



It's Conference time again...

The 2005 General Service Conference is just two weeks away. It's customary for the Gazette to publish a "highlights of the agenda" piece - and we have. But... Have you seen the agenda? Even in itsy-bitsy, single-spaced type it's about three pages of material - and it's all important stuff. So when you read the "highlights", remember that those are just some of the more distinctive items. Sure, reviewing the kits and workbooks happens every year on every committee. Does that make it insignificant? Is revising an old pamphlet somehow less vital than discussing the need for a new video?

Find a copy of the full agenda. Read it. Read even the "boring" parts of the final report when it comes out later this year. And for now, say a prayer for our trusted servants as they shape and safeguard the future of the fellowship. - Ed.

April Assembly Agenda Items

- Delegate's report
- Gary K., Southwest Regional Trustee
- Vote on Budget
- Elect 2 state convention committee members
- Presentation of proposed Procedures Manual changes.

What is the General Service Conference?

That question can be answered on a number of levels. Most familiarly, it is the Fellowship's annual business meeting, when Conference members - delegates from 93 area in the US and Canada, alcoholic and nonalcoholic trustees, directors of AA World Services and the AA Grapevine, and staff members of the General Service Office and the Grapevine - meet for a busy week of committee meetings, presentations, and workshops, which culminates in the approval of a number Advisory Actions to guide the Fellowship during the coming years.

The Conference structure is also AA's primary vehicle of communication, which operates all year long through the general service structure: group general service representatives, district committees, area assemblies, the board of trustees and its two operating corporations, and the work of GSO and the Grapevine. As soon as the annual meeting comes to a close, delegates begin reporting back to the groups, and members begin expressing the concerns that may need Conference discussion and action in the future.

Most importantly, as the Conference Charter says, "The General Service Conference of Alcoholics Anonymous is the guardian of world services and of the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions of Alcoholics Anonymous. The Conference shall be a service body only; never a government for Alcoholics Anonymous." On July 3, 1955, at the 20th Anniversary Convention in St. Louis, AA's founding members turned over to the movement as a whole the Three Legacies of Recovery, Unity and Service. Since its first trial meeting in 1950, the Conference has proved to be a worthy successor to our founders and a reliable guide in good times and bad.

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An Open Letter from our State Convention Committee

IT'S NOT TOO SOON...

...to book your room at the Holiday Inn Select at 573-445-8531 and use code "MSC". The dates are August 19, 20, and 21.

AA members are always willing to pitch in and help out, and we're hoping that this year's convention is no different. What we need most of all doesn't require much effort, but it is critical to our short-term success and long-term ability to hold a convention.

Put simply, we need more than just good attendance: we need people to stay at the convention hotel and we need people to purchase banquet tickets. Why? Because that is really how the convention is paid for.

Registration fees are used to cover speaker expenses, printing costs, coffee, and the like, but none of that money is used to pay for the convention facilities. All of the rooms used for meetings, the banquet, hospitality, etc., are provided by the hotel at no cost, but this is only because the convention committee guarantees that a certain number of sleeping rooms will be rented and a certain number of banquet meals will be purchased.

If we don't rent the required number of rooms, we are required to pay the hotel for unused rooms. If we don't sell the required number of banquet tickets, we are required to pay the hotel for uneaten meals. Since our registration fees are really being used for other expenses, any shortfall in room rentals or banquet sales is likely to come from our prudent reserve and will be a financial "loss" that is difficult for us to recover.

If you stay at a different hotel and don't attend the banquet, you're certainly still welcome to attend and we'll put your registration fee to good use, but I would encourage everyone who is able to make their reservations at the Holiday Inn Select and to make them early: our goal is to sell out our "room block".

We know that many people don't like the banquet (although many DO), but it is an important part of the convention package. The cost (\$25) may seem high, but it would be difficult to go to any restaurant (with tablecloths!) and have a salad, entree, dessert, beverage, and coffee for much less, particularly if you consider including a tip! Most important, it's how we pay for that big meeting room where we have the five main speakers for the weekend.

We're all looking forward to putting on a great convention, and we hope to see each of you there. We'd like it even more if you brought someone new with you!

Jim J., State Convention Committee Chair

Our Southwest Regional Trustee is...

... Gary K., from Colorado !

We talked on the phone a couple of weeks ago, and here are a few notes on what he said:

The Job - Gary's one of 21 trustees on the General Service Board, and for two years, starting last May, a director on AAWS. Starting this May he'll be Chairman of the Board of AAWS for a year. He serves on 3 trustees' committees (archives, CPC/treatment facilities, and nominating) and 3 AAWS committees.

He's passionate about - Gary's service passions are CPC and PI. He believes the CPC arena is going to be the next big "boom" area for AA in so far as where our new people are going to be coming from.

Hot agenda item - One item on this year's General Service Conference agenda that Gary's particularly interested in is the discussion on the possibility of a pamphlet for the judiciary. He notes that there have been many requests from the fellowship for literature directed at newcomers who are being sent to the fellowship by the courts, but that just hasn't proven feasible. The new direction for this effort is aimed at the folks who are *sending* these newcomers to AA. He believes it's going to be a very interesting and productive discussion, whether a pamphlet actually comes out of it or not at this time.

He believes it's okay that takes a long time to get a group conscience in AA on anything like this, and that sometimes the longer we discuss things and cover everything, the better off we are down the road.

He's concerned about - Gary's "just tickled" about the theme for this year's conference, "Basics of our Home Group - Recovery, Unity and Service" because he's

concerned about the status of AA home groups. He believes there are just too many new people in AA who don't understand, and aren't being taught, the difference between a group and a meeting, and how vital having a home group is in recovery.

He's worried about what he sees as the erosion of sponsorship and the widespread tendency of AA's to be inward looking instead of reaching out. Because of this, he fears that we're relying on the meetings to be our 12-step work, and that the substance of our message is being reduced to, "Go to meetings." A lot of the intimacy of early AA seems to be missing and we need to get it back.

And he's here - Eastern and Western Missouri are the *last* two areas in the Southwest Region that he's visiting. So rib him a little about that and give him a big welcome at the April 2005 Area Assembly.

Opening on AAWS board

AAWS (AA World Services, Inc.) will fill an opening for a nontrustee member of its board of directors at the close of the 2006 General Service Conference a year from now. Qualified applicants will be AA members with a minimum of seven years continuous sobriety, the ability to work with others and attend eight regular AAWS board meetings each year plus three weekend meetings of the trustees' committees, plus the Conference for a week in April every year.

Applicants should have a sound business or professional background in, preferably, finance, management, publishing, legal, or information technology. Some additional meetings or travel may be involved.

Send résumés to Joe Dennan, Secretary, AAWS, Inc., at GSO by July 15, 2005.

2005 General Service Conference Agenda Highlights

Cooperation With the Professional Community

- Discuss the need for a pamphlet directed to the criminal justice system.
- Consider request to create a video for professionals.

Correctional Facilities

- Consider including statement on AA's Singleness of Purpose in the pamphlet "A Message to Correctional Professionals":
- Consider the revised updated draft manuscript of AA in Prison: Inmate to Inmate.
- Review Final Report on feasibility and cost of a video introducing AA to training academies for corrections personnel.

Finance

- Discuss request to include information on how to obtain a tax ID number in the "Self-Support: Where Money and Spirituality Mix" pamphlet.

Grapevine

- Consider collection of stories for young people, drawn from previous issues of the AA Grapevine magazine, similar to Spiritual Awakenings.
- Consider request that La Viña produce audio CD of La Viña stories on Steps 7-12 as companion to its CD of stories on Steps 1-6.

Literature

- Consider revised draft introduction to be added to the front matter of the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions, as recommended by the 2003 Conference and per additional consideration of the 2004 Conference Committee.

- Consider revised draft pamphlet "Too Young?"
- Consider drafts for revisions of "It Happened to Alice", "The AA Group", and "The AA Grapevine" section of "Your AA General Service Office."
- Discuss development of publication addressing the concerns of AA's with long-term sobriety.

Public Information

- Consider approving the proposed television P.S.A. - "Living in Chaos" - developed by the trustees' Committee on Public Information.
- Consider feasibility of replacing two videos, "AA - Rap With Us" and "Young People and AA" and suggestion to replace/update the video "Alcoholics Anonymous - An Inside View."

Report and Charter

- Review editorial updates to AA Service Manual.
- Consider placement of a central office serving Native North American People in the AA directories.

Treatment Facilities

- Consider addition of the "Singleness of Purpose Statement" to "AA in Treatment Facilities."

International Conventions/Regional Forums

- Consider the concept of broadcasting encrypted, anonymity-protected, delayed Intranet broadcast of 2005 International Convention Opening Flag Ceremony.
- Discuss ways to encourage interest in Regional & Special Forums & concept of restructuring/increasing them.

From the Delegate's desk...

Here we are at the year's second Area Assembly. The 2005 General Service Conference is only two weeks away. I'm amazed at how fast time is flying. When I took this assignment I thought I was prepared for what was to come. Past Delegates told me that I would soon be getting more information than I could imagine. Being from Missouri – the "Show Me" state – I thought they might be exaggerating just a little. They weren't! There is a lot to read and then determine what to share and where to share it.

I have read and reread the information for my Committee assignment in order to be prepared for my trip to the Conference. I've written the Area Highlights for the 2005 Conference Report and have been in daily email communication with one or more of the other 92 Area Delegates. Surprisingly the other Areas face a lot of the same issues we face. Two big problems we all seem to have is how to get the information out to the groups and individuals of AA and how to provide the best service with what we have.

The Past Delegates of the Southwest Region met in Oklahoma City on March 11th- 13th with the current Delegates to help us prepare for the Conference, which takes place the week of April 16th-23rd in New York. Carol will accompany me on the journey to NY. She will get to site-see while I attend to Area business at the Conference

I would like to thank all the Districts, in advance, that have joined together and will be allowing me to present the Conference report to multiple districts at the same time. This will save the Area both time and money and will hopefully bring more unity to the Area as Districts work together. If I can be of service to your District please feel free to ask. I would also like to thank this Area again for giving me this opportunity to serve.

- Chip B., Area 38 Delegate

Book Price Increase & Service Charge

On July 1, 2005, the price of all books, with the exception of the Big Book, Alcoholics Anonymous, will increase by \$1.00. This increase applies to books of all languages and formats, including hardcover, soft-cover, large print, and booklets. The various formats of the Big Book will remain as currently priced.

The AA World Services Board also approved the implementation of a service charge on orders. The service charge will be 10% on all orders, with a minimum charge of \$3.00. Orders of \$250 or more will be exempt from the service charge.

Both of these measures, along with a broad cost-cutting plan at the General Service Office, will go a long way in helping the trustees maintain a Prudent Reserve.

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Our Area Officers

Delegate: Chip B.
Alternate Delegate: Pat B.
Area Chair: Jim F.
Alternate Chair: Laura V.
Registrar: Donnie B.
Recording Secretary: Ian S.
Treasurer: Dave B.
Assistant Treasurer: Jon M.

91% of districts at January Assembly

Registrar Donnie B. reported in the January minutes that 21 out of 23 districts were represented. In-state representation was 100%. Group representation was 19%, with 100 out of 540 registered groups sending members to the assembly.

New features at Missouri State Convention

The 54th Missouri State Convention this year is Aug 19-21 at the Holiday Inn, Columbia Mo. In addition to the usual great lineup of speakers, Big Book Trivia Contest, Old Timers Meeting, two dances, pool side BBQ, and banquet on Saturday night, there will be two brand new features.

There will be Late Night Young People's Speaker Meetings on Friday and Saturday.

Additionally, everyone who **pre-registers** by August 1, 2005 will automatically be placed in a drawing for **free registration** for the 2006 state convention. 5 free registrations will be given away Saturday night.

Deadline nears for group updates

Area Chair Jim F. notes that at the start of every year, the Conference makes a massive effort to update the group information database at GSO. DCM's receive printouts for their districts, and are asked to update the information and get it back to Frank, our Eastern MO office manager, who updates our local copy of this database and forwards the updates to New York. According to the Service Manual, the GSR's should be involved - one of the GSR's duties is to make sure the DCM has up-to-date group information. Because we sometimes overlook this simple responsibility, the AA Directories have been known to contain obsolete information on meetings, groups, and contacts, and may even list meetings that no longer exist.

If you are looking at a group information printout, check it for errors. It's important to update all the information, not just the name of the new GSR and alternate. This should include your meeting locations & times, the number of home-group members, etc. When they ask for "members", they are not asking how many people attend your recovery meeting. They're asking how many people are voting members of your home group. (Basically, the number of people who attend your group conscience meetings.)

If you don't have a form, you can update your group information on our Area website at www.eamo.org. To get into this year's AA Directories, the information needs to be to Frank at the Area office by mid-April.

Area 38 Statement of Purpose

The Eastern Missouri Area Assembly of Alcoholics Anonymous shall be a service body. It shall protect and respect the autonomy and the privilege of dissent of any or all AA Groups in the Eastern Missouri Area of the General Service Conference.

In the course of its deliberations and discussions, the assembly shall be ever governed by the ideals expressed in the Twelve Traditions, the Twelve Concepts and the AA Service Manual. It shall strive to be the true voice and group conscience of AA unity.

Service shall be the primary purpose of the assembly. It shall encourage all AA Groups to participate in the business conducted, and to support it in its efforts to cooperate with the General Service Office and the AA World Services.

The Area Assembly is specifically charged with the duty of electing a Delegate to the General Service Conference and to provide the Delegate with support to assist him or her in the course of the duties of the office. The assembly is further charged with electing an Alternate Delegate to the General Service Conference and such other officers and functioning committees as it deems necessary.

Reprinted from the Alcoholics Anonymous Eastern Missouri Area Procedures Manual, used with permission.

AREA BULLETIN BOARD

"Accessibility for Everyone" - a Special Needs Workshop

April 9, 2005, 2 -4 p.m., St. Mary's Hospital, Meeting Rm. A/B, 6400 Clayton Rd. St. Louis, MO; sponsored by Districts 2 & 3; refreshments provided. Contact Terry L: 314-832-7798 or Shirley H: 314-426-1442.

District 43 presents: Service Speaker Meeting & Third Legacy Trivia

April 16, 2005, 6:30 p.m. St. Martin's Episcopal Church, 15764 Clayton Rd, Ballwin, MO; dessert, potluck and fellowship; coffee provided.

District 51 Workshop on AA Service

April 26, 6:30PM potluck, 4 speakers at 7PM. Grace Church, Woodlawn and Argonne, Kirkwood, Mo

The 21st Annual Greater St. Louis Area AA Women's Luncheon

May 1, 2005, Renaissance Hotel, 9801 Natural Bridge Road, St. Louis, MO. Speaker: Tonya H. (Baltimore, MD); \$22/person; tables should register together; reservation deadline: April 20, 2005; for more information and a registration flyer see our web site at: <http://www.midwest-woman-to-woman.com>.

Little Egypt Roundup

May 6-8, 2005, Carbondale, IL, at The Horizon Inn and Conference Center (soon to be Best Western University Plaza).

Greeting and Eating Meeting and Delegate's Conference Report

- hosted by Dist. 6. May 7, 2005, 12:00 p.m., Cornerstone Christian Church, 305 Front, Park Hills, MO; bring a covered dish if you can.

Oklahoma State AA Conference (Area 57)

May 13-15, 2005, Clarion-Median Hotel, Oklahoma City, Ok; see <http://www.aaoklahoma.org> for more information.

"Speaking at Non-AA Meetings" - a CPC/PI Workshop

May 14, 2005, 6-8 p.m.; Watson Terrace Christian Church, 4205 Watson Rd., St. Louis 63109; an informative session for members who volunteer to participate in future CPC/PI community seminars; sponsored by Districts 1 & 2. Call Maggie for information at 314-968-9933

District #2 Family Picnic

June 5, 2005, 9am-5pm; Carondelet Park, Pavilion # 1, St. Louis, MO. 9AM-5PM. Contact Rich C. @ 314-616-6673.

12th Annual Camp & Float Weekend - Women in Recovery

June 24-26, 2005, Riverview Ranch in Bourbon, MO (take I-44 West 60 miles to Exit 218.; take Hwy N to Meramec River and Riverview Ranch on left); Questions? Call Tina at 636-947-6837 or Renee at 314-921-4093.

Text Book Group 347 presents 15th Anniversary Dinner & Banquet June 25, 2005, at Sybergs, 2340 Old Dorsett, St. Louis, dinner, dance & meeting.

Missouri State Convention 2005

August 19-21, 2005; Holiday Inn Express, Columbia, MO. For more info see the State Convention Committee's page at www.eamo.org; you can download the 2005 State Convention Flyer there. Pre-registration deadline (with chance to win a free registration for 2006 convention) is July 19.

Pre-registration deadline for 2005 Spiritual Homecoming

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

2005 Spiritual Homecoming

November 25-27, 2005, Millennium Hotel, St. Louis, MO. For more info: www.stl2005.org.

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

From the August 1955 Grapevine...

"Less than a generation ago, there were few doors toward which the alcoholic or his family or his friends could turn their steps. A generation hence Bill may not be with us to stand at the door of the house we build. But the house must be there and it must stand strong. And the door of the house must always be open. For the steps of him who seeks our shelter, to us shall always be those of our brother."

- Anonymous attendee of the 1955 St. Louis Convention

Reprinted from the AA Grapevine, V. 12, Issue 3, August 1955. Used with permission.

Next time (and beyond) ...

We'll be taking a closer look at our beloved and controversial Missouri State Convention, the 2005 Spiritual Homecoming, the International Convention, and what happens -- and happened -- at the General Service Conference. This year's conference theme is, "Basics of Our Home Group - Recovery, Unity and Service," so we'll be doing some work on that, too. And, as always, we welcome your suggestions and input.

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 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).