 2017.

A new slate of officers for A.A. World Services was approved (there was a

I shared all of the subcommittee developments with Area 59 subcommittee Chairpersons and asked them to share with all DCMs on their subcommittees. A lot of constructive developments are underway.

"We..."



We appreciate your feedback on Edition 1, Volume 1 of our new E.P.G.S.A newsletter. It was highly supportive, with one suggestion that we keep the articles "short!" Point taken – we want to keep you informed and connected to Area 59 General Service. So, we give you Volume 2 – our February 2017 newsletter. You will get to know District 49 (Lehighton) better through Judy G.'s (DCM) article. It's important to not forget the basics and so, we've featured Past Delegate and Regional Trustee, J. Gary L.'s article "A.A. 101" to remind us that Recovery is the essential Legacy. It has been written that we are more than a Fellowship, "...we are a society of Alcoholics in action." Our Registrar and Officer-At-Large, Caroline N., shares her experience with us in, "A Society In Action." Our Delegate, Paul shares some key information from the Trustees' Report. Enjoy!

Richard P. (NE Regional Trustee) reported that after losses were expected, the fellowship answered the call and contributions have increased dramatically. They are up by about 13%. GSO had taken on a campaign to streamline operations and cut expenses and this will continue. In about two weeks there will be a mobile version of aa.org; and new developments of the website are underway. The unity and teamwork has been excellent this past year. *The Board has announced that there will be no literature increases next year.*

As a member of the General Service Conference Grapevine Committee, I would like to share this information with Area 59:

1. GRAPEVINE is doing much better than expected for 2015. They had budgeted for a loss in 2016 of about \$146,000; but, there was profit of \$144,000.

2. GRAPEVINE struggled for many years with increasing their subscriptions, but in 2016 there was an increase of 2,100 subscriptions.

3. GRAPEVINE has estimated budgeted loss of \$113,000 for 2017. This is an estimate, but they are hoping that the trend of subscriptions will continue to increase.

4. La Viña's financials for 2016 were a loss of \$152,000 - an estimate for 2017 is not available at this time. The La Viña is funded by the GSB.

What's Happening in Area 59

"The Delegate"

The Delegate has a demanding job, not only because a large amount of time and work are involved, but it is the Delegate's responsibility to serve the US/Canada Conference as a whole: "As voting members of the conference, delegates bring to its deliberations

the experiences and viewpoints of their own Areas. Yet they are not representatives of their Areas in the usual political sense; after hearing all points of view and becoming fully informed during Conference discussion, they vote in the best interest of A.A. as a whole." (See page S49 of the *A.A. Service Manual*.)

The above statement explains the importance of our Area 59 Pre-Conference Sharing Session. Please see the article later in this newsletter and read the letter to members on our home page of the website: www.area59aa.org. I hope to see you and your member-friends and sponsees there!

Paul M.

Area 59 Delegate, Panel 67

A Society in Action

By Caroline N., Officer-At-Large & Registrar

My very first service commitment in Alcoholics Anonymous was to bring the cookies to a 6:00 p.m. beginners meeting that met on Sundays. Where I got sober, group commitments weren't monthly, they lasted for six months! Each and every week, I went to the supermarket and bought packages of Oreos or Chips Ahoy, and always the pink and white animal cookies. I'd get there at least 45 minutes early and arrange them nicely on a platter. Then, I'd stand in the kitchen with the person making coffee and we would greet.

I loved the feeling of giving back. These simple actions of suiting up and showing up began to help me stand a little taller and look people in the eye when they said thank you. My sponsor's words, "If you want self-esteem, do esteemable acts," would echo in my mind. It wasn't until later that I learned that this group didn't give newcomers like me the coffee commitment, because that would be too risky!

But I stuck with it for those six months, and by the end, I was rewarded with continued sobriety and a whole host of new friends in the Fellowship. Service made me feel a part

of, instead of the all-too-familiar apart from, that anxious apartness I had known during my drinking days. I was indeed becoming a part of something: a society in action.

The essay by our co-founder Bill W. called "A.A.'s Legacy of Service" opens the *A.A. Service Manual* (pages S1-S12). Before he recounts the development of our Third Legacy in the early days of A.A., he starts out by defining what an A.A. service is. His definition is all-encompassing: "an A.A. service is anything whatever that helps us to reach a fellow sufferer." From a smile and a handshake to sponsorship to serving within the General Service structure, service allows us to carry the message of hope. And there are so many opportunities to get into service here in Eastern Pennsylvania.

Perhaps you really love the Grapevine and might consider submitting your story, or maybe you are good with numbers and want to stand for district treasurer. You may be fascinated by the General Service Conference agenda items and want to help inform our Delegate at the Pre-Conference Sharing Session. Beyond group service and

sponsorship, you could get involved with your local district or intergroup, or Area 59.

All service in A.A. is a manifestation of the Twelfth Step—carrying the message to other alcoholics—yet it can take many different forms. Bill's essay describes Alcoholics Anonymous as "more than a set of principles; it is a society of alcoholics in action." One never has to be bored in A.A.! There is so much to do. By taking action and getting into service, you can take out insurance against the next drink, as you help ensure that A.A. will be around in the future.

From that cookie commitment I had in 2004, I stayed sober and kept saying "yes" to A.A. I went on to chair meetings, do the literature, speak on occasion, and sponsor other women. For a time, while I was finishing school and starting my career, I stuck with group-level commitments. Then in 2011, I became the General Service Representative for my home group and, in the same year, stood for the Secretary and Registration Chair position on the host committee for the Pennsylvania State

Conference of Young People in A.A. What a year that was!

I've continued to serve ever since in both General Service—as Visitation Chair, ADCM, and DCM for District 27 and now as the Area 59 Officer-at-Large—as well as in YPAA, on the PENNSCYPAA Advisory Council and the Philadelphia Bid for ICYPAA. I also had the once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to serve on the 75th Anniversary of A.A. in Philadelphia planning committee. As I've learned about Robert's Rules and Third Legacy voting procedure, I've also learned a whole lot about patience, love, and tolerance. These are absolutely necessary for committee service!

Spotlight: District 49 *by Judy G., DCM*

Greetings of love and service from the 23 Groups of District 49!

LOCATION, location, location. District 49 encompasses three counties: Carbon, Schuylkill, and Luzerne, and is located in the east, central portion of Area 59. Hazleton is near the geographical center of our District. Some other familiar towns include White Haven, Conyngham, Jim Thorpe, and Tamaqua. District 49 was part of a larger

I've also found intergroup service to be very rewarding, especially taking meetings into prisons and escorting medical students to open meetings through Cooperation with the Professional Community commitments. Did you know that some committees sometimes struggle to get all of their commitments filled? Again, there is just so much service work to be done.

You don't have to be a GSR to attend district meetings. All A.A. members are welcome! Same goes with intergroup committee meetings and YPAA committee meetings. And all of the workshops listed on our Area 59

whole in Area 59 when it split in 1992 with parts of it becoming Districts 58 and 59. The oldest Group in the current District is the Greater Hazleton Group, established in 1948, followed by the Greater Lehigh Group (1972), Freeland Group (1975), and Tamaqua Group (1977). The Open Minds Women's Group of Lehigh, established in 2015, is the youngest Group.

We have started Panel 67 off

calendar. You can simply show up and express your willingness to serve. If you don't know what district you're in or when the committees near you meet, just ask. We can help you look up when and where to go, so you can stop by to see how you can get into service.

When A.A. asks, I do my best to say "yes," because I owe my life to those who came before me and were in service. I am fond of saying, "A.A. not only saved my life, but it made the life it saved worth living." No matter what service you do, I hope you'll become even more involved as part of our society in action.

with a bang by reviewing and revising, as needed, the District Structure Manual, looking at the Delegate's recommendations to the Area, and taking up the work of our District committees. These include Public Information, Hospitals and Institutions, Grapevine, Corrections, Unity Breakfast/Workshop and our District Website. We are planning to put forth the development of a Visitation committee, which will involve all of our active GSRs in going

to all groups and speaking to the importance of representation in District affairs. Our largest District event is the Unity Breakfast which will be held in April. Please view our website, District49aa.org, for complete

information.

As a DCM I look forward to carrying the message of AA and “Supporting Our Future” by working with the servants of Area 59 and the GSRs of Panel 67, as well as increasing

my own knowledge of AA’s colorful history through my work on the Area Archives Committee.

Have a great year everyone and thank YOU for your service!

AA 101: A Newcomer’s Guide

by J. Gary L., Past Delegate & Past Regional Trustee

When I first came in, I was told to do only two things: “Don’t drink”, and “Go to meetings”. But shortly thereafter, you told me that there was actually much more to it, and that the “much more to it” consisted of at least the following:

Join a Home Group

Why have groups at all? Why not just go home, read the Big Book, and do it on your own? I think we all saw where thinking on our own got us, so we do need the help of our fellow AAs. But why one special group – why a Home Group?

Because you need a place “where everybody knows your name”; a place that knows you well enough to know when things aren’t right with you; a place where you know and trust folks enough to be able to share – maybe not the things you should only share with a sponsor –

but the things you can share with special friends; a place where you know the people well enough to know when things aren’t right with them; a place where you can be that special friend that others can reach out to.

How do you pick a Home Group? Do a little shopping, trust your gut, don’t rush but don’t delay, and keep in mind that it’s not a binding decision for life. You can always change Home Groups.

Recruit a Sponsor

Why a sponsor? Early on, I was told that using yourself as a counselor is hiring unskilled labor. Recovery – particularly early recovery – is tough. We need help understanding what to do, how we fit in, and how we can help. Certainly, the entire membership is there to help us, but we each need one special individual to confide in, to ask those “dumb” questions, to take the time to

walk us through the Steps, the Traditions, and maybe even the Concepts. We need that confessor to hear our Fifth Step and to shorten our leash when we go off track. That person is your sponsor.

How do you pick a sponsor? Do a little shopping, trust your gut, don’t rush but don’t delay, and keep in mind that it’s not a binding decision for life. You can always change sponsors.

Begin Working the Steps

I once heard someone say, “When I first read the steps, they all made perfect sense to me - except the first.” An unfortunate attitude because – as I heard someone else say – “All problems with the Steps are Step One problems.” And you work them all. They are all equally important and equally challenging – even Steps 6 and 7, the so-called “forgotten Steps”.

Working the Steps is like going through a tunnel. When you first go in, it's dark, you can't see where you're going to end up, and the best you can do is follow those that have gone before. But eventually you come out into the light - and you'll see that light approaching before you actually reach it. The Steps: First you work them, then you live them.

Read the Literature

Alcoholics Anonymous has been here for over 80 years. Fortunately, those who went before us took the trouble to write down and publish the collective experience and wisdom of those eight decades. Certainly read the Big Book, but there's much more than that. I would refer you to our Literature Catalog for our complete library. And certainly read the early writings, but if you look at the reports of our annual General Service Conference, you will see that new and updated literature is being produced nearly every year.

So take advantage of this treasure trove of experience strength and hope. As one old-timer put it, "The solution is in the literature - because the people will drive you crazy."

Participate in the 7th Tradition

Our 7th Tradition states that we are fully self-supporting,

declining outside contributions. We choose that principle so as not to be beholden to any outside person or agency. And we even put a limit on the amount that an AA member can contribute so as to avoid anyone getting a sense of entitlement. I also have to remember that the 'self' in 'self-supporting' is me! I have a responsibility to help support this organization and the work it does.

Clearly no one is asked to contribute more than they can afford. Your recovery is free, but anything you can do to help keep the doors open and the message alive is always appreciated. Where does your dollar (or more) in the basket go? First and foremost, it should go to meet local needs: paying the group's rent, providing coffee, making literature available, etc. Any money left after that should go to help carry the message beyond the group - within your local District, Area, Intergroup (if you have one), and of course your General Service Office in New York.

What is done with those extra dollars that are shared beyond the group? Ask your District, your Area, and your Intergroup (if you have one) what they are doing with your contributions - *and you have every right to ask that question.* Your General Service

Office has taken the time to list what it does with your dollars. Go to www.aa.org, and look for the service material entitled, "Services Provided by GSO/AAWS".

Get into Service

Service is the rent we pay to continue to live here. Personally, I can't seem to pay off my debt to AA through service since so much more keeps coming back than I can possibly give. Unfortunately, we seem to do everything we can to discourage people from getting into service. We say things like: "If it's not inconvenient, it's not service". We should be saying things like: "I don't have to be in service; I get to be in service".

Summary

All of this reminds me of the newcomer who was complaining to the old-timer about all these tasks. He said, "I really don't have the time to read all this stuff, or to get a service job within AA, and I really haven't met anyone that I think could be my sponsor". And the old-timer said, "Don't worry about it. You don't have to do any of that stuff if you don't want to. You can always wait and do it all when you come back in."

Pre-Conference Sharing Session: April 2, 2017

Please communicate the importance of participation in our Pre-Conference Sharing Session. All Members are invited to attend. GSRs and Alternate GSRs are encouraged. You will experience the democratic method we use to share our collective conscience with our Delegate.

Our Delegate will incorporate the voice of Area 59 into his experience so he can help bring an informed group conscience to the Conference and vote for what's best for our entire Fellowship on critical agenda items.

If you have any questions about the meeting see our web calendar at www.area59aa.org.

Or, contact the Area Chairperson at chairperson@area59aa.org. Our Delegate is also available to answer questions via email at delegate@area59aa.org.

Or, please feel free to contact any Area officer for details. Please bring your and your home group's voice to this most important event to "support our future" in A.A.

Let's inspire service and action in Eastern PA General Service!

"We..." is a newsletter for members the Area 59 (E.P.G.S.A.) General Service Committee, Service Volunteers and interested Fellowship members. For information contact chairperson@area59aa.org.

"Supporting Our Future"

2017 G.S.C. Theme