



Rotation? Already?

Here we are, friends, already halfway through this rotation – and it's time to start some serious consideration of the next rotation. Why? Maybe so the next group of trusted servants doesn't have to re-invent the wheel yet again. Many new committee chairs will come from current committee membership – some won't. If we start getting people excited about upcoming service positions *now*, while there's still plenty of time to learn about how the job actually functions, they'll be ready to get to work from the start instead of spending the first six months feeling their way around in the dark trying to find out whatever the heck it is they're supposed to be doing. Which is why you're going to see massive workshops on Area-level service at this month's Area Assembly.

If you're not currently busy at the Area level, now may be the time to try it out. If you're rotating out of a position, it's time to think about who's going to be doing your job next year and what they need to know (and what job you're going to rotate in to). Let the new guys know what you've done that works and – here's where humility comes in – what windmills you've been jousting with that just won't fall the way you want 'em to. And if you, like your editor, have tried some things that just ain't gonna work no way, no how, you might want to keep your successor from making the same mistakes. Just some things to think about, especially if you're not at the workshops.

– Editor

"I spend a lot of hours on the computer with notes and numbers jotted down," says Area Treasurer Dave B. "There is more to being a Treasurer than collecting money and writing checks. There are IRS forms, payroll and withholding, reports are regularly requested, ideas that need answering and a surprising number of questions about GSO, Finances, and Traditions. Of course, a good Treasurer will try to be quick to respond with accurate information.

"For the Area, we have developed over time a system that is very good, in my opinion. I've chatted with a number of other Area Treasurers and the GSO comptroller, and have heard some real horror stories. I've heard about other systems that make me scratch my head - sometimes bad and sometimes, "Why didn't I think of that?"

"Of course, the most work comes at budget time. The budget itself isn't necessarily hard to do, getting responses is. The working copy of the Area Budget is presented in January and voted on in the Spring Assembly, when it is finalized. That allows the Treasurer three months to travel to Districts and answer questions..

"One of the challenges for the Treasurer is balancing the budget expenses with a projected income. We can budget for any amount - we just have to be sure that the income is sufficient to meet the budget. If donations from groups fail to meet the expenses - the overall spending would have to be reduced a proportionate amount.

"Out of that quandary has come an accounting and budgetary process known as "Budgeting Ahead". What that means, simply, is that the Area already has the money saved up and is, in essence, paid up. Budgeting is based on funds that are already in the bank. Of course, that means years of setting aside money on a periodic basis into a separate account until it reaches it's goal; i.e. the proposed expenses for an entire fiscal year. In short: Don't spend or even think about spending it, until you've got it.

"Currently, several times a month the income and expenses are totaled up, checked for the difference, and the trend is watched. For the past fiscal year, we have been trending neutral, meaning our income and expenses remain fairly constant. So why change? Simply, we can't budget money we don't have. If we were to undergo significant changes in income from groups for whatever reason, suffer an overall monetary catastrophe or even want to increase our service to the suffering alcoholic, we might or might not have the money available.."

The AA message is a spiritual one; the Promises tell us we will lose our fear of financial insecurity. But we have to be practical enough to provide for ourselves. To paraphrase Dave: God will provide, but there's no magic involved. We have to do the work.

It's Budget time again!

Self support is where money and spirituality meet, right? So how come we serene, upstanding, service-oriented alcoholics seem to go a little bit insane when it comes time to spending money on service? Nothing brings out the belligerent drunk in an otherwise sane AA like a discussion over money. And yet, every year we manage to put together budgets at every level of the fellowship – usually without bloodshed.

By the time you read this, a proposed budget will be ready for our perusal and discussion. We'll vote on it at the April assembly. Our treasurer and assistant treasurer have been hard at work getting it ready, and there's more to consider than you might think.

2006 Area Assemblies:
April 8, June 24, October 7 & 8
Holiday Inn
Wentzville, Missouri

Our Spiritual Homecoming...

Once in a Lifetime

We all knew the Spiritual Homecoming was going to be special, truly a once-in-a-lifetime experience. It was that and more. Your editor, who considers herself a fairly tough old bird, found herself with the shivers and tears more than once during the weekend, and those are moments that can't be communicated well in words. The committee did an outstanding job and produced something that, in the end, was more than just an event. We asked committee chair and co-chair Ginny J. and Ed M. to share with us, and while there isn't room to print it all here, we'll try to get the full article up on the www.eamo.org web site (in the Gratitude Gazette section). And now, here's Ginny and Ed, and just a few of the comments they collected...

From the committee

We think the best way to report on the 2005 Spiritual Homecoming is just to share expressions of experience, strength & hope offered by some of those who attended. Some of their comments:

"It was truly an honor to be... in one place with so many AA members from around the world. ...Sunday morning I really felt like I was witnessing history in the making. It's hard to describe the emotions that I felt at that moment...I had a tremendous surge of love and pride for this great fellowship which we are privileged to hold in trust for the next generation." Laura V., MO.

Brenda L., past delegate from MN.: "The Sunday morning event was awesome – I cried through most of it."

"When Bill turned his workings over to the fellowship in 1955, and he and Lois left the podium and sat down in the audience with the rest of the crowd, he made the remark that that was the biggest 3 days of his AA career. This 3 day event had to be one of the biggest days of my AA career, along with having the privilege of being at the conference with Bill W. in 1970. The feeling a person got from being in St. Louis is hard to describe. The fellowship, friendliness, and the outpouring of love for each other, the archives section and the closing of the gathering on Sunday morning with all of the past servants and Gil Lamb's daughter was just beyond words." Jimmy D., dry date 5-22-58, Panel 20, NM.

Local St. Louis AA Mike P.: "Gary Glynn's (Class A Trustee Emeritus) talk on 'A Vision for AA's future' inspired me to look at our fellowship's potential in a whole new light. The archives, the speakers and the atmosphere repeatedly blew my mind!"

"As the convention wore on, I began to realize that I was participating in an historic event and that some of the speakers, the

presentations, and archives might never be available in the same way again... I've been sober for 2½ years, so it was invaluable to me to see how God's hand has played out in the larger AA and to learn more about the history, growth, and structure of AA. It was also invaluable to hear the last speaker on Sunday (Gary K., SW Regional Trustee) talk about our responsibility back to the organization and the people within it who saved our lives." Janell J., KS

Class A Trustee Emeritus Jim Estelle: "The Spiritual Homecoming was aptly named and skillfully presented. I know there were many volunteers involved and I wish I could thank them all. Share my gratitude when you can."

St. Louis volunteer Perry J.: "I found the experience to be much more than I could ever have anticipated. Not only did it push me to personally perform at a high level, it also rewarded me in ways beyond anything I ever imagined; being part of AA history, meeting people from all over the world, people involved with the inner workings of AA, people that have brought AA to the extreme edges of the globe and others that have not been inclined to participate in service work that are now re-evaluating their commitment to being of service. I've made new friends and my life has been enriched by this experience. I am extremely grateful to have been fortunate enough to be a part of the 2005 Spiritual Homecoming experience."

Our own Pat B., who worked with the Longtimers who came from everywhere, shares: "It was a wonderful experience which only got better with each session. I felt quite privileged to coordinate these sessions. So much knowledge, wisdom, humor, and deep love of the fellowship was shared by so many. I couldn't help but grow."

Conley B., Panel 43, AR: "Having the two alcoholics and the Al-Anon member that had been at the 1955 Convention was a Ten-Strike! ...Again, I urge you to publish a book so that those who were not there can share in the experience, and for those who will do the 100 year celebration."

The 2005 Spiritual Homecoming Committees of AA and Al-Anon wish to express their sincere thanks and appreciation for the participation and support of General Service Board of A.A., A.A.W.S., Inc., The A.A. Grapevine, Inc.; the "longtimers" and speakers in AA and Al-Anon who came and shared and enriched our lives; the wonderful entertainment for helping us to laugh and take a healing, humorous look at ourselves and our recovery. Most of all, we thank each and every member of AA, Al-Anon, friends and family who came to celebrate with us this 50th Anniversary of AA Coming of Age.

*Ginny J., Panel 39, Area 38
Ed M., Panel 51, Area 38
Chair & Co-Chair
2005 Spiritual Homecoming*

2005 Spiritual Homecoming Archive Displays

The Archives Exhibit Hall was a tremendous spiritual experience for me. 28 Areas participated with displays and used 66 tables. Texas brought the largest display, filling 9 tables, followed closely by Oklahoma. Arkansas filled 5 tables with a timeline of all of the locations that Joe and Charlie had presented their Big Book Study. The Father Dowling display was the most comprehensive presentation of his documents, memorabilia, and artifacts ever displayed. Many thanks go to the Maryville University Library and its director, Dr. Eugenia McKee. Overall, this was the largest, most comprehensive display of AA Archival material ever assembled.

We began setting up tables Wednesday morning, and took down the last display Sunday afternoon. Between those times there was non-stop conversations about AA history, displaying, conserving, and preserving AA's heritage. I seldom left the Archives room, not being able to tear myself away from these conversations, or for fear something would come up missing, or that I would miss something. It was a tremendous spiritual experience for me and countless others.

A.A. volunteers from the Eastern Area contributed countless hours to make the Archives Exhibit a resounding success. Our Area Archivist, Sandie G. was tireless, not only in the Display room, but also assembling the Father Dowling and the Eastern Area exhibits. Our Archives Chair, Karen L., and their team, which included Bill W., Renee D., Mike B., Glen F., Bill B., Chris and others, assisted Sandie. Martha W. was my right hand for the last two years. Thanks go to Rob M. who put together a Fr. Dowling 3-D display and many others who helped put the displays together. We had a security team of volunteers who stood guard at the door continuously from Friday morning to Sunday afternoon, all day and all night. And then there were the hundreds of A.A. and Al-Anon members who came from all across the US and Canada, lovingly bringing their Area displays to participate in this historic exhibit. I will always be grateful for their generosity and their wonderful pieces of history.

What a blessing it has been, to participate in Alcoholics Anonymous. It is a gift God has given me that just keeps on giving, one day at a time.

Tim H., Panel 47, Area 38, Chair, Archives Displays

From the Delegate's desk...

Time is moving way too fast. We're already halfway through our rotation.

As we enter 2006, we have but four assemblies left before we turn our jobs over to someone else. Rotation is a vital part of A.A. Hopefully everyone is prepared to pass on their assignments to their replacements. A quick inventory might be in order. Have you kept your alternate informed and therefore prepared to take over in your absence or for the next rotation? Have you done your best to complete any projects you may have started? If the answer was no, there is still time to meet your goals but don't wait much longer. If the answer was yes, then ask yourself what else can you now do to carry the message? Do it!

I was told several years ago that I don't rotate out, I rotate on. I don't know what the future holds, but I do know what the past held and I don't want to go back. I am looking forward to attending the Conference this year. Work for the CPC Committee has already begun. My Committee (CPC) has already started communications in preparation of the 56th Conference. We will be looking at the possibility of using some type of short video segments and slide show presentations for CPC's to carry the message to the professionals. We still have the issue of a pamphlet (previously requested) directed toward the criminal justice system to deal with.

This year's Conference theme is "Sponsorship, Service and Self-Support in a Changing World". Following are some of our discussion topics, which were printed in the 55th Final Conference report. Share them with your groups. We will be discussing them at the April Assembly.

Sponsorship

- 1) Presenting AA to Newcomers
- 2) Changes in the Alcoholic coming to AA
- 3) Sponsorship into Sobriety, into Service

Service

- 1) Performing Service without Expectations
- 2) Leadership - An ever vital need
- 3) Responsibility with Accountability

Self-Support

- 1) An informed Group Conscience
- 2) Gratitude through Self-sacrifice

The workshop topic will be "Passing it on in a changing world".

Some of you may already be aware that the Group pamphlet (revised in 2005) is available from GSO. Look it over and let me know what you think. The Literature Committee for the Conference worked hard to produce this piece of literature. I think they did a pretty good job.

I will have the 2006 Agenda items and background material in a few weeks and will be in communication with the Area Committees. I would like to thank all of you that have helped me stay sober this year. Please let me know how I can be of service.

-Chip B.
Panel 55, Area 38

Models of Service

Among other topics at the area committee work session in November, DCM's and area servants discussed models of how our area works. Not everyone agreed on every point, but most participants generally agreed on the following.

An average district in our area has 23 registered groups, of which less than half participate in service. A district needs a DCM, Alt DCM, Secretary, and Treasurer, plus typically at least four committee chairs from among the following: PI, CPC, Corrections, Treatment, Special Needs, Bridging The Gap, Grapevine, Archives, Workshops, and Answering Service. So a healthy district needs 4 officers plus at least 4 committee chairs, plus GSR's. (This doesn't include people who work on the committees - for instance, taking meetings into jails.) If only half of the groups send GSR's, an average district meeting should have an attendance of twenty.

An average group in our area has 17 members, of whom half attend group conscience meetings. About half of these people have jobs in the group, such as GSR, Alt GSR, Treasurer, IR, GvR, etc. Most groups in our area do not study the Traditions in their meetings. We ballpark-estimated that an average group produces 1.5 people who work beyond the group level, of which one serves as GSR. At this rate, it takes 16 participating groups to produce the eight officers and committee chairs required for a healthy district. Since less than half of our groups participate, this would suggest that a healthy, active district may need 32 groups, instead of the 5 to 20 suggested in the service manual.

Discussion included ideas for increasing participation in groups and districts. It was noted that some groups do not have a pamphlet rack, service literature, GSR, or any other means for people to learn about service work. Some thought was also given as to how many years it takes to produce an effective GSR, committee chair, DCM, or area worker.

The point of the exercise was not to dictate how things ought to work, but to encourage more thought and discussion of what works best.

How We Stack Up

Based on figures reported in the 2005 Conference Report, here's how the Eastern Missouri area compares to other conference areas:

	Eastern MO	Average
Number of members	8900	16000
Number of groups	550	740
Members per group	17	21
Number of districts	23	25
Groups per district	23	34

Openings on State Convention Committee

At the April 8 assembly, we will elect two people to the State Convention Committee, to replace people who will rotate off of the committee in July. Committee members serve for two years, meet about four times a year (typically on Sunday mornings in Jefferson City), and work at the convention. Expenses are reimbursed. The following qualifications are suggested: 4 years of continuous sobriety, some past attendance at the MO State Convention, enthusiasm, dependability, and the ability to work well on a committee. If you know someone who might be interested, encourage them to contact the State Convention Committee, Area Office, or Area Chair for more information!

Notes from the chair

At the winter assembly this year, we're encouraging people to begin preparing for the elections that will take place this fall in our area, districts, and home groups. Things happen slowly in AA, and now's the time to start planting seeds that may lead to a healthy crop of service workers this fall. Failure to successfully rotate means that all our contacts and experience will vanish and eventually have to be rebuilt from scratch.

What can we do? In recovery meetings, group consciences, and sponsorship, we can encourage people to read pamphlets, study the Traditions & Concepts, and get involved in service committees. We can have coffee with our Alternates, or sit down with friends and sponsees to read the Service Manual. We can attend a workshop or study group, or take Box 459 to a business meeting. We can invite a newcomer to a group conscience or district meeting, or chat with someone who might fill our current job in the next rotation. We can be constantly on the lookout for workers to carry meetings into institutions - one of the best ways to get new people into service, and a good way to help people prepare for sponsorship. If service is working for us, let's not keep it to ourselves! And let's don't forget to begin thinking, reading, and asking about new service challenges we ourselves might accept in the next rotation.

– Jim F., Area Chair

Update for AA Directories

It's time again to update your group info for the Western US Directory. Talk to the area office manager, the area registrar, or your DCM for more information. Deadline is mid-April.

AREA BULLETIN BOARD

District 41 Workshop - "The ABC's"

January 28, 2006, 11 a.m. to 1 p.m.; The Heights Community Center, 8001 Dale Ave., Richmond Heights, MO. (corner of Dale and Hanley); there will be four speakers and the all-important food.

Grapevine Workshop

February 4, 2006, potluck at 6 p.m. Speakers at 7 p.m., St Luke's Methodist Church (Dist 5.3), 2761 Telegraph Rd, 63125. Will include a digital display from 2005 Spiritual Homecoming. Contact Glenn F. (314) 313-2664 for more information.

Sponsorship Panel and Discussion Workshop - Hosted by District 7. February 19, 2006 (Sunday), 3 p.m. to 5 p.m.; Cape Downtown Group, 417 Broadway, Cape Girardeau, MO. For men and women; bring your Big

Books. Pat B. will be one of the panel members; for more info, call Robert F. 573-225-1589 or Cathy K. 573-334-8714.

Five Corners Convention

Feb. 24-25, 2006, Free registration. Sikeston, MO

What a Concept! - a workshop on the Concepts presented by District 12. March 4, 2006, 1:00 p.m., Red Top Christian Church, Hallsville, MO. There will be a Pizza Potluck; Jim F. to speak at 6:00 p.m. following the potluck. For more information and directions visit the District 12 website or contact Ryan at 573-443-4227.

Twelve Traditions Study Group

Presented by District 2. March 7, 2006 through April 11, 2006 (6 weeks), every Tuesday 7 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. Study materials will be provided. Please bring your 12 x 12s. Buder Library, 4401 Hampton, St. Louis 63109; contact: Marge (314) 771-3402 or Dave (314) 775-6351 for more information.

Area Assembly

April 8, 2006. Holiday Inn, Wentzville, MO.

General Service Conference

April 23-29, 2006 in New York.

Missouri State Convention

July 14-16. Capitol Plaza Hotel, Jefferson City, MO.

Intergroup Meeting

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

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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