



Eastern Area of Missouri, Conference Area 38

## Summer, 2003

### Service Work:

#### Why do some stay, while others do not?

Last issue's articles included a discussion on ways to handle our new service positions and some observations by those new to their positions. This issue we wanted to talk about why it is that some of us rotate on while others rotate out!

We don't have the answers, and don't wish to imply that either path is right and the other wrong, we simply wanted to get some feedback from those who have been there and to perhaps provide some information to groups or districts out there who might have struggled with the dilemma of filling their various service positions and keeping them filled.

The question we put to those who wished to respond was, "Give us a couple of the reasons you have stayed with service or left before or after your term was completed".

Although most of the responses we received were from those still actively involved in service, we were able to come up with some reasons that have been given by those who no longer serve within the service structure as told to those who responded to our request. We wish to thank all those who took the time to contribute.

#### Why I'm Still Involved In Service Today!

1. "I got involved in service because I wanted what others had. I heard that service would help me to stay sober and I took the suggestion".
2. "The reason I became involved in service? Too much time on my hands and I wanted to give something back to AA and have a chance to meet with people whom I care for. AA has given me so many blessings."
3. "I believe strong sponsorship and an active, structured home group practicing the third legacy is why people get involved and stay involved in service."
4. "Service makes me believe there is something I do belong to and am a part of. I never experienced that growing up. All parts of a service commitment are important and everyone's service is of equal value."
5. "Service gives me a chance to get out of myself. It is hard to think of me when I am trying to be of service to others. It's just so true that I get back so much more than I ever put in."
6. "Service allows me to get out of my little comfort zone which is made up of my regular meetings. I get to see people I wouldn't otherwise see and get exposed to thoughts and ideas I wouldn't otherwise hear."
7. "Bill W. closes his commentary on the six warranties of Concept XII with these thoughts: 'The sum of these attitudes and practices is, in our view, the very essence of democracy – in action and spirit.'

Freedom under God to grow in his likeness and image will ever be the quest of Alcoholics Anonymous... we of AA believe that our freedom to serve is truly the freedom by which we live – the freedom in which we have our being.' Thus our freedom to be and to flourish as people is based upon our quality of service. Happiness is a by-product of being useful. It is in service to others, especially to another Alcoholic, that God does for us what we cannot do for ourselves. We need not understand any great truths. The door has been left wide open. We need only reach out to another alcoholic, sharing our experience, strength and hope. Our rewards will be without limits.

#### Why I No Longer Serve In A Service Position!

1. "I didn't have the time I needed to do the job well."
2. "There was too much politics involved."
3. "The meetings were just too long and boring."
4. "I tried to be of service but I was told I was outside my area and wasn't needed."
5. "I didn't feel like I was given sufficient information and assistance to get the job done."
6. "It was time someone else got involved."

The following are thoughts given by those still in service as reasons they have seen for people leaving service:

1. "Our group took the first person who came along to fill our service positions and they weren't always ready for the responsibility or the best person for the job."
2. "We sometimes rushed people into certain positions when we should have merely let them make coffee or wash ashtrays and be of service in that way."
3. "I believe that if someone suffers from poor sponsorship and an inactive unstructured home group, then the chance of that person getting involved in service, much less staying involved in service is very dim."

Well, there you have it! Remember these are only the opinions of those who chose to participate but, hopefully the comments provided will provoke some discussion and give us all food for thought in arriving at our own decision as to whether we "rotate in or rotate out."

**The Editor**

## **Some Personal Thoughts On Service**

by Mike D. Alternate Editor

Since 1955 when Bill W. gave AA the Three Legacies of Recovery, Unity and Service, we have been responsible for extending the helping hand of AA anytime and anywhere someone has reached out for it.

I feel that the Third Legacy of Service is the most important of all. Once we recover and become members of a home group we sometimes let up and give ourselves a pat on the back for a job well done. I was one of the fortunate ones who had a sponsor, involved in service, who invited me to get involved. I was told to give back what had been so freely given.

I was hooked at my first District meeting. I was fascinated by the way business was conducted. Prior to that, my experience had consisted of group conscience meetings that had often been full of arguments that led to bad feelings.

Shortly after this, I was elected Alternate GSR and started regularly attending District Meetings where I began to learn the Twelve Traditions and not just read them at meetings. I met a new set of AA friends and gained new knowledge of AA service.

At the next rotation I became GSR and continued to become more involved. I was ready to attend my first Area Assembly and once again was very apprehensive and unsure of myself until I met the other new GSR's who were feeling the same as me.

Recovery for me was a miracle and once I got sober and found a home group I always felt there was more to sobriety than just meetings. Thanks to my sponsor, service work has been the answer for me.

Being a GSR gave me a feeling of worth that I hadn't experienced for years. Being informed made me feel helpful to my group and to myself. I was available to my group, to other GSR's and to the District. Being a GSR helped me to become involved in Workshops which are so important to the still suffering alcoholic and to those who would learn more about our program.

I became knowledgeable about GSO, it's literature, bulletins, kits, etc. I learned about the Concepts and was therefore better able to pass on information to the best of my ability.

Best of all, being a GSR made me feel I belonged. I belonged to a group of men and women who would teach me all about being a responsible member of AA.

In my humble opinion, my sobriety is my number one priority and the people I meet in service help me to maintain that priority. Meetings, my home group, my service work and the hand of my higher power help me to stay sober "One Day At A Time".

### **Chairperson's Chatter**

As your chairman, I saw our Spring Assembly fulfill one of our primary roles – to inform and prepare our delegate

For the General Service Conference. Due to your willingness and honesty during our sharing session on the conference agenda items, he was better able to serve Area 38. You shared your ideas, concerns and suggestions, which gave our delegate insight into how better to serve us. You shared with the language of the heart that Bill W., one of original founders, states many times in our literature. We asked him to serve and you have shown you are willing to support him in that effort.

We also survived the change in the agenda. Most of us don't like change or trying new ways, but you did so willingly and with genuine patience. Every new thing we do is an experiment, and after a few times, we will know if it works. There seemed to be a new energy throughout the session, and hopefully, everyone walked away our delegate for the General Service Conference. Due to feeling they had learned something that day. So, thanks to all who have been so willing to try a something new and in the loving spirit of our Fellowship.

### **From our Delegate**

#### **Being Friendly With Our Friends**

From our earliest times, Alcoholics Anonymous has been blessed with innumerable non-alcoholic (civilian) friends. Where would we be today if Bill W's brother-in-law, Leonard Strong hadn't agreed to be helpful to him?

Mr. Strong's influence led us directly to the Rockefeller Foundation, which, in turn, opened other doors into religion and medicine. Left to our own devices, without these friends present in AA's pioneering days, I would submit that our fledgling fellowship would have either died on the vine or evolved into something quite different from what we experience today. Their quiet and perhaps not so quiet counsel during those tumultuous times certainly buffered the tendencies of the "promoter classes" that existed then.

The vital need to have among our ranks non-alcoholic friends is as important today as it was then. Who among us can claim that their entry into AA was accomplished without the influence of non-alcoholic friends? These friends come from any number of backgrounds and disciplines. Doctors, lawyers, judges, theologians, captains of industry and social scientists have all contributed to the growth of AA here and abroad.

Currently, at the level of the General Service Board of Trustees, our by-laws provide that the number of non-alcoholic trustees not exceed seven of the twenty-one members. At the recently concluded 53<sup>rd</sup> General Service Conference of Alcoholics Anonymous, the Board elected to leave a vacancy in the ranks of Class A (non alcoholic) Trustees. This action was taken because the number of resumes for our friends available to serve

had dwindled to such a level that an informed choice could not be made.

One of our many responsibilities as servants to our groups and AA as a whole is to find ways to carry our message to others in a way that increases the overall exposure of the message to those who might be in a position to advocate on our behalf. What I mean by this is; have we twelve stepped our doctor, minister or other professional who might be in a better position to share AA's message to the still suffering alcoholic?

In our Conference Area of Eastern Missouri there are numerous Universities, Seminaries, Law Schools and other places of business where potential friends of AA are being trained and educated. While many of us do not travel and socialize in those circles, we may have friends or acquaintances, who have friends in these areas who might be of service to AA as a whole.

If you are aware of someone who might be available, please contact a past or present delegate and provide them with the information necessary to make contact with that individual.

### **Being Friendly With All Our Friends**

In this day and age, a workshop may soon come to be called by an entirely different name. A festival perhaps? Maybe a gathering? Or even an Event?

Whatever it is called, organizing one is a reflection of the spirit of Alcoholics Anonymous. The first word of the 12 steps, is the word "we" and it is essential to putting on the workshop, festival, gathering, event or whatever it is called. Organizational meetings are necessary. Getting many people involved is essential to the putting on of a workshop.

"The key thing is to call your workshop something other than a workshop if you want more people to attend it," said one chairperson of a recent workshop. "Most members don't like to attend workshops. They like to attend events, so you should call your workshop something other than a workshop."

Promotion is another aspect of a successful event. Putting together a flyer to promote the event, festival, gathering or workshop is a necessity. Getting people to attend meetings to promote the workshop is important. Having a band or creating a carnival atmosphere are some possible promotional tools; even an old fashion pot luck, anything to get fannies at the event, festival, gathering or workshop.

Make sure all people who need to be in the know are contacted. Those who organized a recent workshop, might have inadvertently "stepped on some toes" according to those involved. "Misunderstandings", might have occurred that could have been avoided on both sides. The workshop was nevertheless quite a success, and necessary information was passed on to those who wished to attend and become involved.

"Our workshop was an attention getter and a call to

action for those involved however it showed that we need to work together with the Area as a team in order to be in full compliance with Tradition Five, (Our primary purpose is to carry the message to the alcoholic who still suffers.)" said the chairperson.

Although a key Area Chairperson attended the workshop, that appearance was only as a member of AA, not in any Area capacity and it is hoped that better cooperation can be obtained in the future. One thing common throughout AA is the sharing of our experience, strength and hope and it is hoped that this experience will benefit both the Area and the individual AA members involved.

Rick F.

### **What Does The Area Chair Do?**

Hello family, my name is Matt L, and I've volunteered to write another article. This time I've been asked to write about the Area Chairperson.

Again, lets start with a basic definition from the AA Service Manual, page S40: **Chairperson:**

"The chairperson is responsible for the smooth running of area assemblies, consulting with the committee before setting the date and time, making sure that all groups are notified, consulting with officers and committee members on the program, and chairing the assembly meetings. The chairperson, more than any other officer, keeps the delegate informed about what is going on in the area, and makes sure that committee members are aware of what goes on in world services."

So, what understanding can we get from the above description? Lets take it from the top, and work our way through it.

*The chairperson is responsible for the smooth running of area assemblies.*

The chairperson negotiates the contract with the hotel for meeting space, coffee and refreshments, arranges for donuts, sees to it that head counts are taken for lunch arrangements, etc. The chairperson also helps to oversee the gathering and distribution of the substantial body of information that goes into helping the assembly attendees prepare for an assembly, like the printing of minutes, budgets, worksheets, and such, which are collected from the various area officers and committees. In short, the chairperson sees to it that all the little details, (and some not so little details) are provided for, so that we can concentrate on the business at hand in an informed and efficient manner.

*Consulting with the committee before setting the date and time, making sure that all groups are notified, consulting with officers and committee members on the program, and chairing the assembly meetings.*

One of the main responsibilities of the chairperson, is the setting of assembly dates, and the assembly agenda. After discussion with the delegate, and possibly

holding an agenda setting meeting, the chairperson sets the agenda for upcoming assemblies. Depending on the time of year, certain agenda items must be included in the upcoming assembly (i.e., conference reports, elections, budgets, and other recurring events.) The chairperson then sees to it that the DCM's, GSR's, and committee members have this information to take back to their committees, districts, and groups.

The most visible duty of the chairperson is chairing the assembly meetings. If you're reading this article, then you've most likely been to an assembly, and you've seen our chairperson in action. I won't belabor the obvious, but the chairperson is the primary mediator at these meetings. The chairperson maintains order in these proceedings. This can sometimes be a difficult job, many of us love AA deeply, and we want to protect it. This can make voting, and the discussion of topics, seem to take a grave seriousness. (I personally, have been swept up in this, and have taken part more than a few heated discussions, about what I felt was best for AA.) The chairperson must take this into account, and keep the tone of the assembly healthy. We AA's learn, (hopefully) that in discussing our differences, we gain a better understanding of the Fellowship as a whole. Issues that originally stood out in black & white contrast, now begin to take on the color of real life experience. This often comes to us in the practice of the Third Legacy Procedure, and in the voice of the minority opinion, which the chairperson guides.

*The chairperson, more than any other officer, keeps the delegate informed about what is going on in the area, and makes sure that committee members are aware of what goes on in world services.*

A vital responsibility of the chairperson is to be the 'eyes and ears' of our delegate, and the committee members. Once again, this is no little task. It includes visiting districts, making phone calls, sending and receiving e-mails, attending and holding workshops, and other social activities. They also keep in close contact with the Eastern Area Office Manager, who is our vital link to GSO. The chairperson meets regularly, through the year, with the delegate. This is an important channel for the flow of information. This is our 'Informed Group Conscience' in action, we gain a better understanding of AA's General Conference, and our chairperson helps pass to the delegate the conscience of the area, committees, and districts.

Well, I could go on and on, but in the interest of space, I'll sign off with that. I hope you have found this article useful and informative.

Yours in service, Matt L.

## **Bulletin Board**

### **July**

**Friday Night Live and Group #72 Pot Luck:**  
St. Andrew United Methodist Church 3975 N.  
Hwy 67 in Florissant July 25<sup>th</sup> 6:30 Pot Luck,  
7:30 Traditions meeting, Speaker Mark M.,  
8:30 Traditions Skit

### **August**

**Working With Others Group Annual  
Summer Whoopee Party** 3 pm Saturday  
August 9<sup>th</sup>, open meeting at 7:30 pm #3  
Briarbrook Trail off Bopp Rd. for info call  
(314) 518-9003.

**20<sup>th</sup> Annual Fall Classic, Labor Day  
Weekend** August 29<sup>th</sup> –31<sup>st</sup> Airport Marriott  
Hotel

### **October**

**Women to Women Seminar 2003** October 3<sup>rd</sup>  
– 5<sup>th</sup>, Rosemont IL, [www.wtw-seminar-2003.org](http://www.wtw-seminar-2003.org)

Got a hot topic? Got something on  
your mind? Got a grudge? Got a  
beef? Got a question? We can't  
promise to print it, but we can't print  
it if you don't submit it.

**Have A Great Summer &  
We'll See You At The  
Fall Assembly**

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