

Our 12th Step Responsibility

Central Service: the Connection

An interview with Don B. at Central Service

May, 2007

Even though Central Service/Intergroup and General Service are separate entities, they augment each other. Both are vital to facilitate carrying the message. In seeking to learn how we all work together in our 12th Step work, the Gratitude Gazette spoke with Don B. the Executive Secretary of the Alano Society's Saint Louis Area Central Service Office. Even though our conversation focused primarily on the St. Louis Central Service Office (CSO), we learned that the principals practiced in this office apply to any Intergroup Office around the US and Canada.

GG: *Please tell us about the work of the CSO.*

Don: Our office in Maplewood has 3 paid staff and 10 volunteers. Since our telephone number is the one widely available, we are often the “first face of AA” for the alcoholic and to the public. Therefore, we take care to give an appropriate impression to our callers and visitors. Our primary duty is to help bring 12th Step work to the still suffering alcoholic. We do not actually make 12th step visits from this office—we facilitate 12th Step calls through contacting volunteers (we update our volunteer lists yearly).

In addition, we are a clearing house for calls of all types: from the public seeking information, from institutions seeking AA speakers, requests for AA booths at health fairs, calls from Groups and Districts for local information, and so on. We maintain large resource lists for public inquiries. If the public requests non-AA information—treatment centers, for example—we refer them to the appropriate party, such as the National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Abuse. We closely adhere to Tradition 6.

We network with Area Committees to fulfill requests. We call Districts for local Bridging the Gap and Special Needs requests. We have an abundance of AA literature available. Our meeting book “Where & When” is updated bi-annually; our newsletter “the Alano News” is printed monthly. Over 500 Groups receive our monthly mailings: which include the “News” and multiple AA events flyers.

To help us continue to do our job well, the CSO Executive Secretary attends the yearly Intergroup Convention—held at different locations around the country.

GG: *How do CSO and General Service work together?*

Don: Even though we are separate from the Conference Structure, we are, in a way, “parallel universes”—we all work toward the same goal: carry the message. Therefore, our relationship with the Groups, Districts, and Area is a cooperative one—there is a flow back and forth. Some Districts send representatives to the IR meetings. We depend upon up-to-date information from the Districts, etc. so that we can pass it on. We network with Area and District Committees as necessary to fulfill requests from professionals and the public. Since 1973 the Alano Board President (or their Board representative) has had a vote at the Area Assembly. At the same time, we take care to stay within our defined function at CSO—we do not interfere with the Districts or Area. If something comes our way that is outside our office purview, we refer it to a General Service entity.

GG: *How does CSO serve the Groups?*

Don: We are the Groups’ Central Service Office. We serve the Groups—not the other way around. As with the Conference Structure’s inverted triangle, we have a similar philosophy—Groups at the top, IR (Intergroup Representative) underneath, and CSO/Alano Society Board at

