



Conference time again...

Remember why we gather at Area Assembly? No, it's not for coffee, donuts and dignified discussion; it's to choose a Delegate and prepare him or her for the General Service Conference, which is coming up in just a couple of weeks. Our Delegate, Chip B., is asking all of us for help getting ready for the Conference. Read his column on page 2 for some significant concerns. If you're at Area Assembly, attend the workshops. If you're not at Area Assembly (and why the heck **aren't** you?) get in touch with him directly or through your DCM. He's our voice in New York, and if he doesn't know what we're thinking, it's hard to act on our concerns. On page 3, you'll find a very long list of agenda items the Conference will be considering, discussing, and acting on. Yeah, the print is small – and even so, the list isn't complete – but get your magnifying glass out and take a look at them. These are things that directly affect individual AA members and groups, so we need to be as involved as possible; it's just one small way of giving back to the fellowship that has saved our lives.

Behind the Scenes at the General Service Conference

If you think of the General Service Conference as a comet that flashes into view for a week every spring, think again. The fact is that the work of the Conference, which serves as the group conscience of AA in the U.S. and Canada, goes on all year long.

Rick W., the General Service Office staff member who currently serves as Conference coordinator, is the contact for all 136 voting Conference members, including the 93 delegates from the United States and Canada. The Conference, he explains, "is responsible for the leadership that once rested on the shoulders of our founders.

...Like putting together the myriad pieces of a giant puzzle," Rick explains, "it's an enormous, fascinating and absorbing challenge... the sweeping scope of the Conference gave me a sense of awe and responsibility to A.A. as a whole. I felt I could see God working through our mix of fallible alcoholics to come up with a group conscience that was inspired."

Rick, who also serves as secretary of the Conference Agenda Committee and the trustees' Conference Committee, corresponds regularly with the delegates throughout the year. They are encouraged to submit their concerns for Conference sharing.

On the agenda for the 2006 Conference are presentation/discussion topics in line with the Conference themes. They include (Sponsorship) "Changes in the Alcoholic coming to A.A."; (Service) "Performing Service Without Expectations"; and (Self-Support) "An Informed Group Conscience."

"...for the Conference participants," Rick says, "there's little time for sightseeing. These A.A.s are totally committed to the work at hand. They may be exhausted, but they're there till the last bell."

Excerpted from the Box 4-5-9 (April-May 2006, p 5) article of the same name with permission of AA World Services, Inc.

Missouri State Convention Returns to Jefferson City!

After a few years in Columbia, the Missouri State Convention is headed back to the Capitol Plaza Hotel in Jefferson City. The pre-registration drive is on, and there's an extra lure for registering early – two lucky early registrants could win a free full ride: registration **and** hotel. Can't beat that.

Convention committee co-chair Mike F. says, "How many adjectives can we use per inch? Exciting, bigger, informative, life changing ... you get the idea." This year's convention at the Capital Plaza in Jeff City July 14-16 promises to offer one of the best line-up of speakers in several years. Everyone who attends will have their recovery enriched and enhanced as the fellowship and learning will be on going all weekend. Don't miss out on the once a year opportunity to meet old friends and make a few new ones.

Speakers will include our Southwest Regional Trustee, Gary K., Tom I. from North Carolina, and Wayne B. from California. There will be the usual banquet, ice cream socials, music, and marathon meetings; and this year's convention promises to bring some great breakout sessions and workshops, including a corrections session with Tom I.

Don't miss this great opportunity for fun, fellowship, meeting old AA friends, and making new ones. There's nothing like a trip to the state convention to enhance sobriety and fellowship – and just have fun!

Flyers are available for download at the Eastern Area web site: <http://eamo.org/06stateconventionflyer.pdf>. Register early, and bring someone new in sobriety, 'cause there's nothing else in the world like that first convention!

Directory Updates Due Now

There's still time to get your updated group information in for this year's printing of the Western United States AA Directory, but you need to act NOW. The cut-off date is in mid-April and, look at the calendar! GSRs & DCMs can notify Frank, the Area office manager, of any recent changes to their group information as soon as possible. We sometimes see very old information in there - extinct groups, outdated locations, people who have long-since left the scene. GSRs and DCM's are responsible to the travelers who rely on this publication for finding meetings on the road. It's no good trying to find a meeting where the lights have gone out... or moved across town.

From the delegate's desk – Serious issues, OUR issues

I have been trying to find the words, the right words, to express what I would like to say without offending anyone. With less than two weeks to go until our 6th Assembly of this rotation I still can't find those words. Maybe I shouldn't worry about offending anyone, the old-timers sure weren't shy about offending me. Instead of trying to sugar-coat it, here it is. We are not self-supporting. What a shocker.

Most of us have heard our Southwest Trustee and listened to his concerns for the financial situation of Alcoholics Anonymous. He recently put pen to paper and provided us with a copy of his report to the General Service Board Trustees and the AAWs/GV Directors. I have shared a copy of his letter with your DCM's, if you are interested in reading it, ask to see it. He expresses concern over the current trend in AA, of which a smaller percentage of groups are providing most of the financial contributions to GSO and what this means to AA's future. This is even occurring in our Area. Fewer groups in Eastern Missouri are contributing to support the GSO. While the total monies being contributed is slightly higher the percentage of groups contributing is getting less and less.

Somehow we are failing to get the groups to participate in the self-support of AA. Why is that? Where is the breakdown in communication? If we are responsible for keeping A.A. afloat, then why are we still so tight with our money? It seems that not much has changed since 1941 when Bill was giving a \$5 bill to a drunk to fix a hangover and dropping a dime in the hat (read the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions: Tradition Seven).

Another concern is the purchase of non AA approved literature by AA groups. I have seen the little red "Big Books" in use by several people. I've been told we have AA Bibles out there. We no longer are the sole publisher of AA related material. If we continue to purchase this type of material from other sources we deprive Alcoholics Anonymous of much needed financial support. However, as an autonomous entity you can buy what you want.

Groups want action taken at the Conference to remove the handling charge for literature purchases under \$250 and to keep the volume discount on literature purchases. Both of these ventures will cost the fellowship money. Yet the number of groups, making donations is on the decline. Are we willing to make up the shortfall of these ventures with our contributions? When the Concepts were written they indicated that literature purchases were in essence donations as the money was used to support services. If the groups fully supported the GSO financially we would not need to rely on literature sales to meet expenses.

In March, at the Southwest Regional Delegates Assembly (SWRDA), one of the presentations focused on lack of communication from GSO to the groups. The question was posed as to where this breakdown occurred. Was this lack of communication a Delegate to DCM, a DCM to the GSR or the GSR to the group problem? Where is the breakdown in communication? Why is it that the number of groups, participating in self-support, is on the decline? Is it because they don't know of the need or just don't care? Is it because we are not sponsoring the folks that start these meetings? I have gone to some meetings and wondered if I was even at an AA meeting. Maybe that's part of the problem. We have but one primary

purpose and we can not be all things to all people. I am here because I don't want to get drunk today and just for today I choose to stay sober. Are we losing our singleness of purpose?

In an effort to curb financial shortfalls staffing reductions are already taking place at GSO. Reductions of expenses have been made where possible without noticeably reducing services to the fellowship. Without an increase of voluntary contributions the problem may eventually be solvable only by a reduction in some services.

As you share this weekend on the Conference theme, "Sponsorship, Service and Self-Support in a Changing World", let me know what solutions you have. Why does your group contribute to GSO, the Area and your District? If you don't contribute, I would really like to know why. Share with us what is working or not working for you with Sponsorship and Service. How do we get the 59% of the groups not participating from Area 38 to become involved?

Let's not leave the suffering alcoholic out there alone. Share with us. Let's make sure the hand of "Alcoholic's Anonymous" will be there for the next guy or gal that needs it.

– Yours in service, Chip B, Delegate 55/38 Eastern MO

Notes from the chair

The Spring Assembly this year features a workshop on Speaking To Non-AA Audiences. This important work – talking about "what AA is and isn't" – is rewarding, but it can be tricky. Many people come to AA on the advice of family, friends, and employers, or professionals such as therapists, medical staff, treatment counselors, clergy, police, lawyers, and judges. With the right mix of preparation and humility, we can help by sharing with these folks about AA within the guidelines of the Traditions and our collective experience.

If you missed the workshop, you might look at the pamphlet "Speaking At Non-AA Meetings" and related pamphlets, such as "How AA Members Cooperate With Professionals". These are available through GSO, online at aa.org, at intergroup offices, and at active home groups around the area. An hour or two of your time at a presentation (or maybe on radio or TV!) could spread in ever-widening circles to help many others like ourselves. To get involved, talk to your GSR or DCM

At our Summer Assembly this year on June 24th, we'll have a 9am workshop on Institutional Meetings. This is a terrific opportunity for folks interested in Corrections, Treatment, or BTG work. We'll share experience on meetings in jails, prisons, treatment centers, mental hospitals... how to get involved, how to structure the meeting, stay on the primary purpose, deal with the staff, get literature, help people transition out of the institution, etc. Immediately following the workshop will be meetings of the Area committees on Corrections, Treatment, and Bridging The Gap. Please encourage a friend, spouse, or newcomer to come out for coffee, a bagel, and an informative and exciting morning on institutional service.

The two-day election assembly this fall, on October 7 & 8, is taking shape. We will have a special guest, Rick W., staff member of the 2005 Conference Committee on CPC and Chairman of the 2006 General Service Conference. Among other things, Rick will be our main speaker at a Saturday night speaker meeting. There will be a variety of service workshops, displays, and activities such as trivia games, movies, and AA meetings during the day and late into the night. If you have suggestions, please let me know. Meanwhile, mark your calendars, reserve a room, and invite a friend! If service is working for us, let's not keep it to ourselves.

– Jim F., Area Chair

2006 General Service Conference - "Sponsorship, Service and Self-Support in a Changing World" Conference Agenda Highlights

For anyone who thinks we just send our delegates off for a week of blissful, convention-like fun, here's a *partial* list of what they'll be dealing with in New York:

AGENDA:

Review suggestions for the theme of the 2007 General Service Conference. Discuss presentation/discussion topic ideas for the 2007 General Service Conference. Discuss workshop topic ideas for the 2007 General Service Conference.

CPC:

Discuss the need for three short video segments for streaming on G.S.O.'s A.A. web site directed to professionals in the employment/human relations, legal/criminal justice, and medical fields, with a total cost not to exceed \$60,000. Discuss ways CPC committees present A.A. to professionals.

CORRECTIONS:

Review the trustees' Committee on Corrections Progress Report on the Development of an Informational Media Presentation Introducing A.A. to Training Academies and In-service Training Programs for Corrections Personnel. Consider the revised manuscript of A.A. in Prison: Inmate to Inmate.

FINANCE:

Discuss proposal to replace the word "donation" with "contribution" in A.A.W.S. literature. Discuss requests to add references about other AA information for group treasurers, requests to remove the pie charts from the pamphlet, and discuss request to add an additional pie chart reflecting a 25/25/25/25% distribution in the pamphlet "Self-Support: Where Money and Spirituality Mix".

Discuss requests to rescind the small-order freight charge policy instituted by A.A.W.S. effective 7/1/05. Discuss requests to eliminate the discounts on volume purchases of A.A.W.S. literature.

A.A. GRAPEVINE

Consider suggestion that A.A. Grapevine produce an anthology of La Viña stories in the year 2007 or later.

LITERATURE

Review revised draft pamphlets "Too Young?" and "It Happened to Alice!" Consider suggestion to revise the pamphlet "A.A. for the Native North American." Discuss request for a review of language in A.A. literature that refers to the first 164 pages of the Big Book. Consider revised front matter and review stories for draft manuscript, "Young People and A.A.". Discuss requests to develop an intergroup/central office pamphlet. Review trustees' Committee on Literature progress report on the Spanish-language Third Edition Big Book, *Alcohólicos Anónimos*. Consider request to develop an A.A. history book covering the years 1955-2000. Consider proposal to discontinue the pamphlet "Letter to a Woman Alcoholic". Consider developing a pamphlet concerning Alcoholics Anonymous, religion and spirituality.

POLICY/ADMISSIONS

Approve invitation for two observers to attend the 56th General Service Conference, one from G.S.O. Japan and one from G.S.O. Australia. Review dates for the 2009 General Service Conference. Review report from General Service Board on feasibility of more balanced composition/structure of regions. Review request that the Conference be mindful of balancing the number of odd and even panel delegates when decisions are made that affect delegate rotation.

PUBLIC INFORMATION:

Consider 2005 annual report from the trustees' Committee on Public Information regarding G.S.O.'s A.A. Web site. Consider approving proposed television P.S.A. (Public service announcement) "Testimonials" developed by trustees' Committee on Public Information. Review info on centralized distribution, tracking and evaluation of the television P.S.A. "Living in Chaos."

For 2007 Alcoholics Anonymous Membership Survey: 1) Discuss how to get more area delegates involved in the distribution and collection of Membership Survey Questionnaires. 2) Consider request to add the following categories to the "Length of Sobriety" section in the "2007 A.A. Membership Survey" pamphlet: Sober between 11 - 20 years Sober more than 20 years 3) Consider request to add "Domestic Partner" to the "Marital Status of Members" section of the 2007 A.A. Membership Survey Questionnaire. 4) Consider request to add a "Sexual Orientation" category to the 2007 A.A. Membership Survey Questionnaire. 5) Consider and approve the 2007 Alcoholics Anonymous Membership Survey Questionnaire.

Review report from the trustees' Committee on Public Information on Videos for Young People.

REPORT AND CHARTER:

Review The A.A. Service Manual, 2005-2006 edition: Discuss discrepancy between the Conference Charter and The A.A. Service Manual regarding panel rotation of DCMs. Consider request to include a description of the duties of a district committee member chairperson (D.C.M.C.) on page S30. Consider a request to restore the graphic "Service Structure Inside the A.A. Group" to Chapter 2. Consider a request to insert an inverted triangle graphic similar to the one found in "The Twelve Concepts for World Service Illustrated" pamphlet. Consider a request to revise page S28 to more accurately reflect the number of groups in a metropolitan district. Consider a request to add a descriptive sentence on the role of a trustee-at-large to second paragraph on page S63 in the section "Trustees-at-Large."

Consider a suggestion to restore The Twelve Concepts for World Service by Bill W. to its original form as published in 1962. Discuss a request to add/attach explanatory letter regarding appropriate use of A.A. Directories.

TREATMENT FACILITIES:

Consider scope and name of the Conference Committee on Treatment Facilities. Review summary of results of the 2004 Treatment Facilities Committee Survey prepared for inclusion in the Treatment Facilities Workbook.

TRUSTEES:

Review résumés for Pacific and Eastern Canada regional trustees. Review slate of trustees and officers of the General Service Board of Alcoholics Anonymous, Inc. Review slate of directors of A.A. World Services, Inc. and A.A. Grapevine, Inc. Review background material and experience pertaining to request that the selection process for Chairperson of the General Service Board be expanded to include past Class B trustees as candidates. Discuss recommendation from the General Service Board to approve the revised Bylaws of the General Service Board of Alcoholics Anonymous, Inc. Discuss recommendation from General Service Board to approve the revised Certificates of Incorporation of the General Service Board of Alcoholics Anonymous, Inc.

ARCHIVES:

Consider that the Conference Archives Committee annually review a list to be compiled by G.S.O.'s Archivist of proposed archival recordings (format to be determined by A.A.W.S.) to be produced for sale by A.A.W.S. so that the Conference might provide guidance prior to production.

INTERNATIONAL CONVENTIONS/REGIONAL FORUMS:

Discuss addition of informational flyers to the Regional Forums section of G.S.O.'s A.A. Web site. Discuss the Report on Restructuring and/or Increasing Regional/Special Forums from the trustees' Committee on International Conventions/Regional Forums. Review report on the 2005 International Convention in Toronto.

Go, Delegates!

AREA BULLETIN BOARD

General Service Conference

April 23-29, 2006, New York, NY. Only one of us is invited, but it's still important!

The 22nd Annual AA Women's Luncheon in St. Louis, MO, will be held on Sunday, May 7, 2006, at the Renaissance Hotel near the airport, 9801 Natural Bridge Road. The luncheon costs \$22 per person, and the deadline for reservations is April 16, 2006. If you have a group of friends who would like to sit together, please register together. Tables seat 10, and it is not necessary to reserve an entire table in order to sit together. Women wishing to spend the weekend can call the hotel reservation service at 1-800-228-9290 and ask for AA Women's Luncheon rate.

Parking is free in the hotel lot. The doors will open at noon, with lunch served at 12:30 P.M., followed by a guest speaker. The ballroom is smoke free. Please remember that the luncheon is for AA women only – no children.

For more information, call Sandie at 314-832-9400 or e-mail sandie@lanesusa.com or Peg at 314-962-8342, e-mail dufer@wulaw.wustl.edu.

Districts 1 and 2 Family Picnic Saturday May 20, Carondelet Park, Pavilion #1, St. Louis. Starts at 11AM. Barbeque, entertainment, speakers, great fellowship! Rich C: 314-616-6673.

District 15 Annual Picnic, June 17, 105 E. Bourke, Macon, MO, Noon to 4pm. For info call Mike C. 660-768-5818.

Area Assembly, June 24, 2006. Holiday Inn, Wentzville, MO.

Missouri State Convention

July 14-16, 2006, Capitol Plaza Hotel in Jefferson City, MO. Pre-register now!! For more information, see the front page. You can download a flyer at the Eastern Area web site.

Alcoholics Anonymous National Archives Workshop, "Preserving Our Past for Our Future." September 14, 15, 16, and 17, 2006. Holiday Inn South, Baton Rouge, LA. Workshops, seminars, speakers, banquet. Contact co-chairs Jimmy H. 504-382-9286, jhardingola@cox.net or Bobby B 337-662-3402, danieb@att.net for more information.

Area Assembly, October 7 & 8, Holiday Inn, Wentzville, MO. This is our election assembly, so be there! Who knows, you might like it and decide to come all the time.

SWRAASA Southwest Regional Alcoholics Anonymous Service Assembly. October 13-15, 2006, Hilton Wichita Airport Executive Conference Center, Wichita, KS. Registration is just \$5. One of the most enriching experiences for any AA service worker. Flyer at: www.ksarea25aa.org/page4.html.

Intergroup Meeting, 3rd Tuesday of every month, 8 p.m. St. Mary's Hospital, 6400 Clayton Rd., St. Louis.

Action items for April 8 Area Assembly

- Election of an Area Registrar (vote).
- Approval of Area CPC Chair (vote).
- Report on Spiritual Homecoming.
- Election of two State Convention Committee members (vote).
- Approval of the fiscal-year budget presented in January (vote).
- Presentation of proposed changes to Area Procedures Manual.

Origin of a Well-Known Quote

Many of us have heard that our co-founder Bill W. Said, "If A.A. ever fails, it will be from within," or words to that effect.

Actually, the quote is from the closing talk at the 1977 General Service Conference by Bob H., who served as G.S.O.'s general manager from 1968-1974. Excerpted here is an interesting piece of A.A. History:

"...all of us are a part of the continuum of A.A. history. To some small degree, then, each of us is responsible for A.A.'s future.

"Some of us, sometimes, are fearful of that future. We fear lest this development or that problem, may destroy us all. Fear not, my friends. If this Fellowship ever falters, it won't be because of 'two-hatters,' of professionals in the field. Nor will it be caused by future 'Rand-type' reports, or by members with 'other' problems. No, it won't be because of any of these things about which we seem to worry so much. If we ever fail, it will be simply because of us. It will be because we can't control our own egos, nor get along well enough with each other. It will be because we're just not wise enough nor good enough to hold this thing together. It will be because we think too much about our 'rights,' and too little about our obligations and responsibilities.

"But I don't think we're going to fall apart. I think we are going to stick together and keep A.A. strong and growing."

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The formalities ...

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).

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