

Show Me: Young AAs in Service

SMICYPAA on the Move

Of all of the AA acronyms out there, SMICYPAA denotes one of the most dynamic entities in Missouri AA service. Before deciphering this term, we first examine another acronym: **ICYPAA—International Conference of Young People in Alcoholics Anonymous**. ICYPAA was first held in 1958, and has since met yearly in different U.S. and Canadian cities. “The purpose of ICYPAA is to celebrate sobriety among young people, the young at heart, and to carry the A.A. message. Since its inception, ICYPAA has depended on A.A.’s Three Legacies of Recovery, Unity, and Service in order to survive.” (from SMICYPAA’s website: smicypaa.org). In 2002 young Missouri AA’s put together **SMICYPAA—Show Me ICYPAA**. This launched a bid committee intent on bringing ICYPAA to St. Louis, Missouri. The Gazette conducted telephone interviews with three SMICYPAA members: (1) Mike P., who got SMICYPAA going, was its first Chair and is also the current Area Registrar; (2) Ian S., one of SMICYPAA’s “ground-floor pioneers,” the current SMICYPAA Chair, District 42’s DCM (District Committee Member) and also the Area’s Webmaster; and (3) Susan M., an early SMICYPAA member, SMICYPAA’s current Outreach Chair and active in general service. Their comments are combined.

What is SMICYPAA’s primary function?

Bring ICYPAA to St. Louis. Live the spirit of ICYPAA. Reach out to as many young and young-at-heart Missouri AA members as possible, getting them involved. Be a resource with young peoples’ 12th step work throughout the state. Also, there is a lot of fun involved! We closely adhere to the Traditions, the Concepts, and the AA Service Manual.

SMICYPAA’s structure and website is very thorough.

We are governed by our By-laws and Procedure Manual. Our voting utilizes the Third Legacy. We have a tax ID. SMICYPAA has a full roster of officers, committees and subcommittees. Our monthly meeting minutes are posted on our website.

Many of SMICYPAA members wear several hats.

There is crossover. Many of us are also involved in general service. Originally, most of the members came on board as “general service veterans.” Some of our members have experienced their first service position in SMICYPAA; this is often a “gateway” to other service for them.

What prompted the drive to have Missouri host ICYPAA?

Mike P.’s first ICYPAA experience in 2001 (held in Louisville) sparked his enthusiasm. The following year, at the Portland ICYPAA, he talked with numerous Bid Committee Chairs, learned the process, and participated in a “token bid” session to try out the experience—feed-back was positive. On his return to St. Louis, an informational outreach speaker and dance event was organized. Interest ran high. A sharing session using GSO guidelines soon followed. It was attended by Glynn W. of the ICYPAA Advisory Council. The 25 attendees gave their emphatic endorsements to go for the bid. Ian S. and several others joined Mike at the outset and quickly laid the foundation for the as yet unnamed group.

Tell us about SMICYPAA’s first bid?

After an intensive year’s work of getting SMICYPAA up and running, networking, making arrangements, and putting together a polished bid package, the first bid was presented at the 2003 ICYPAA in Orlando. It was received remarkably well. Feed-back from the bid panel stated that such a good package had never been presented on the first bid. A tremendous shot-in-the-arm!

Why St. Louis?

At this time, St. Louis is the Missouri city best equipped to handle the estimated 2 to 4 thousand ICYPAA attendees. (In recent years it has been around 4,000.) Bidding committees bid by their State. SMICYPAA bids for all of Missouri, even though our host city will be St. Louis.

How many cities usually bid for the ICYPAA contract?

About 8 or 9 cities bid each year to host the following year's conference. It takes a few bidding attempts before being awarded the contract. SMICYPAA has presented bids since 2003. (ICYPAA was cancelled in 2005 due to Hurricane Katrina.)

Tell about the bidding process and the voting.

The contracts are decided by the 12 member ICYPAA Advisory council, in addition to 2-3 members from recent host cities, and Bid Committee Representatives (BCGs) from each of the bidding states. The BCGs are somewhat analogous to Area Delegate representation at the Conference. Third Legacy voting procedures are used. The awarded bid for 2008 to Oklahoma City came out of the hat.

What needs to be demonstrated to ICIPAA's Advisory Council when they consider awarding a bid?

We need to show that we are financially self-supporting. It takes several tens of thousands of dollars to put this thing on. The local committee structure needs to be strong: enough members on the committees and sub-committees—not just a committee of one: someone by themselves with state-of-the-art computer software churning out good-looking material. They look for plenty of involvement and enthusiasm; what fund-raising events we put on; our passion and participation. Our package needs to be comprehensive; it is time intensive; we present a supporting letter from the Area Chair; we demonstrate appropriate tax and permit status.

What is SMICYPAA's Bid Book?

Our Bid Package Book is a state-of-the-art publication which shows that we satisfy all of the bidding requirements as above. It is updated every year and costs \$250-300. About 25 copies are made. Some of the pages are in color. The bears in our logo move as the pages are flipped. We have a Bid Book Committee devoted to this project.

Tell us about SMCIPAA's logo.

It is fashioned after the State of Missouri's seal. We have made our bears friendlier.

Your rotations are one year.

This gives as many people as possible a chance to be involved. This helps to put newer AA members to work quickly. Often, our experienced SMICYPAA members will step back from positions—they'll stay deeply involved, but will give the newer people a chance to take a service position. The officer and major committee chair positions do have minimal sobriety requirements. Our elections are held one month after each yearly ICYPAA Conference.

How many members are involved in SMICYPAA?

About 20-30. We would like to increase those numbers around Missouri. Monthly meeting attendance numbers in the 20s.

What is average age of SMICYPAA members? Are there any age requirements?

In general, members range from the 20s to the 30s. All age groups are invited to join—young people and the young-at-heart.

How have most people become involved in SMICYPAA?

Most people have joined because of word of mouth. Often, they attend out of curiosity. Then they stay.

Do you change the location of your meetings?

Our meetings are generally held at different locations in the St. Louis area—at this time, most of the people involved in SMICYPAA are from around St. Louis (perhaps because St. Louis will be the host city). We have had monthly meetings and events in Columbia and Jefferson City. Since SMICYPAA encompasses all of Missouri, we plan to branch out more around the state.

What events does SMICYPAA put on?

Two-day Mini Conferences, dances, trivia nights, kickball tournaments, etc. All high energy and great fun! A karaoki night and other activities have recently been discussed.

How many Young Peoples' Groups are in Missouri?

One Young Peoples' Group is noted in the "Where & When;" however, there are a number of Groups around the Area that are attended by large numbers of younger AAs.

Prior to SMICYPAA, did other organizations for young AAs in Missouri exist?

Two Young People's Conventions were previously established in Missouri: Missouri State Conference of Young People in AA (MOSCYPAA), and St. Louis Area Young People in AA (STLYPAA). They were not associated with any Young Peoples' organizations outside Missouri. One of SMICYPAA's strengths is its alliance with young AA members throughout the US and Canada.

Tell us about your outreach around Missouri.

We are focusing on involving all of Missouri in SMICYPAA and carrying AA's message throughout the state—particularly targeting young people. We have better exposure in the cities. Our challenge is to reach into the small communities and to "smoke out" the young AAs. We are planning to gather in some vans and take trips around the state. Some of these trips can run up to 48 hours—they are wonderful fun in addition to being worthwhile.

Please share with us some of the many benefits of involvement with SMICYPAA.

In SMICYPAA, we learn so much about service. We build service leaders. We have been a nurturing structure for many young people in AA—the bonding, the sense of purpose, the joy of sobriety, the close friendships, and the rewards of service. We help people feel at home in AA, no matter what their age. Like all AA service, SMICYPAA keeps young AAs in the middle of the lifeboat. And, as mentioned before, we have a good time!

Additional comments:

All AAs are invited to join us. Come to our monthly meeting—the first Saturday of every month. The time has generally been 4PM. The locations vary. Please check our website for location and time before each meeting: **smicypaa.org**. Also, visit our website for detailed SMICYPAA information: our activities, committees and service opportunities, procedures, bylaws, minutes, and information on ICYPAA. Our goals: To continue reach out and to involve more people outside St. Louis in SMICYPAA. To carry the message of AA to young people around the state. To keep the fires burning hotly until Missouri gets awarded the bid for ICYPAA.