



### Out with the old...

When your outgoing editor finished her first Gratitude Gazette two years ago, it was in a state of something resembling panic: OhmiGod, how am I ever gonna fill up *EIGHT* of these things!!

Not to worry, New Editor. It's no problem.

The hardest thing has been deciding what to leave out of each issue. There are few things as full of exciting events, significant actions, inspiring words, and quotable folks as Alcoholics Anonymous service work. Some of the articles sit on my desk, waiting for their spots, for a long, long time – and most of them will just have to go into the scrap book. Does that mean you can never see them? No! Almost everything printed here that hasn't come directly from Area 38 or personal interviews is reprinted from literature that's available to every AA service worker: The A.A. Grapevine, Box 4-5-9, The A.A. Service Manual (still one of the best kept secrets in the fellowship), the Final Reports from each year's General Service Conference, and all of those Conference-approved pamphlets you see around have furnished most of them. Additionally, the Internet is brimming with information and resources. You don't have to know the secret handshakes to get any of his material, but you might have to do a little investigation. Trust me, the effort will be worth it.

Your new editor steps up now, and the old one rotates on to new adventures in service. See you at Area Assembly, where we'll all be wearing new hats!

### AREA 38 Trusted Servants –

- Delegate: Pat B.
- Alternate Delegate: Jim F.
- Chair: Laura V.
- Alternate Chair: Larry N.
- Registrar: Mike P.
- Recording Secretary: Carol B.
- Treasurer: Mike N.
- Asst. Treasurer: Kathy H.

### How “bright” is YOUR district?

A district that sends no one to represent it at area assemblies is said to have gone “dark.” This occurs with the breakdown of the process by which GSRs (General Service Representatives) meet to elect a DCM (District Committee Member) to attend area meetings. When the district goes dark, its members no longer have a voice in Alcoholics Anonymous as a whole.

There are 93 areas in the United States and Canada, comprising hundreds of districts. Judging from the delegates who spoke about their experience for Box 4-5-9, participation varies, sometimes widely, from area to area.

“We have always had great participation in our districts,” says Randy M., delegate for Area 91, Saskatchewan, Canada. “We have 21 districts, and at the last couple of area assemblies we had full attendance, with either the DCM or the alternate showing up.” The most recent meeting, he says, also attracted “a significant number of GSRs from meetings in the local area.”

One of the ways in which [some] areas... encourage participation is by holding their meetings in different districts and by paying the expenses of DCMs so that... their attendance does not become a funding issue...

The situation is not so bright in Area 53, Central Southeast Ohio, where...dark districts are a big problem. Of 42 districts, only 16 are connected. The area, says Madeline, counts on a core set of groups that have a real interest in the A.A. structure. What hurts participation, she says, is that, some take for granted that A.A. will always be there. “They have the idea that GSO takes care of itself—that’s pretty common. They believe they have to donate money to GSO, but do not believe that their group can make a difference.”

“We try to approach the new groups. The old groups look on it as politics. They are glad there are service geeks, and are happy to let someone else do it.” Her area, says Madeline, does not spend time trying to boost interest among groups that have a history of non-participation in the service structure.

“The older groups have already been approached, more than once, so we don’t feel it is a good use of our time to keep trying over and over again. The best prospects are the new groups and those A.A members in the first year of sobriety.”

The area looks for opportunities to expose groups to service, she says. “An opening for service can occur when a group is having personality problems and calls on the delegate to head a group inventory—that’s a good opening.”

Basically, though, says Madeline, “you deal with the 16 districts that are active.”

According to Nancy K., the delegate for Area 29, Maryland, “Dark districts have been a problem for quite a while. You can have a district that has no DCM or not even any GSRs. Other problems are GSR lists that are not up to date. There is no contact info, so the members in the district have no voice or representation.”

Area 29 comprises 47 districts, with fewer than half participating at any given assembly or committee meeting, says

(Continued on Page 4)

## SWRAAZA 2008 –

Coming to an Area (very) near you

October 10-12, 2008

Get ready!!

## Reflections on SWRAASA

"Wow, what a great SWRAASA we experienced in Kansas!!" says new Delegate Pat B, "There were over 700 service-oriented AA members gathered to share and hear the experience, strength, and hope with one another. The workshops were great and the presenters were all prepared and informative. We also had the opportunity to ask questions either in the sessions or at lunch. Past Delegates, Trustees, past and present, all the ones before us, sharing what worked for them. All coming together trying to make sure A.A. will always be there for the next alcoholic who needs us. And the alcoholic we need so desperately, too. Remember? Got to give it away to keep it!

"Now that I have you all excited, guess what!! Well, Eastern Missouri Area will be hosting the next SWRAASA in 2008. Right here in our territory. So, think about it. Make your plans. Offer your time and talents to the committee we choose. But most of all, plan on attending one of the best service assemblies around. The Southwest Regional Alcoholics Anonymous Service Assembly October 10-12, 2008!!"

District 12 DCM Dave P. says his first SWRAASA was a real treat. Riding to Wichita with other AA members was all about AA and service even before they reached Kansas. From Friday afternoon through Sunday, everything went by *fast*, days and nights filled with sessions on everything from GSRs to how GSO operates – and everything in between. Imagine being surrounded by 700 people who love AA and AA service.

So what's it like to actually be a presenter at SWRAASA? Our new Area secretary, Carol B., found out recently.

"I must say I was very surprised when I was asked to do one of the roundtables at our SWRAASA! Also excited, honored, scared and flattered. Did I mention scared??"

I always figure everyone else knows so much more than I about the ins and outs of Alcoholics Anonymous – from the history, to the procedures, to the structure and so on. So at first, being a good alcoholic, I briefly considered trying to get out of it. Then my conscience, which is alive and well, told me I couldn't do that.

So I dove into my service manual and realized that my topic, the structure, covered more than half of the manual! The first half, in case you're wondering. So I did a lot of reading, and writing, and drawing charts, and sweating, and spazzing – then praying and re-reading and re-writing, and so on, and so on...

So the day finally came, and luckily my time was 8:00 in the morning, so I didn't have to think about it all day long. I went over all my notes. I made sure I had three coats of deodorant on and a shirt that wouldn't show sweat, and went to smoke a cigarette before it started. Someone happened to be outside, and must have sensed my nervousness, and reminded me that nobody wanted to beat me up and tear me to shreds, so I relaxed a little – that helped a lot. I went to my assigned room and waited for the crowd.

Guess what! It all went very well – I was able to talk and didn't jumble up my words and then turned it over to the attendees – and I hardly got to talk again! I'll admit we didn't exactly stay on the topic that I thought we were supposed to be on. It seemed like we talked an awful lot about GSRs rather than the whole structure. I felt bad about that for a while and felt like I had failed.

In the days following, I realized that it was exactly the way it was supposed to be: The GSRs are THE most important part of our structure! If we are having problems with GSRs, then there really is no structure, at least not for long. Also I realized that it was a way to get me into the service manual a little more – I still don't have it memorized – don't know that I ever will -- but for now – mission accomplished!"

### From the "Buzzards' Roost"

It's the 20<sup>th</sup> of December, 2006, and my time as delegate is almost done. It sure doesn't feel like two years have passed. It went so quick. I would like to again thank all of you for giving me this experience. I have served the Area as best I could and now -- I rotate.

As we enter 2007, I will move to the back of the room to join that group of individuals affectionately referred to, by some, as the "Buzzards". In the years ahead I will strive to be an "Elder Statesman" rather than a "Bleeding Deacon". You have selected some talented individuals to serve you this rotation. They are serving because they care about AA. Support them in their efforts.

Before I move to the back of the room I would like to share something I discovered about our financial support.

You will face some of the same questions in the new rotation that we faced in this last one. One of those is how to get AA to become self-supporting rather than relying on literature sales to support our services. I reviewed the donations made to the Area and found that over the last two years 268, or 51%, of the groups in the Eastern Area contributed to the Area. That is fairly close to the number of groups from Eastern Missouri contributing to the GSO [46% (242) in 2004, 47.5% (247) in 2005]. We were slightly above the 43.2% average of the other Areas in group contributions to GSO.

What was a real shocker to me is that, through the first 11 months of 2006, only 211 or 40% of the groups had participated in self support of the Area. (For you math whizzes, the number of groups go up and down and these numbers are not set in stone but they are real close.) Maybe the other 50 or so groups will have donated by the year's end; maybe they won't. I am concerned about the numbers though. There could be many reasons why the number of groups supporting the Area seems to have declined. You will have the opportunity to share on the subject this rotation. Please talk to your group about self-support.

The amount given is not as important as the act of becoming involved. I still would love to see 100% participation from the Groups in Area 38 to the General Service Office and the Area. It's probably not going to happen, but if each District continues to discuss the need to be fully self-supporting with their Groups, we might improve participation just a little. To those groups participating - thank you. To the groups that haven't or aren't participating - please consider doing so. It has been an honor and privilege to serve you.

*Chip B., Past Delegate, Panel 55/38 Eastern Missouri*

### **From our new delegate's desk...**

First off, I want to welcome everyone to one of the greatest service entities in all of AA...Area 38 Eastern Missouri. Next, I want to thank everyone for giving me the privilege as serving as your Panel 57 Delegate. I will do my best to serve you and Alcoholics Anonymous well. If you are new to our assembly, get ready for a wonderful ride!! We have many strong and dedicated members who are returning from previous rotations willing to help in any way they can.

There are many of us here who stand ready to aid you in whatever you need to do your job. We have many opportunities this term. Opportunities that will make our fellowship stronger and more unified. Just remember how very important you are to this process. Without your willingness to serve, without your love of AA, our structure would not continue on. So, before we get further along, just know we are filled with gratitude at how hard you work trying to carry our message. We thank you for taking the time away from your daily lives to come together to find ways to make our fellowship more available to that still suffering alcoholic.

The next 2 years promise to be not only joyful, but also trying at times. Yes, there will be times we will look around the room and just shake our heads in amazement. I thank our Higher Power that we have a fellowship that allows us to voice our views, share our concerns and even debate ways we can carry our message into the world. Just remember one thing. Everyone in that room is there because they love AA and want to make sure our fellowship is there for the future still suffering alcoholic. What an honor to be a part of it all!!

*Pat B, Delegate  
Panel 57/38 Eastern Missouri*

### **Notes from the chair**

The beginning of a new year and a new rotation is always an exciting time. It is an opportunity to start things anew and, hopefully, a chance to begin learning and become teachable all over again. While it presents us with a clean slate, what we write on that slate is entirely up to us. For me, taking on a new service position is always a humbling experience.

First, I would like to thank the area for entrusting me with this job...I have very big shoes to fill. Even though the new rotation has just begun it has already been a busy three months since our elections, starting with SWRAASA in October and culminating with today's assembly. We have been blessed with a wonderful group of officers and committee chairs with which to serve, and they have certainly made this time of transition much easier for me.

Second, I would like to thank both our outgoing and incoming delegates, Chip B. and Pat B., for all of their hard work and dedication this past rotation. Our area can rest assured it is in good hands. Love of the fellowship and devotion to service work has been and continues to be evident in both of these trusted servants, and I am extremely proud to have them representing our area. One of the greatest benefits of service work is the opportunity to make lifelong friends with those who serve shoulder-to-shoulder with us as we "trudge the road of happy destiny."

And last but not least, a heartfelt thanks to all of the new committee chairs and their alternates for agreeing to serve. I believe that time is everyone's most precious commodity, and realize it requires personal sacrifice in order to fulfill any service commitment. However, the payoff is tremendous. All we have to do is "suit up and show up" and amazing things happen. This is one of the tremendous paradoxes of AA—we receive not just in the measure we are willing to give, but so much more.

The recent holiday season has caused me to reflect on the many blessings which sobriety has given me and the many things for which I am grateful. Not the least of these is Area 38. I was reminded at SWRAASA this past fall of how we consistently work together as an area for the good of the fellowship, often putting aside our own personal opinions and disagreements in order to achieve unity. Let's pray that this spirit of unity and fellowship will pervade everything that we do this rotation, allowing us to seek the higher good in carrying our message of hope to the still-suffering alcoholic.

Yours in Service,  
Laura V., Chairperson

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### **From the A.A. Grapevine:**

#### **Guardians of the future**

As an AA member involved in service work, I am often prone to assume that I and others like me are doing all that is necessary to assure the future of Alcoholics Anonymous. But are we?

We have many dedicated men and women who do their respective jobs as group secretaries, treasurers, GSRs, and committee members, even as Conference delegates. But is the fact that we are dedicated to these jobs enough? I think not. The more involved I have become in service, the more I am convinced that our most important work as servants of AA is done as individual members at the group level. It is the example we set for new members of our Fellowship and the attention we pay to them that determine the future of AA. It is these new members who are going to carry on the work we are now doing. Some day, they are going to sit where we sit and attend to those things we think are important.

In our time, we may do much good work and propose many good policies; but how they will be carried out depends on these new AA members. Eventually, they will assume the responsibilities of our individual groups, our assemblies, and our conventions and will be the guardians of our Traditions.

What we do now and have done in the past will be judged and praised or condemned by them. The future and fate of Alcoholics Anonymous as we know it will be in their hands. Considering these thoughts, we had better pay these people more than casual attention!

A. R.- Clarkston, Georgia

*Reprinted from the AA Grapevine, March 1978. Used with permission*

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# AREA BULLETIN BOARD

**Structure of Home Group & How to Chair Meetings**, Hosted by District 7. February 3, 2007, 10:00 a.m. to noon, at Cape Downtown AA, 417 Broadway, Cape Girardeau, MO; chaired by Ed M., Past Delegate and Larry N., Alt. Chair, E. Area; contact Steven McD. At 573-450-0395, or Kenny B. at 573-334-7660 with any questions.

**Is AA A Cult, A Self-Help Group, Or What?** Saturday, Feb. 10, 2007, 2:00 PM - 4:00 PM, Community United Methodist Church, 301 West Broadway, Columbia, MO 65203. Come join the discussion about what AA is and what AA is not! Plenty of parking! Snacks and beverages will be served. Note: This workshop is an OPEN meeting. Download the flyer or a map at: <http://aa.columbia.missouri.org>.

**Trivia Night!** – 3rd Annual – presented by SMICYPAA February 10, 2007, New Hope Presbyterian Church, 1580 Kisker Rd. St. Charles, MO 63304; speaker (Harold L.) at 7 p.m., Trivia at 8:30 p.m.; suggested donation: \$8 in advance, \$10 at the door, \$75 Tables of 10 (advance registration required); for more info, call Ben M. at 636.236.5264, or visit [www.smicypaa.org](http://www.smicypaa.org).

**32nd Annual Sweetheart Dance**, Feb 10, 2007, 8PM, presented by North County Intergroup, St Ann Community Center, St Ann Community Center, 1 Community Center Dr., St. Ann, MO 63074. \$20 Tickets must be in by Jan. 26. Contact North County Intergroup for more information at (314) 731-4854.

**25<sup>th</sup> Annual 5 Corners Convention** - Feb. 23 & 24, 2007, Sikeston Armory, 300 S. Main, Sikeston, MO; accommodations available at the Days Inn (conference attendees will be able to get the same deal as they did last year at the Raudmont--\$55 + tax per night with an unlimited number of people in the room for the nights of the conference--call the Days Inn at 573-471-3930 and mention the 5 Corners AA Convention). For more info, contact the Chairman at PO Box 158, Sikeston, MO 63801.

**Great River Roundup**, March 2-4 dinner and dance at Pere Marquette Park north of Alton, IL. For information/directions, write PO Box 522, Wood River, IL 62095 or call Bruce at 618-254-5273.

**Area Assembly**, March 31, Holiday Inn, Wentzville, MO. That's right: the Spring Assembly is in March! Be there! Other 2007 Area Assemblies are June 23 and October 6.

**General Service Conference** New York, NY. April 22-28, 2007.

**Districts 1 & 2 Picnic** - May 19, 2007, Tower Grove Park (City of St. Louis), Turkish Pavilion.

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

## **How bright is your district?** (Cont'd from P. 1)

...Nancy. "We get about 100 people for an area assembly, whereas if everyone were participating, we would have almost 1,000."

"Some members don't think they have a voice in AA. They see it as a group in New York that makes the decisions. I want them to see what is coming out of New York, to see for themselves that GSO is constantly asking for input from the members out there."

Nancy puts in a lot of leg work to encourage participation. "I have gone to groups in districts that have no representation. I drop off stuff like the area calendar of events or the phone numbers of staff members at GSO At the break I announce that information from GSO in New York is available on the literature table, which never fails to spark interest."

Efforts of the area are paying off, she says. "We have six new active districts this year as a result of scheduling area meetings in parts of the state where there was little to no participation. One district that had not been heard from in six years now is active."

In addition, she says, "the area is working with three districts to get them up and active; that would make for nine newly active districts in all in the last two years. Simply put, you need people willing to serve—an active district sets the tone for service in the area."

In Southern Wisconsin, Area 75, four of 32 districts have for years had no representation at the area meetings, according to Nancy G., delegate. A few years ago, three districts were absorbed by neighboring districts due to nonparticipation.

"Misinformation or lack of information regarding the general service structure seems to be the major problem," says Nancy. There is also, she says, "the perception that area meetings are nothing but politics. People fail to realize that the area is made up of their groups, of their districts, and that the structure is in place to keep them connected to A.A. as a whole. Education is imperative, both through sponsorship and through organized efforts such as district workshops. Area 75 provides a GSR school, which is held at the first area assembly of each year, and also travels throughout our districts upon request."

In November 2003, Area 75 formed an ad hoc committee to look into the problem of dark districts, and as a first step contacted those districts, says Nancy. "The response varied from an assurance that they would attend the next area meeting to a clear dismissal of any interest in AA at the area level or beyond."

Area 75 continues to communicate with these districts through mailings... and through district visits by area officers.

"We continue to reach out, maintain communication, and work at all levels to ensure that everyone in Area 75 feels welcome and connected to the area and AA as a whole. We hope that they will see the value of participation and unity through general service."

*Excerpted from Box 4-5-9, Vol. 52, No. 1, Feb-March 2006. Used with permission.*

*The Gazette is published by the Gratitude Gazette Committee, Eastern Area of Missouri, Alcoholics Anonymous. Opinions expressed are not those of the Area or AA as a whole, which have not endorsed this material except where noted. Gratitude Gazette, c/o Area Office, 2683 Big Bend Blvd., Rm. 18, St. Louis, MO 63143. [gazette@eamo.org](mailto:gazette@eamo.org)*