



# GRATITUDE GAZETTE

## EASTERN AREA OF MISSOURI CONFERENCE AREA 38

*SPRING 2004*

### CHAIRPERSON'S CHATTER

Busy, busy, busy! What a joy watching all of you out there serving others, being useful. Sometimes we at the Area level forget to say how much your efforts are seen and appreciated. So, as one of your fellow 12th Step workers, thank you!

12th Step workers not only handle the "feel good" requests, like working with that new person, one-on-one, but also take time out of their lives to help with the group, district and workshop activities within their area. They also set aside 4 full days a year to attend the assembly to not only carry their group's voice, but to listen to the voice of others explain how they are trying to help find and help that still suffering alcoholic out there.

Assemblies make for a long day, but what a privilege to be allowed the opportunity to be heard, to have our opinions respected and to be helped in our journey! It's great to witness one DCM reporting something that concerns their district and have another DCM state that his or her district is a little bit better informed because of that report.

I remember, while serving as DCM, how another district's report helped me see how we were not alone in our difficulties and that the solution that had worked for them could also work for us.

What's really great is when someone comes up to you and says how your district helped their district becomes stronger because of something you said in a prior report. Talk about a spiritual experience!! So many problems have been solved by one GSR, DCM or Area Committee Chair listening to another alcoholic share what it was like, what happened and what it is like today in their group, district or committee.

Finally, what a privilege to receive the wisdom of our past delegates as they help us in this journey! I know how I felt when they said, "job well done". They are the ones that were doing all the things you are doing and for the same reasons.

How can I better serve Alcoholics Anonymous, to re-pay just a small part of what the fellowship has given to my loved ones and me? Is it really a sacrifice to donate such a

small amount of time to serve at all the group, district and area functions? This alcoholic doesn't think so and it really shows throughout our area that you don't believe it's such a sacrifice either. So, once again, let me thank you for all that you do to help ensure that the message of Alcoholics Anonymous can always be in place for the future alcoholic.

Pat B. Area Chair

### YOUNG PERSON'S CORNER

The Area Chairs topic was service work. Well, since being a member of AA I personally have realized that being a part of something is a gift.

Sometimes I really make myself crazy. I will convince myself that I won't be able to get something done. I did this while I was drinking as well. I would sit around doing nothing and dreaming of better things.

Today something beautiful has happened. I am more than capable of being a part of life. When I ask people what they do in A.A. I hear many examples of how they are part of the service structure. Meghan, who has 9 months sobriety, told me that she believes that if there were no service work at the meeting level, such as, greeters, meeting chairs, and coffee makers the entire structure of AA would fall a part. She feels that if people did not show up and take care of the "little" things nothing would remain.

Another interesting perspective was from Krista who has 2 weeks of sobriety. She described an experience she had at a meeting. She listened to the speaker and described how this helped her know she is a part of. Many other "young people" in AA have described experiences similar to these. I have noticed that those who best remember the hurt and desperation that they went through are most likely to give more and more of themselves.

Life, I believe, is not always a cup of tea. The most amazing thing today is that we of Alcoholics Anonymous get to enjoy it, because a nameless group of alcoholics sat down and shared their experience, strength and hope in what became the "Big Book" and that today we get to share it with each other. Through action we have been able

to watch meetings grow, newcomers relate, and know that because of the actions taken by those who came before us we get to enjoy life today.

Thanks always, Ashley Gazette Staff

### **DO I MAKE SERVICE ATTRACTIVE**

Not one of us is given a torch big enough to lead the drunks of the world out of the darkness and into the light. Instead, each of us has been given a candle that burns for a short while with a flickering flame. If we stand together, the light will outshine the greatest torch. If we argue and bicker and blow at each other's candle so that each of us starts shielding our own little flame, then the alcoholics of the world will continue to suffer in darkness, and so will we.

The answer does not lie in more rules or guidelines. The solution lies in trust and faith. I pray that this Conference will be a witness to the Fellowship of the trust and faith by each member here, in the guidance of a Higher Power.

Excerpted from the 1995 Conference Report  
Presentation Entitled Substantial Unanimity in the  
Conference Process, Gary F. Western Canada Regional  
Trustee

Reading the above excerpt from a report to the General Service Conference brings some ideas to mind about the difficulties I've had in conveying an attractive image of the general service structure.

The first thing that changed in my ideas and attitudes when I got involved in service was a simple exercise in logic that has troubled me ever since.

Service is Good!  
Service is needed!  
Everyone should do Service!

While I believe the above three statements, the simple fact is that not everyone is active in AA service work. Some people consider it a service to AA and society just by showing up in a meeting. Many people in AA look at any type of collaborative effort to serve the community or suffering alcoholic with a great deal of skepticism. What's important to remember is I still have to attend meetings and associate with these people all the time.

The point is, "am I conveying a positive image of service to these people?" Sometimes I do. Other times I don't. The following are some of the difficulties I've had or continue to have that render me less useful.

Ego — I tend to view service experience boastfully. I am

careful what I say, but in a sense I can exude a sense of egotism about AA that is wrong.

Gossip — The negativity with which I portray others who are not as active in AA is comparable to the attitudes of the Oxford Group members who criticized Bill W. for not being "maximum," or the self-proclaimed "Perfect" Group in St. Louis which took our ideas about moral inventory and learned to apply it "outward" instead of "inward."

Attitude — When I compare my general disposition when I am "amongst friends" who are active AA members and when I am in other meetings where service may not be taken, as seriously, I tend to feel less uncomfortable and consequently not as friendly to others. In extreme situations, I can be perceived as tense, irritable, judgmental and opinionated.

Day by day, I think I'm learning to be more accepting of other people and this is good! When I think about the tremendous gifts I have been given directly and indirectly due to activity in general service work, I sometimes think, "What can I do to repay God and AA for these things?" Just like our program of recovery, the answer that comes is usually "pass it on." The ONLY way I can pass on a message of service is to keep my inventorying to my own problems and share with enthusiasm and encouragement what has been given to me despite myself.

Submitted Anonymously - Our first such submission –  
Thanks

### **FROM THE PUBLIC INFORMATION CHAIR**

Public Information is basically carrying the message to those outside of the fellowship—it is trying to reach the still-suffering alcoholic by giving out information about A.A. to the general public, especially at the level of press, radio and film (the media). Of course today the media may also include the Internet, cable television or various other electronic or digital forms of communication.

The first P.I. Committee in A.A. was formed in 1956 by the General Service Board, although efforts at working with our friends in the media had been instrumental in growing the fellowship for several years prior to that, beginning with the Jack Alexander article in The Saturday Evening Post issue of March 1, 1941. According to Pass It On, A.A.'s biography of Bill Wilson and the history of our fellowship, "it is estimated that 6,000 A.A.'s owe the start of their sobriety to the Post article, and nobody knows how many more thousands were sparked by them." (pg 249).

Thus our fellowship realized the invaluable aid that could be received from the right kind of publicity: that based on attraction rather than promotion while maintaining A.A.

members' personal anonymity, thus placing "principles before personalities."

Today, local P.I. committees continue to carry the message through public service announcements via radio and television, through placing Big Books in local libraries, meeting schedules in newspapers, and phone numbers in local directories. We also participate in health fairs, school presentations, and speak before professionals or those interested in learning more about our fellowship. I am happy to report that the P.I. Committee in Area 38 has been actively involved in all of these activities this past year.

While it is sometimes difficult to step out of our "comfort zone" in sobriety and speak to those outside of the fellowship as a representative of A.A, it is always a learning experience. I was recently asked to participate in a panel discussion at a workshop for new substance-abuse counselors. The panel included representatives from Narcotics Anonymous and Celebrate Recovery, a Christian 12-Step program. Unlike the other panelists, I was able to communicate A.A.'s primary purpose without commenting on their programs, primarily because of what I have learned from our three legacies: a) that we have no opinion on outside issues, b) that we have no "corner" on the recovery market and c) love and tolerance of others is our code. It was not necessary for me to defend A.A., because A.A.'s record speaks for itself. I don't know when I have been so proud to be a member of Alcoholics Anonymous.

On behalf of the entire P.I. Committee, it has been a privilege to serve the members and groups of Area 38, and we look forward to serving you in the days and months ahead.

Respectfully, Laura V. P.I. Chair

### **PRUDENT RESERVE – WHAT DOES IT MEAN?**

The pamphlet "Self Support: Where Money and Spirituality Mix" answers the above question as follows: "Any suggested prudent reserve for a group should be dependent on local needs. A suggested prudent reserve for central offices, inter-groups and area committees could be one to twelve months operating expenses depending on local needs."

Prudent reserves come into question most frequently when budgets are being set and discussed. Discussions regarding a prudent reserve can provide fertile ground for argument and disunity. Many amends become necessary when tempers flare over what amount is considered necessary as a prudent reserve.

This article is not intended to in any way suggest what is,

or should be, the amount of the prudent reserve for any AA entity, but, it was suggested as a Gazette topic and perhaps we can generate a little interest and friendly discussion regarding this troublesome area and perhaps even broaden our views on the subject.

Actually the question set forth below dealt more specifically with the 7<sup>th</sup> tradition but it all seems tied in to me, and I got to write the article, so....

As stated in the long form of Tradition Seven, ... "We view with much concern those A.A. treasuries which continue, beyond prudent reserves to 'accumulate funds for no stated A.A. purpose.' Experience has often warned us that nothing can so surely destroy our spiritual heritage as futile disputes over property, money and authority." (Emphasis added).

The query suggested by our questioner specifically was, "can someone give a definition of what is a "stated A.A. purpose"."

Well readers give it a shot. Send us your thoughts and comments. If we get sufficient interest maybe we can squeeze out another article. I'll take a stab at an answer but there are probably going to be as many opinions on this as there are noses at a sinus sufferer's convention. In other words everyone will have one. Don't be afraid to share yours.

First of all it would seem safe to say that Tradition Five clearly states that "Each group has but one primary purpose---to carry its message to the alcoholic who still suffers." This then, "carrying the message" is clearly a "stated A.A. purpose", but how exactly is this done?

At the Area level, Area Chairs are appointed to head the numerous committees who attempt to "carry the message." The committees submit budget requests that are then approved or disapproved by the Assembly as a whole. This in effect is the committee's operating fund for the year. The committee will attempt to perform all its authorized activities based upon this allocation of funds. Occasionally budgeted amounts are not expended. It is an often heard lament of Committee Chairs that they may have the necessary funds but not the necessary bodies which would allow them to expend the funds they have been granted. This is where the need for service workers comes into play as discussed in several of our initial articles. If the bodies are there the money gets spent.

The Prudent Reserve is set aside to ensure that in time of emergency or disaster the Area would be able to carry on it's stated purpose, i.e. "carrying the message" for a reasonable length of time.

The Editor

## FROM THE GRAPEVINE

The A.A. Grapevine Website has a new look! And a very special offer. . . A.A. Grapevine Digital Archive Special Introductory Rate for Subscribers

### **Live in June and FREE for the entire month!**

In June 2004, coinciding with the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the magazine, the new A.A. Grapevine Digital Archive will go live, and access to Grapevine article and letter ever published (all 12,000 of them) including the 150 articles Bill W. wrote for the magazine, will be free for the whole month.

### **A reward for Grapevine subscribers**

If you're a Grapevine magazine subscriber, or become one by October 31, 2004, you can have unlimited access to the A.A. Grapevine Digital Archive for one full year for just \$5.00. This special introductory price is the Grapevine's way of saying thanks to all our loyal subscribers. But to take

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## UPCOMING EVENTS

April 15-18, Springtime in the Ozarks, Eureka Springs Ark. Inn of the Ozarks, Eureka Springs, Ark.

April 16- 18 17<sup>th</sup> International Men's Conference Oakbrook IL contact Les A. (773) 978-4582 or Milton K. (773) 994-7226

April 17, Saturday SMICYPAA Potluck and Speaker Meeting, Directions: 55 South to Exit 96 (Cape Girardeau). Make a left on William Drive. Make a left on Sprigg St. Make a right on Broadway. Make a right on Fountain. Christ Episcopal Church will be at the corner of Fountain and Themis.

April 24, 9 AM to Noon Carrying the Message in Treatment Centers Workshop, Sponsored by EAMO Treatment Committee Grace Episcopal Church, 514 E. Argonne, Kirkwood, MO Talks and discussion groups. Contact Clement C. (314) 535-6223 or Mike B. (314) 892-1693.

April 30, Friday 7:00 PM SMICYPAA Speaker Meeting and Bingo Night at Parkway United Methodist Church 2840 N. New Ballas Rd. Contact Hal @ (314) 956-0241 Suggested donation for Bingo \$5.00.

May 2, Sunday 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Greater St. Louis Area AA Women's Luncheon Renaissance Hotel 9801 Natural Bridge Rd. \$20.00 per person contact Nancy J. (314) 739-2312 or Ginny J. (314) 368- 7739.

May 7, doors open at 7:30 PM Friday Night at the Movies, Sponsored by the There is a Solution Group. St. Alban Church basement (Alban Hall) 2001 Shepard Road 1 block N. of Clayton Rd. And Highway 109

May 8, Saturday AA Meeting and Trivia Night presented by the Fall Classic. Little Flower Church in Richmond Heights, MO 6:30 PM Speaker 7:30 PM Trivia Challenge \$10 per person contact Bill B. (636) 227-4586 or Jeff W. (314) 707-0246

May 22, Saturday 9:00 AM Area Sharing Session Hope Lutheran Church south St. Louis Co. All DCM's, and Alternates, Area Committee Chairs, and Alternates and Area Officers and Past Delegates are encouraged to attend.

June 12, River City Freedom of Cape Girardeau. Dinner and Speaker Annual Anniversary celebration at St. Vincent Grade School Gym 1919 Ritter Dr.

June 13 Pacific Facility Spring Fling Picnic at Noon Open Meeting at 6:00 PM for info (636) 257-2430

June 25-27 Women in Recovery Camp and Float Weekend, Bourbon, MO, Riverview Ranch, Contact: Tina B. @ 636 947-6837 or Rane A. @ 314 921-4093 for prices

August 20-22 Missouri State Convention, Holiday Inn Select, Columbia, Mo Contact tfblechris@msn.com (816) 728-4960 or seren-t@centurytel.net (573) 438-8607