



## Interesting times...

One bit of ancient Eastern wisdom that's always puzzled me is a curse: "May you live in interesting times." Now, I'm an old drunk, and one thing a drunk hates with great passion is *boredom*. But in my dotage, I'm beginning to catch on. *Interesting* is a hurricane. *Interesting* is facing the loss of everything, including your town, and staying sober in spite of it; or far, far worse, *not* staying sober. *Interesting* is trying to get AA meetings and literature to the hundreds of alcoholics displaced by Katrina. *Interesting* is... well, let's just say that boring looks pretty good from here, for a change.

We AA's are a helping bunch and G.S.O. was inundated with questions about how to help our A.A. family in areas devastated by Hurricane Katrina (and as the Gazette goes to press, Hurricane Rita is bearing down on the Gulf coast, promising lots more of the same). A copy of their F.A.Q. appears on p. 4, and, as Louisiana delegate, Don M. Tells us on p. 3, their position is spot on. The Traditions and spirit of Alcoholics Anonymous are alive and well. -Editor

## 2005 Missouri State Convention Self Supporting!!

After last year's financial hardships, the State Convention Committee reports that the 2005 Missouri State "Funvention" appears to have been fully self-supporting. There will be a detailed report given at Area Assembly on October 1, but essentially, the news is very, very good.

And it was a great, good time as well. Great speakers, wonderful fellowship, non-stop meetings, good food, a wide variety of entertainment, good food, and lots and lots of newcomers learning first hand that we are, indeed, not a glum lot.

A retiring committee member said, "For me personally what made the convention a success was the many comments I heard from newcomers saying how incredible of an experience it was for them. I heard many newcomers say they were amazed at the convention. These comments really give me a good feeling." Us, too.

Next year, the convention will be back in Jefferson City. Let's make sure that our support and attendance guarantee that we don't have to ask ourselves again at an Area Assembly if our Missouri State Convention has a future.

There's a move afoot to form an "alumni association" of sorts to keep the valuable and hard-won experience of past state convention committee members from being lost, while keeping the spirit of rotation strong, as well.. We'll hear more about it at Area Assembly. We'll also be filling an opening on the convention committee at the October assembly. Don't miss it!

**Kudos to everyone who made the  
2005 Missouri State Convention a success !!!**

## 2005 Spiritual Homecoming Just once in a lifetime...

*Dateline St. Louis, MO, Millennium Hotel & The Americas Center,  
November 24, 25, 26,27, 2005*

A.A. members from the Eastern Area of Missouri, the Midwest, areas all across the U.S. and Canada, plus England and possibly Ghana, are gathering this November to celebrate the 50th Anniversary of A.A.'s Coming of Age in St. Louis in 1955. This is no ordinary convention, nor is it an International. It's something unique: a one-time event bringing together the most broad-based collection of A.A. history and individuals sharing historically significant experiences ever put together on one program, reflecting AA's growth over the last 50 years and looking to the direction and path we will take into the future. It will pay tribute to the General Service Conference and highlight the importance of this structure -- the reason that A.A. is still here today and growing around the world, still carrying the same A.A. message of recovery.

Check out the September issue of the A.A. Grapevine, pages 30 and 31 – This is the first time in the 61 year history of the A.A. Grapevine that an article has been published preceding an event, other than the A.A. International Convention. This gives you an idea about how GSO and the Grapevine view the Spiritual Homecoming.

In addition to great speakers like Clancy and Joe & Charlie & Joe (of Big Book Study fame) and scores of events, not all of which appear on the flyers, the Homecoming will feature an anticipated 35 presentations/workshops, long-timers' meetings, marathon meetings, and fellowship with AA members from around the world, starting at 10:30 a.m. on Friday, November 25. More than 20 A.A. Areas from across the U.S. and Canada are bringing or sending their archives displays. Special exhibits include one on Fr. Dowling, the Joe & Charlie Big Book Study, GSO Archives, and more.

Friday and Saturday events will be at the Millennium Hotel. Sunday morning's "A Tribute to the General Service Conference" is at The America's Center. This culminating event, presented through multi-media and live speaker presentations, highlights the Conference's 55-year history of carrying the A.A. Message around the globe and looks towards A.A.'s future in an ever changing world.

Writing in the Grapevine in April 1955, Bill W. looked forward to the St. Louis convention by saying:

*"St. Louis isn't going to be just another anniversary for the very potent reason that there can never be, in all of history to come, another such occasion as this."*

It's often said of that history-making 1955 event that "What happened here defined A.A.'s future." Our Spiritual Homecoming this November not only celebrates the past, it also embraces the challenges of that future, and proclaims that we all plan to "keep coming back".

## **From the Keynote Address**

### **2005 General Service Conference**

"Whereas alcoholism is isolating, insulating and self-centered, recovery looks outward, outward to reality, outward to Twelfth Step work, and outward to service. Healthy AA groups function the same way. Each needs to provide service opportunities to its members to carry the message of recovery. The real autonomy of a group is not preserved by its distance from other groups, but by its proximity to them, by its creative diversity, and by its willingness to work together with other groups through the service structure.

We all know that there is a difference between attending a meeting and belonging to a group. A home group is a haven, a safety net, and a source of emotional balance - a place to be helped and to help others. The distinction between a group and a meeting is often lost in large urban areas, where the bonds of support and loyalty can suffer by the transitory nature of attendance. Our Traditions speak only of groups, not of meetings. To strengthen groups and the concept of a home group as the fundamental unit of recovery is a worthy goal...

...Our responsibility in service is to listen, to learn, to love, and to lead - but first of all to listen. That process does not begin at this Conference. It begins with the groups and with the service structure that communicates with the Fellowship through them...

...The challenge of the next decade is to revitalize all parts of our service structure in order to better serve our groups. If each Conference exhausts itself on the minutiae of internal business, the shape and color of the ornaments we hang on each tree, rather than the overall growth and health of the forest, the work of AA will suffer, as will the spiritual basis of our Fellowship.

If this Conference does its job, if we share with one another our common vision, and if we detach ourselves from the short term and look to the long term, we are the only board of inquiry our Fellowship will ever require. That was the mission entrusted to the Conference nearly 55 years ago. That is our continuing obligation and responsibility today.

- John K., Trustee

*Reprinted from 2005 General Service Conference report*

## **From the Delegate's desk...**

I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for your patience as we waded through the many confusing requests for help during the hurricane disaster. The Delegates from those Areas affected by the Hurricane Katrina have been working to keep the A.A. business flowing. They have been working hard to communicate with their Districts and Groups to make sure the alcoholic community has the help they need to keep meetings open and provide the support necessary to carry the message. The groups and districts affected have been working both for their communities and their AA community. The Delegates have also been updating the other Delegates around the country of the state of affairs for their Areas. AA is alive and well down there.

The number of people willing to donate time and money to those in need was simply amazing. Wouldn't it be great if we turned that desire to be of service (during a disaster) into full-time support of AA? If we could do this all the time for the Area and GSO, we would have ample funds to carry AA's message.

I would also like to thank all of you that were willing to help with the Shelter in St. Louis. Unfortunately it did not materialize the way it was designed to but again members of AA were there and were willing to be of service.

I have visited District meetings and activities and was also given the opportunity to attend the Corrections workshop. My Alternate, Pat, as well as Jim, our Area Chair, have been busy attending functions as well. They are a great help in keeping an ear open to what is going on in our Area. Thank you. I would be remiss in not mentioning the work of the Committee members of the Area. Without their work we could not reach the countless alcoholics within our Area. So again my thanks goes out to these folks that work behind the scenes. These folks are a vital part of our service to the alcoholics we have reached and not yet reached. If you have the chance please let them know they are appreciated for their work.

This has been a learning experience from the get-go. I look forward to this next year and all it has in store. If we may be of service to your group or District please do not hesitate to ask. The experience, the opportunity to serve, that we get to have as Officers and Committee members is, as some have told me it would be, a "Life changing experience". Thank you for the opportunity to serve the Area.

- Chip B., Area 38 Delegate

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## **Home groups, home groups...**

They're the theme of this year's General Service Conference, the focus of our Area Assembly workshops, the backbone of our service structure, and the mainstay of our sobriety. With that in mind, your intrepid reporter/editor/dishwasher staked out a table at the State Convention and conducted an informal Home Group Survey. Sixty-eight people shared their views anonymously on the spot and six more e-mailed their answers.

Overwhelmingly, they stated that they belonged to home groups. One fellow said he didn't, but the written answers didn't bear that out. Why was home group membership important to them? Accountability was the #1 answer, with honesty and commitment following close on its heels; at least four people mentioned that belonging to a home group ensures communication and connection with AA as a whole through the service structure. "It's my home address in AA. It's where I

belong." And one brave soul said, "They can spot my BS, and save me from it."

When asked what makes their home groups strong or special, "We follow the Traditions," in one wording or another was the top answer, with ten people mentioning this. Three people said that a membership with strong sobriety made their group strong. Committed membership, annual group inventories, keeping principles above personalities, and "great with newcomers" also came up more than once. One person said, "Great coffee."

What would they change? Thirty-two respondents said, "Nothing at all." "More meetings a week" came in second, and bring old-timers back into the fold was #3. "Bring back the greeters at the door," another member said, "That way, when newcomers arrive they know the hand of AA really is reaching out to them." Can't argue with that.

## Notes from the chair

On Sunday, Nov 6, the area officers, committee chairs, and DCM's will gather from noon to five at The Office at 341 Droste Road in St. Charles for a work session. Alternates are strongly encouraged to attend. Below are the main topics to be discussed. I hope everyone will find time to discuss these issues with their DCM's in advance of the meeting.

1. Re-structuring - We have 9 "standing committees", plus State Convention, Structure & Procedures, and Website. Five other committees have been proposed: Literature, Finance, Nominations, and two ad hoc committees to review the structures of the Archives and the State Convention. Is 17 committees too many? Any suggestions?

2. Technology - We're developing an online calendar for all activities in the Area, to prevent accidental conflicts. Do we want to also develop chat rooms, bulletin boards, email newsletter, automated Bridging the Gap hookups, and so on? Do we need a "technology committee" separate from the Website committee?

3. Re-districting - Some districts are struggling, and some districts are pooling their resources to be more effective. How, why, and when should we re-district? How well has it worked so far? We'll have reports from some past and present DCM's in the affected districts.

It promises to be a lively discussion! We will also preview the proposals that are likely to come from the Structure & Procedures committee in March. (Let us know if you have any suggestions.) This is a chance for our Area leadership to discuss issues in depth, in a way that's not possible at assemblies.

Assembly dates for 2006 are: Jan 21, April 8, June 24, Oct 7 & 8. Please mark your calendars now. Especially note the two-day election assembly in October 2006, which will feature a special guest, plus activity all day and well into the night.

We're about halfway through our rotation. I hope the winter holiday season won't slow down our services too much. (It sure didn't slow down our drinking.) See you round the tables.

Jim F, Area Chairman.

## Paying for our Spiritual Homecoming

The #1 reason we're hearing for people NOT attending the 2005 Spiritual Homecoming is the registration price of \$50. It's easy to say it's because there are about three times more things to do at the homecoming than at a convention, but there's more. A committee member explained it this way: Paying for this event a huge order. The 2005 Spiritual Homecoming is incorporated as a 501(c)(3) organization. In this case, the IRS was a friend. Their requirements for a comprehensive budget required detailed accounting of costs and a close look at what was required. These had to be reasonable in conjunction with stated purpose and duration of the event. It had to clearly set out that all workers are volunteers, with no wages or personal expenses, such as registration or housing, paid. With no track record of attendance, certain basic assumptions were made and projected attendance was divided into total cost to arrive at a registration fee. Any overage of funds after event expenses can only go to another non-profit organization, either to GSO, Eastern Area of Missouri, or Central Service. Any loss cannot be assessed against any other A.A. entity.

Sounds reasonable to this alcoholic. See you there, eh.

## Our Seventh Tradition ... Alive and well after Katrina

*The following statement of position on behalf of the Louisiana Area Assembly is excerpted from an e-mail from Don M., Delegate from Louisiana to his fellow delegates and G.S.O*

At this time, our Area does not require outside financial support regarding the damages inflicted by Hurricane Katrina. Of course, we are overwhelmed and immensely grateful for the thousands of kind and loving offers of financial support, including offers to provide literature. [But ] ...in the spirit of our Seventh Tradition, we would like to begin our rebuilding and reconnecting efforts with the resources we presently have. So, from the standpoint of Area 27, we gratefully accept your encouragement, compassion and, of course, prayers. And please understand that this is in no way a negative rejection of any kind and loving offers from any AA group or person outside of Louisiana. Instead, it is our best effort to practice our principals and follow the spiritual guidance of our Higher Power(s) and the AA Traditions....

...As to the shelters in multiple Louisiana communities where our people ended up, AA meetings have and are occurring, organized and run by local groups, Intergroups and other AAs. For the most part, getting literature into the Louisiana shelters has been less of a problem than finding people who want it. However, there were several early reports of the need for more literature, and those were handled by local AA groups and members.

Carrying the message to the still suffering alcoholics in Louisiana is both a short and long-range issue. In both instances, putting "feet on the ground" will be the key to effectively carrying the message... We are working with Red Cross and State Health officials in our ongoing PI, CPC and Treatment efforts. The scope of literature needs in communities where evacuees will end up is uncertain...

...For Area 27, we express our position and commitment as follows: Our Seventh Tradition wisely guides us to support ourselves with our own voluntary contributions. We do not accumulate funds for unspecified or uncertain needs, and we use our funds strictly toward the end of carrying the message to the alcoholic who still suffers. Our Area Assembly treasury has what we believe to be sufficient resources to provide significant financial support to the groups that we serve. And if we exhaust our funds, we believe that members of AA groups throughout Louisiana will respond consistently with the experience of our wise long-timers and our own experience--if there is a need, it will be met. These are tough, down-and-dirty times for us. And to us these challenges make our Traditions and Three Legacies all the more relevant, not less so.

..As for the need for funds, a repeating thought for me has been that our message is most effectively carried one-on-one, where one of us shares a message of experience, strength and hope with another still-suffering alcoholic. I understand that's how Ebby did it with Bill, Bill and Bob with each other, and so on. Sure, service requires funding, but it is ultimately the recovering alcoholic who actually carries the message.

We are about carrying the message. Many of us will go back to what is left of our cities and homes as they are drying out, and some of us will make new homes. We share a common solution, but the solution requires legwork. Katrina never damaged our Steps, Traditions or Three Legacies. They worked fine, are working well now, and we hope to keep putting them to use on the Road to Happy Destiny.

*Don M., Panel 55 /Area 27 (Louisiana)*

## **From G.S.O. Hurricane Katrina - "How Can We Help?"**

The General Service Office has been flooded with questions about how to help our A.A. family in distressed areas. We hope the following questions and answers are helpful.

Q. Do you suggest that we send literature and money directly?

A. In situations such as Hurricane Katrina, the local A.A. meetings often require very few contributions of money or even complimentary literature. Usually, local A.A. members are proud and happy to work together to replace any lost literature, etc. Local groups often make whatever repairs are necessary to their meeting places and are grateful to do this work with other sober members of their A.A. community.

An example of local help occurred with the Tsunami disaster. The affected countries were part of the Asia Oceania Zone and countries like Australia and New Zealand in that zone were able to provide the needed replacement A.A. material without turning to other General Service Offices worldwide for additional help.

Many of the affected areas do not have mail delivery. Our experience is that A.A. members in the past have helped as private citizens through relief organizations.

Q. What can I do to help the affected members, groups, central offices/intergroups?

A. G.S.O.'s experience shows that it is often difficult to imagine what is needed. We pray, we don't drink and we go to meetings so that we will be ready to respond to requests for help when they are received.

Q. What does G.S.O. plan to do to help those affected by Hurricane Katrina?

A. Just as in the past, the General Service Office is ready to support the efforts of local A.A. members in all types of disasters, Hurricane Katrina, fires, floods, mud slides, etc.

G.S.O.'s experience is that we are often called upon to replace lost literature on a complimentary basis. We wait to do this until the local conditions are stabilized and local A.A. members have an opportunity to let us know exactly what is needed.

Q. So exactly what is the General Service Office doing right now?

A. G.S.O. has contacted and offered their support to inter-groups and central offices in cities and towns where thousands of evacuees will be living for the next few months.

Q. Can I send money to G.S.O. and specify that it be used for Hurricane Katrina Relief activities?

A. The General Service Office does not have the means or staff to earmark A.A. funds that are received at this office. Every A.A. dollar received at G.S.O. is used on a priority basis to carry A.A.'s message when a need is expressed. This includes responding to literature needs during natural disasters, translating literature for A.A. members in emerging countries and helping new A.A. groups in U.S. and Canada.

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## **AREA BULLETIN BOARD**

### **Area Assembly October 1, 2005**

Holiday Inn in Wentzville. Everyone welcome - GSRs and DCMs need to be here to be accountable to their group. Building Strong Home Groups - workshops, reports, and discussions. 9-3pm, Holiday Inn in Wentzville, MO, I-70 exit 212. All members encouraged to participate. Part of the annual Eastern MO Area fall service assembly.

### **11th Annual Bootheel Roundup, October 7-9, 2005**

Doors open at 4:30 p.m. October 7th and close at midnight, October 9th; at the Community Center, Hayti, MO 63851, Hwy. 412; no registration fee; mystery speakers, free bingo, free dance, free banquet; email [loveallofyawl@msn.com](mailto:loveallofyawl@msn.com) for more info.

### **Pre-registration deadline for 2005 Spiritual Homecoming**

November 1 (mail-in), November 15<sup>th</sup> (on-line). Pre-registration is \$45.00. On-site registration is \$50.00,

### **District 2 invites you to spend an evening with a panel discussing commitment.**

November 5, 7:00 PM to 8:30 PM. Watson Terrace Christian Church, 4205 Watson Rd (Watson & Chippewa), St. Louis 63109. Refreshments served. Contacts: Marge D (314) 771-3402, Dave M (314) 775-6351

### **8th Annual AIM Mens Breakfast**

November 13, 2005, 9:00 a.m. to 11:30 a.m., the Lindbergh Viking (at Watson Road); registration: \$15 to PO Box 430025, St Louis, MO 63143-0025.

### **2005 Spiritual Homecoming**

November 25-27, 2005, Millennium Hotel, St. Louis, MO. For more info: [www.stl2005.org](http://www.stl2005.org). To volunteer email [volunteer@stl2005.org](mailto:volunteer@stl2005.org).

### **Southwest Regional Forum, December 2-4, 2005,**

Embassy Suites Hotel, 3303 Pinnacle Hills Pkwy., Rogers, AR 72758; weekend sharing sessions designed to improve communication among AA members, the General Service Board, and the GSO/Grapevine staffs. No registration fee. Flyer can be downloaded at: [eamo.org/05Forum%20Flyer.pdf](http://eamo.org/05Forum%20Flyer.pdf)

### **St. Louis Intergroup Meeting**

3rd Tuesday of every month, 8 p.m. Please note: the IR meeting has moved to St. Mary's Hospital, 6400 Clayton Rd. St. Louis, MO

### **Area Assembly - January 26 21, 2006**

Holiday Inn, Wentzville. Be there!

#### **And, as always ...**

Have a (printable) opinion? Want your voice to be (anonymously) heard? Want to write an article and be the editor's new best friend? Contact the Gratitude Gazette at [gazette@eamo.org](mailto:gazette@eamo.org) or write to:

Gratitude Gazette  
c/o Area Office  
2683 Big Bend Blvd., Rm. 18  
St. Louis, MO 63143

(Note - if you're submitting a suggestion, an article, or Bulletin Board item by mail, please allow extra time, as material must be forwarded to the editor, who lives about as far from Metropolitan St. Louis as one possibly can and still be in the Eastern Area of Missouri).

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