



# GRATITUDE GAZETTE

Eastern Area of Missouri

Summer 2005

Conference Area 38

## Yes, Virginia, there IS room at the inn

There *ARE* rooms available in the convention block at the Holiday Inn Select in Columbia. There are *LOTS* of rooms available, despite rumors to the contrary. And the rumors are flying. How do I know? Heard 'em, fell for 'em; almost didn't bother to pre-register because, hey, why bother if you won't be sleeping there anyway, eh? Argh. Just when you start thinking you're smart, savvy, and well-informed...

For those of us lucky enough to be at Area Assembly, reserving rooms is going to be easy, convenient, and free. Well, okay, the phone call's free. Missed the Area Assembly? Just call the hotel at: 573-445-8531 and use code "MSC". **USE THE CODE.** If you don't use the code, you might be incorrectly informed that there are no rooms available. No doubt, that's what happened to whoever's telling folks that there are no more rooms to be had.

You may see this information elsewhere in the Gazette. Why are we harping on it? Simple. It's important! We'd hate to see anyone miss being part of such a celebration of recovery, service and unity. But let's be practical, too – if you don't pre-register, you have absolutely NO chance of winning any of the free registrations to next year's Missouri State Convention, do you?

See you there!

## The Voice of Alcoholics Anonymous

Under the theme "Basics of Our Home Group – Recovery, Unity and Service" the 136 Conference members of A.A.'s 55<sup>th</sup> General Service Conference met in New York City April 17-23.

What is this annual closed meeting, often referred to as A.A.'s "annual business meeting", about?

Delegate chairperson Jimmy Jack B., of Kansas, speaking Sunday afternoon, said: "We are really the voice of Alcoholics Anonymous as a whole. We need not forget the group conscience of our areas, but you may set those views aside long enough to listen like you have no opinion. This is a whole lot harder than it sounds. It allows me to levitate above the heat of the debate and to get a better look at Alcoholics Anonymous as a whole. It removes my blinders, so to speak. It brings the importance of what we do into the light. Learn to trust the committee process, the Conference process. We will see spiritual principles in action and experience the unity of the Conference."

Quotation excerpted from Box 4-5-9 (June-July 2005, page 1) with permission of AA World Services, Inc.

From the State Convention Committee...

## Nine Speakers Featured at Missouri State Convention



The 2005 Missouri State Convention is featuring nine speakers from across the country *and* from in-state. The convention this year is August 19-21 at the Holiday Inn Select in Columbia.

Harold G. from Annapolis, Maryland, will be sharing on Saturday at 10 am. Harold said in a telephone interview that he believes it is important that newcomers experience AA conventions to see the "new freedom and happiness" that many people enjoy from consistently working the program. He said, "Commitment is the key and recovery as we understand it in AA is spiritual, that our whole path is spiritual." When asked how old he is, Harold replied, laughing, that he does not like answering that question and is 103 years old, but has only been sober since 1970.

Bobby M. from Cleveland, Ohio, will speak Sunday at 10 am. Bobby has been sober since July 26, 1978, and still attends his original home group after 27 years. He said, "My sponsor told me to get in the dummy row, which is the front row at my home group, and I'm still there. I give back what was freely given me. I found God, love and trust in the rooms of AA." Bobby said the hardest thing was giving up the drink. "Alcohol was everything that made me ok." He added, "In recovery I believe there are no mistakes, only opportunities to grow".

Our Saturday 8 pm speaker is J.C. H., from College Park, Georgia, who has been sober since May 1, 1984. J.C. said that one of the most important things he learned in sobriety is that he has choices. "Prior to AA," he explained, "I only existed. I had no real direction as to how to live life. Today I have choices, which enhances the quality and ability to contribute to life. When drinking, I always wanted quick fixes. With hitting bottom, I became teachable and started accepting who I was and what I was."

Louis D., from Dallas, Texas, will be the 8 pm speaker on Friday and Geneva B. from Chicago, Illinois is the Al-Anon speaker at 1:30pm on Saturday.

The convention has speakers from both the Eastern and Western Areas of Missouri this year. Dorothy P. from Kansas City, is the early bird speaker at 6:30 pm on Friday and Sissy S., from St. Louis, speaks at 7 am on Saturday.

New for this year are the late-night young people's speakers. Ammie A., from Independence, Mo., will share at 1 am on Saturday, and Travis W., from St. Louis, Mo., will speak at 1 am on Sunday.

The ice cream social this year is free with registration. Those who pre-register will have a chance to win free registration for the 2006 convention. If you win one of the free registrations, you can use it yourself or give it to someone as a gift.

See you at the convention!

## 2005 General Service Conference Advisory Actions & Considerations

Conference Advisory Actions represent recommendations made by the standing committees and approved by the Conference body as a whole; or recommendations discussed and voted upon by all Conference members during general sessions. Some Advisory Actions and a few additional committee considerations appear below in condensed form. A complete list will be published in the *Final Conference Report*.

### Advisory Actions

**Floor Actions** - that the draft manuscript, *A.A. in Prison: Inmate to Inmate*, including revisions suggested by the 2005 Conference Committee on Corrections, be returned to the trustees' Committee on Corrections for review and revision, mindful of the concerns expressed during the Conference discussion, and that the revised draft manuscript be submitted to the 2005 Conference Committee on Corrections.

**Agenda** - that the theme for the 2006 General Service Conference be: "Sponsorship, Service and Self-Support in a Changing World"; that the Workshop topic for the 2006 General Service Conference be "Passing It On in a Changing World."

**Correctional Facilities** - that the "Singleness of Purpose statement" be included in the pamphlet "A message to Correctional Professionals"; that the name of the Conference Committee on Correctional Facilities be changed to the Conference Committee on Corrections.

**Finance** - that in the interest of self-support, area contributions for delegates' expenses be increased from \$800 to \$1,200 effective with the 2006 Conference and that the areas continue to be encouraged to make contributions over and above this requested amount to help cover a greater portion of the Conference costs.

**International Convention/A.A. Regional Forums** - that an encrypted, anonymity-protected, delayed extranet broadcast of the 2005 International Convention Opening Flag Ceremony be approved.

**Literature** - that the Spanish-language Third Edition Big Book, *Alcohólicos Anónimos*, continue to be developed and a progress report and/or draft copy be brought to the 2006 Conference Literature Committee; that the term "sexual preference" be replaced with "sexual orientation" on page 10 in the pamphlet "A.A. and the Gay/Lesbian Alcoholic; that the revisions suggested by the committee to "The A.A. Group" pamphlet be approved.

**Policy/Admissions** - that the timetable for the election of delegates from the Western Canada Region be revised to allow for an even distribution of new delegates on each panel; that the 58<sup>th</sup> General Service Conference be held April 27-May 3, 2006.

**Public Information** - that the Membership Survey pamphlet

and the one-way Membership Survey display be updated to reflect the findings from the 2004 Membership Survey with the following revision to the reporting categories under "Length of Sobriety": Sober more than 10 years, Sober between 5-10 years, Sober between 1-5 years, Sober less than 1 year; that the television public service announcement (PSA) "Living in Chaos," developed by the trustees' P.I. Committee be approved.

**Report and Charter** - that online meetings in languages in addition to English, French and Spanish be listed in A.A. directories under "ONLINE MEETINGS" with the meeting language indicated next to the listing and in accordance with a 1997 Conference Advisory Action.

**Trustees** - that new language be added to existing language of the Bylaws of the General Service Board regarding successor terms of Class B trustees in the event of resignation or death; that the slate of trustees and officers be elected at the annual meeting of the members of the General Service Board in April 2005.

### Additional Considerations

**Archives** - the trustees provided updates to the conference committee on the following ongoing projects: preparations for the International Convention, Ownership of Material, the current status of the audio preservation project, and distribution increase of the *Markings* newsletter.

**Cooperation With the Professional Community** - discussed the need for a pamphlet directed to the criminal justice system and requested that the trustees' Committee on Treatment Facilities/Cooperation With the Professional Community review current C.P.C. literature to see whether it provides easily accessible information on singleness of purpose, open and closed meetings, proof of attendance at meetings, anonymity, and how to contact A.A. locally, and report to the 2006 Conference Committee on C.P.C.

**Grapevine** - agreed to forward to the Grapevine Corporate Board the request that a collection of A.A. Grapevine stories for young people be produced in 2006 or later.

**Treatment Facilities** - reviewed the results of the 2004 Treatment Facilities Committee Survey, which noted that in many areas, inpatient treatment services have decreased and outpatient services have increased; and many local Treatment Facilities Committees bring A.A. meetings into other institutions such as nursing homes, halfway houses and homeless shelters.

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### Our Area Officers

Delegate: Chip B  
Area Chair: Jim F.  
Registrar: Donnie B.  
Treasurer: Dave B.

Alternate delegate: Pat B.  
Alternate Chair: Laura V.  
Recording Secretary: Ian S.  
Assistant Treasurer: Jon M.

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

The 2005 Conference is over and I can honestly say it was an experience of a lifetime. As I have shared at the Districts I have already visited, "You can't get here from there". On Monday the 18th of April, I had the opportunity to present the Area highlights to the Conference. At that same time and same day 16 years prior I was being escorted by three of the Sheriffs deputies into a lock-down ward, under the order of a judge, for a 96 hour observation period. I was described as "dangerously anti-social" and listed as a danger to myself and others due to my alcohol abuse.

I have only a handful of Districts left to visit and present my report of the Conference. The report has been given in as little as 20 minutes and up to an hour. I really appreciate the efforts of the Districts in gathering together for the presentations. It saves the Area money and saves me a lot of time trying to get the information out while it is still new.

Sharing hour upon hour of reading in preparation for the trip and then the almost 80 hours of meetings and discussions during the Conference is almost impossible to describe in the short time allotted. Most of the Districts already have a copy of the actions taken at the Conference.

Some of my counter-parts from the other Areas have tried to sum up the Conference in one word: here are their thoughts. All these words: Spiritual, Memorable, Grateful, Happyjoyousfree (that's just one word in Louisiana), Humble, Love, Hope, Astounding, Inspiring, Humbling, Life-changing, Gratitude, Soul-stirring, Blessed, Awesome, Passionate, Indescribable, Nurturing, Sad, Loving, Emotional, Unified and Awe-inspiring, when used together, come as close to describing it as possible. *Supercalifragilisticexpialidocious* is what came to the mind of this alcoholic. I just can't describe it in one word.

The Area may have a chance to view the opening Flag Ceremony of the International Convention. I will receive a password for an encrypted presentation of the ceremony. It will occur on a delayed broadcast and will only be available at one site. We would need to set up equipment to see the presentation. At the moment I can't tell you what will be needed for this. More will be revealed.

Thank you for the opportunity to serve the Area.

- Chip B., Area 38 Delegate

**Pre-register for the 2005 State Convention and reserve your hotel room now. There ARE rooms available - just use code "MSC".**

### **Need more information on the Fall Classic or 2005 Spiritual Homecoming?**

Both events have great web sites. The Fall Classic can be found at [www.fall-classic.com](http://www.fall-classic.com). No Internet access? Call Mike M. at 314-205-1565 or Wilda P. at 636-256-4976.

The 2005 Spiritual Homecoming is at [www.stl2005.org](http://www.stl2005.org). It seems to be pretty much web-based, but it looks like you can send your reservations to: 2005 Spiritual Homecoming PO Box 8626, St. Louis, MO 63126. More will be revealed!

### **Chairman says, "Get ready for October!"**

At the June 18 assembly, we're discussing "basics"- Conference history and structure, the Traditions, and the Concepts. It's important that all of us keep learning and sharing these basics, which guide everything we do in service. Basic principles like "rotation" and the "right of decision" prepare us to work at the group, district, and area levels. And basic knowledge of our history and structure enables us to participate responsibly in AA's real-world decisions.

At the October 1 assembly, we'll get into a different type of "basics" and talk about the AA groups. The groups were the theme of this year's Conference, and most of us agree that the quality of recovery, unity, and service is related to the health of our home groups. So do we really know how to build healthy groups? If we discuss this in our groups and districts over the summer, and come prepared for some serious roundtable discussions at the October assembly, we are likely to make some progress in this area. Here are a few questions to prime the pumps:

What are the real differences between a meeting, a group, and a home group? How do you start a group? Do we have good literature about groups? If so, has anyone in your group read it? How do you know if a group is healthy, and how do you build a healthy group? What's the right group size, and how many groups should there be? What are the best format, location, and frequency of meetings? Are meetings for "sharing" or "study"? Should we have more open or closed meetings? Do we need "special-interest" groups? What is the relation of sponsorship to the group? Should groups talk about Unity and Service, or just Recovery? Business meetings - how often and how long? How many group jobs should there be? How much rent should we pay, how much money should we have, and how do we keep the treasurer from running off with it? How do groups deal with Traditions problems? With slippers? With romance? Can a group be healthy if no one in the group knows the Traditions (such as rotation or autonomy) or Concepts (such as minority opinion or good leadership)? What's a "group inventory"? How do we get more people to join groups, and more groups to join the service structure? (Should we?) What's the job of GSR, really? Should groups try to help other groups? Should groups do service work, or leave that to the districts? How do groups affect other groups or AA as a whole? What is the absolute best possible way to carry the message?

If we have a lively and open-minded discussion this summer, then by the end of the day on October 1 the job of GSR may indeed look like "the most important job in AA", as it has been called. In fact, our GSR's might be among the busiest and most valued service workers in our area. If so, they'll be glad they learned the "basics".

- Jim F., Area Chair

## How's YOUR home group doing?

Our Southwest regional trustee, Gary K., had a lot to say about home groups when he was here in April. When asked about the theme of this year's General Service Conference, he said he was, "...just tickled" with it. Why? "It's something we can't workshop enough in AA. We've got a lot of people who are just going to meetings, and they've never belonged to a group... there's so little understanding in our new people of the difference between a group and a meeting."

Part of that problem, he says, is that the focus of many AA's has changed. "Our fellowship is getting very inward-looking. We're looking *inside* the wagon ring. And we're worried about who's coming to the groups. We're worried about what they're saying when they get there. We're worried about who's sending them... And we're not doing our 12-step work at the door. We're depending on the meeting to do the 12-step work. And I think...it is [creating], and is going to continue to create a ton of problems for us. And I see this everywhere. Everywhere I go. More and more, we're depending on the substance of the program, and the substance of the message to be just: go to meetings."

Are we taking our home groups and AA itself for granted? Are we turning singleness of purpose into narrowness of purpose? Are we, as we were once warned we could, destroying our fellowship from within? Or are we just going through a cycle, with the "good old days" coming around again on the horizon?

Before the next assembly, let's look openly and honestly at our home groups and come together prepared to learn and grow.

### Next time (and beyond) ...

We'll have more on our conventions and gatherings: what went on at the State Convention, the International Convention, and the Fall Classic. More on the upcoming Spiritual Homecoming. And on the "Basics of our Home Group." 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](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).

## AREA BULLETIN BOARD

(Updated version always available at [www.eamo.org](http://www.eamo.org))

### River City Freedom Group 20th Anniversary Celebration!!!

June 18, 2005, Fellowship at 5:00 p.m., dinner at 5:45 p.m., St. Vincent Grade School Gym, 741 Forest Ave. Cape Girardeau, MO; please bring a side dish.

### 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.

### The State-Wide SMICYPAA Camp out '05

July 15-17, 2005, the SMICYPAA (Show Me International Conference of Young People in Alcoholics Anonymous) Bid Committee invites you to a three day/two night camping & one day float trip on Missouri's Famous North Fork River with midnight AA Speaker Meetings! Suggested donation is only \$15. Don't miss this one! For more info: [www.smicypaa.org](http://www.smicypaa.org).

### July 19 -Preregistration deadline for MO State Convention.

Don't miss out on your chance to win a free registration for the 2006 convention! Don't have a flyer? Download one in PDF format from [www.eamo.org](http://www.eamo.org)

### 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](http://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.

### Fall Classic, "There is a Solution"

September 2-4, 2005, Airport Marriot; For more info: [www.fall-classic.com](http://www.fall-classic.com).

### Area Assembly October 1, 2005

Holiday Inn, Interstate 70 and Exit 212, 900 Corporate Parkway, Wentzville, MO 63385

### 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,

### 2005 Spiritual Homecoming

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