



# GRATITUDE GAZETTE

## EASTERN AREA OF MISSOURI CONFERENCE AREA 38

### WINTER 2004

#### CHAIRPERSON'S CHATTER

Welcome to the 2004 Winter Assembly! I hope you are as excited as I am looking to the upcoming year. We have many new things in place and are seeing if they fit. We have an opportunity to leave the area service structure a little better, than before, if it all works. If it isn't working, we can always put things into original form. If we stumble down the line, as this alcoholic does so often, we can help pick each other up along the way. It's all an experiment, hopefully tried with an open-mind and a willing heart.

Before we look at any visions we have for the future, let's take the time to reflect on the last year. Do you remember the first assembly you attended in the position you agreed to serve? Has the assembly helped you to learn anything about the area/district/group service or yourself? Try to look at 2003's assembly agenda items. What information benefited you the most? What was the least helpful to your service position? What could we do to help strengthen the assembly? How did you utilize the area officers or area committee chairs to aid in your work? Are you more confident in your position? Can you see how service benefits your group, district and also your personal journey of sobriety?

As I reflect, I have seen true unity, open-mindedness, and a willing spirit in the assembly. We haven't always agreed, but we were not disagreeable with each other. We have tried new things that have worked, and fine-tuned the things already in place. Your groups and districts were always ready to come forward when our delegate needed your voice and were respectfully attentive when he was reporting to us. All our committees are busy helping to find that alcoholic and the groups are there when they find us. Hopefully, your area officers and committee chairs have been as available as you have needed us to be. If not, bring us to the front, so we can aid you in your work.

As I said at the start, I am very energized about the coming year. Our 2004 General Service Conference theme is "Our Singleness of Purpose – The Cornerstone of A.A." Please take the time to review what this means to you, your group, your district and to A.A. as a whole. We have opportunities that will increase our unity and service to the fellowship. There's something I have always noticed around our fellowship. You won't find someone taking so much time away from their personal life to attend assembly, district meetings and what other service they may be doing because they hate A.A. The two alcoholics who may disagree on what is best for A.A. are the two alcoholics that truly love A. A. This is where I feel we excel – we truly want the best for A.A., which in the long run, is the best for that still suffering alcoholic.

As in the past, let me or the other officers how we can be helpful. We are only here to serve and we need your participation to best do the job. We need each other on this road of happy destiny. As we trudge this road of integrity and respect, we will know the true spiritual awakening our founders desired... just doing the best that we can "One Day At A Time".

Pat B. Area Chair

#### CORRECTIONS CHAIR

With the New Year comes another year of wondering what will happen to our A.A. members in prison. Each one of us knows about the rising cost of services and how it affects our daily lives. We personally have to cut back here, to get what we want there. So to, in the County jails and the State prisons.

Most County jails do not have A.A. literature to hand out to people who are locked up, even for the first timers. No Where & When's to guide them to A.A.

meetings when they are released. The need for literature is even more acute when we factor in all of the new prison facilities that have been opened in the last five years.

I can tell you from my own personal experience with traveling as a Volunteer in Corrections (VIC) to various prisons, that there is an ever growing need for volunteer assistance to those still serving time, as well as to those about to be released. As we are well aware, the best time to plant the A.A. seed is when the drunk is in the midst of his or her darkest despair. Something as simple as an A.A. pamphlet can provide much needed hope and guidance.

I urge each and every Group and District to adopt a prison to which they donate Big Books, Twelve & Twelve's, Daily Reflections and other A.A. literature. We may be the only hope these men and women have to obtain this much, needed information.

Soft cover literature and pamphlets may be purchased from GSO or Central Services and then delivered to the applicable District Corrections Chairperson. If your District doesn't have a Corrections Chairperson, elect one, or, if that doesn't work, come in person (along with the literature) and attend the Correction Committee meeting at the Area Assembly at 9:00 am where the literature will be gladly accepted for delivery.

As Corrections Chair, I would like each of you to know that many officials praise the A.A. program and the work of the VIC's. Speaking for myself, such service has been a rewarding part of my recovery. Always remember, the Responsibility Declaration: I am responsible. When anyone, anywhere, reaches out for help, I want the hand of AA always to be there. And for that: I am responsible.

Ben C. Correction Committee Chairperson

### **WHAT I GET OUT OF CORRECTIONS WORK**

When I started taking AA meetings into jails, work release and halfway houses years ago, my first thought was I didn't have anything in common with those inside nor anything to offer them. After all, I never spent time in jail or any facility of any kind. I never accumulated any DWIs or got into trouble with the law.

Then the thought hit me one day. I do have something in common with them. I am an alcoholic just like them. The

thought hits me every time I attend a meeting in jail, work release or halfway house. I am reminded each time that I could be in the same situation - IF I decide to take the next drink. I often relay that message in the meetings I attend. Yes, my circumstances may be different but I potentially could be in the same predicament if I decide to take that next drink. The more I attend meetings in those facilities, the less likely the chance that I will ever end up there as a resident and the more I realize how lucky I've been - up to this point, that is. The more I attend meetings at such places, the more I am reminded I am just like them, that I am not better than they are but I am their equal. I am reminded each time of why I drank in the first place. I drank for the effect produced by alcohol. I am reminded of my insecurities, fears, feelings, etc.

Each time I attend I am reminded that I'm in a meeting of AA. Each time I attend the facilities I am reminded of the thoughts of why I give up an evening to attend an AA meeting there. I am reminded each time I go there of where I don't want to end up.

I recalled speaking in a state prison several years ago, where one of the inmates was in a wheelchair. He later commented he was glad I was there because he was a high bottom alcoholic like myself. He reminded me of my nights of drinking and driving. He relayed a story of why he was in prison. He was left in a wheelchair after three people died in a car accident. I was reminded that that could have been me and still could be me, if, I decide to take that next drink. I have never forgotten that experience.

I am also reminded each time of the blessings I've received from attending meetings in facilities. For instance, I recall speaking at a halfway house on the very day my mother died. I received many blessings that night because most of the residents said they were still using when either or both parents had died.

I don't know if any of the people have stayed sober through my years of attending meetings in facilities. In fact, it is none of my business. I do know one thing is for sure: I am sober. Enough said.

Rick F. Gratitude Gazette Committee

Check out the December 2003 Grapevine for some additional articles on AA Behind the Walls.

## YOUNG PERSONS CORNER

(Ashley is new to the committee and this is the first of what we hope will be many articles by her with a view to focusing on the younger crowd.)

### AN ATTITUDE OF GRATITUDE

I have never seen an alcoholic who was filled with gratitude get drunk!

Sobriety has taught many of us that the gift of giving surpasses materialistic presents. Many of us used to rebel against actions of love, happiness and gratitude. Today, many AA's rebel against resentments, self-pity, and self-seeking actions and motives.

We have come together unified by a God as we have come to understand Him, with a purpose to beat down a disease which has drawn us away from our hopes and dreams.

After interviewing many AA members, there was one thing I heard over and over again and that was that we had searched for love, we had searched for happiness and we had searched for God, and that once we gave of ourselves, we found all three.

An experience that has happened to many of us is losing something or someone and in doing so having lost faith. This happened to me, but a miracle occurred at one of the worst moments in my life. My father had passed away. I thought God had given up on me. Faith walked back into my life when a girl opened up to me when I did not want to open up to anyone. Through giving to this wonderful girl I found God again. I was blessed with joy and happiness once again, through giving.

In Alcoholics Anonymous we come together sharing our experience strength and hope. Without this attitude of gratitude we would not be the miracles we are today.

Ashley S. Gratitude Gazette Committee

### I'M TIRED OF SERVICE WORK

I'm tired of service work. I'm tired of being the one who goes the extra mile, the one who sets up the meeting room, who makes the coffee, who acts as the greeter, who chairs the meeting, or represents the Group as an IR or GSR, or acts as treasurer or secretary. I'm tired of taking

a new sponsee to new meetings or meeting with him or her to work on a step or discuss a tradition.

Sound familiar? Ever catch yourself bemoaning the momentary lapse of judgment that got you to accept a nomination or volunteer for a service position in the first place.

"I really don't want a two month, or one year or two year commitment, I don't have time for it. I want to go out and have some fun or spend the time on me or just veg out. Let somebody else do it." Ever voiced those sentiments?

I'm sitting here doing just that. I don't want to come up with an article that no one's going to read anyway. I'm just not creative enough. I'm too tired. I want to just take care of me.

Then I heard of two guys I know, who weren't taking part in service, who are back out there taking care of themselves, taking a drink or two, or three. And then there's the other fellow from my Home Group who stopped doing the deal and somehow life overwhelmed him and he's no longer with us at all. I miss all three of them, and I wonder how could it have happened, but I really don't have to look very far or think very hard about it. I know what happened. It's been drummed into me from the very beginning of my sobriety... work the steps, find a sponsor, go to meetings and get in service.

Anybody got a topic for a Gratitude Gazette article?

The Editor

We really do welcome suggested service topics or articles for the Gazette. 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. Don't be afraid, no one but you and I will know if we don't print what you have to say, what do you have to lose?

## **NEW EASTERN AREA OF MISSOURI OFFICE HOURS**

**The office is now open on Wednesday afternoons from 3:00 PM to 7:00 PM.**

These hours coincide with the Central Service Office extended hours on Wednesday. Do all your shopping at one convenient time. Thanks to Frank P. for making this possible.

## **EASTERN AREA OF MISSOURI WEBSITE (EAMO.ORG)**

Don't forget to grab a flyer about the Website and see if your District or Committee has ideas or information they want posted. Thanks Ian.

## **UPCOMING EVENTS**

- Saturday, January 24, 2004 District 2 Inventory 10:00 AM – 2:00 PM (fellowship 9:30)  
St. Cecelia's Church in the gym/cafeteria 906 Eichelberger  
Pot Luck finger food. Marge D. (314) 771-3402  
Jimmy F. (314) 353-0494
- Saturday, January 24, 2004 District 42 Free Lunch Eating Meeting 12:00 – 2:00 PM  
Ivy Chapel 620 N Woods Mill no need to bring a side dish  
RSVP to Tom L (636) 530-1846  
Kim B. (314) 275-4954
- Saturday, January 31, 2004 AA/Alanon Pot Luck 6:00 – 10:00 PM  
Immaculate Conception Church 7240 Anna in Maplewood  
Bring a side dish or desert Babysitting during the meeting
- Saturday, February 14, 2004 29<sup>th</sup> Annual Sweetheart Dinner Dance 6:00 PM  
St. Ann Community Center \$18.00 per person  
Gene (636) 397-6422
- February 21<sup>st</sup> weekend 5 Corners in Sikeston, MO
- Thursday, February 26, 2004 4<sup>th</sup> Annual Celebration Meeting of Gateway to Sobriety  
Pot Luck 6:00 PM speakers to follow. Holy Communion  
Church Delmar & Jackson U-City
- February 27-29<sup>th</sup>, 2004 St. Louis Women's Show downtown America's Center Volunteers needed  
to cover an AA booth. Contact your PI Chair or the Area Chair.