



GRATITUDE GAZETTE

WINTER 2009

REPORTING SERVICE NEWS AND VIEWS
IN AREA 38 ≈ EASTERN MISSOURI AA

Continuing Onward

Thoughts from the Chair ...

I would like to welcome all of you who will be serving this rotation. After last fall's election, I had mixed emotions: excitement, but also fear and doubt. I am sure some of you felt the same way in your new assignments. I've been reminded that I'm surrounded by helpful, experienced, trusted servants. In every service position I've ever had, I have been brought along by the servants who have gone before me. I'm sure there will be challenges along the way. Working together, I believe we can meet any challenge that may come our way. Area 38 over the years has been blessed by the quality of the people who have served, and continue to serve. Just look at the back of the room at the Assembly — where the past Delegates sit. The officers I will serve with are talented, dedicated and caring people. I feel confident that the people who will serve as our committee chairs and alternates will build strong committees — we will be left stronger by their service. I know that Jim F, our Delegate, will do a great job representing Area 38 at the Conference. All of these people are willing to help. We need not doubt or fear. We need only to be able to ask for help. My hope and prayer for us is that we grow, we get to know each other, and that we have fun doing it. I look forward to serving with you.

*In service,
Larry N., Area 38 Chair*

Delegate's Message:

The last few years brought remarkable changes in New York. For instance... 1) The Conference overturned a long-standing rule that prevented alcoholics from serving as Chair of the Board. 2) After several years of painful dispute about mandatory rotation, the longtime General Manager voluntarily passed the torch to a replacement. 3) The Board began drafting a process for formal appeals, as described in Concept Five in 1962, and recommitted to tutoring our non-alcoholic Trustees on the Traditions and Concepts.

These events, the results of long and persistent effort, suggest that the Board may be growing more responsive to the Fellowship and more committed to our principles. We instinctively recognize the rightness of that. But by the same token, if we expect our New York servants, with their worldly concerns, to draw closer to us, then it's also right that we make a corresponding effort. We are called to step down a little from our spiritual hilltops, step out from our comfortable church basements, and participate in the world service dialogue. And on that note, welcome to the 2009-2010 rotation.

At the start of any rotation, it's good to exercise what Bill W. called, in Concept Nine, "the all-important attribute of *vision*." We imagine ourselves two years from now — how we will feel, what we will have accomplished, what we will pass along, who will be ready to take our place. We prepare once again for a long series of small, affordable personal sacrifices, like investments designed to add up over time. We begin expanding our network of service friends to make ourselves more useful. We begin talking and reading about our new roles so that we don't waste time on old mistakes. And we begin listening — in our Groups, Committees, Districts

and Area — for the patterns and trends that may be the emerging thoughts of a group conscience.

This rotation, since I will be serving on the Finance Committee at the Conference, there will be some talk about finance. It turns out that "finance" involves issues of unity, authority, autonomy, purpose, self-support, professionalism... everything from copyright laws, to the definition of a group, to what services we should provide, to the age-old issue of how to attract people into service. Interestingly, it also touches on the relation of the Fellowship to the Board, and how we hold them accountable.

It's good to discuss finance but not to get stuck on it. I encourage people to set some exciting goals for this rotation, especially the kind that will take two years or more to ac-



complish — the kind that will make an enduring difference. I hope you insist, if you are going to give up part of your life for service, that the projects you work on and the time you spend are worthwhile. Insist on it. Demand it. With the little time God has given us, let's do something truly, indisputably worthwhile. There is, after all, nothing more attractive than that.

*In service, Jim F., 59/38,
Eastern Missouri*

Join Us at SMICYPAA

Smicy-what? SMICYPAA, the Show Me International Conference of Young People in Alcoholics Anonymous. SMICYPAA is a bid committee: created to bid at the International Conference of Young People in AA. The purpose: to bring the ICYPAA conference to St. Louis. In 2009 the committee will head to Atlanta where our work will be submitted in hopes of bringing this world-class conference to St. Louis.

Our mini-conference is a miniature version of the ICYPAA conference, this year being held at the YMCA Trout Lodge (off Rt. AA in Potosi, MO). There will be A.A. and ALANON speakers, a dance, marathon meetings, fellowship, and all the usual SMICYPAA fun, not to mention the activities available at the lodge. Registration is \$10 and can be done online at smicypaa.org. Accommodations include double occupancy, guest rooms and loft suites starting at \$65 per night, per person (this price includes 3 meals/day!). Dates: January 23 - 25.

The event was created 2 years ago to generate awareness about SMICYPAA's bid and reach out to alcoholics young and old. Our events are not "just for young people." The level of sobriety is impressive, and many of the committee members are involved in service at the district and state level. The mini-conference brings great speakers and great fellowship together. It is worth the price of admission. We look forward to seeing you there.

For more information about SMICYPAA visit www.smicypaa.org. Our new site is pretty cool.

My first encounter with young people in Alcoholics Anonymous went something like this...

I was 23 years old, a recent graduate of both the county jail and university. I had moved back to St. Louis, and after ignoring my sponsor's suggestion to meet new people in recovery and make some friends, I found myself quite miserable. At the time I considered other people a rather annoying distraction. It was a bizarre occurrence indeed when a younger guy I had met at a certain Saturday morning meeting kept asking me to come hang out with him.

I thought, what a weirdo, why would this guy want to hang out with me?! So I finally accepted the invitation to "get some coffee and go to a meeting." This would get my sponsor off my back for a while. Which seemed to be the generic AA friendly pick up line. He picked me up and we were off to a meeting — a young peoples meeting.

I am not a talented writer so I cannot really describe the internal rage, anger, resentment and disgust that started to swell up inside of me around the 5 minute mark. These people — and there were many of these people, aged 14 to their late 20's — were all so connected. They were loud, energetic, joyful — my opposites! I didn't consider myself young and I decided that young people in AA were not for me.

How could some 16 year old kid know what it's like to be an alcoholic? It didn't make sense to me, who at 22 was confronted with sobriety. Wasn't my bottom so much lower? Wasn't I in some way "more alcoholic" or did I know "what it was really like?" These are all the thoughts of a sick person. Having never fully accepted the disease concept, I was never really in recovery — just hoarding resentment and waiting for relapse.

4 years later...

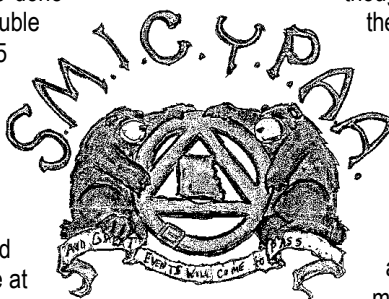
I'm sober, happy, joyful! I have some energy; I like people. What happened? A relapse. The 12 Steps — I am a different person. I love AA. I ask people if they want to "get some coffee and go to a meeting." I still don't like young people's meetings. I don't feel young; I don't like being looked

at in AA as a young person.

A friend of mine says "Hey, you should come do some service with SMICYPAA." I am so not into this idea. I've got sponsee's; I'm a group secretary; I don't need more service; I'm good thanks. "OK, well, then you should come to our mini-conference in Columbia."

OK, I'll go. My buddy Ralph R. and Amy W. hop in the car and we go to Columbia to see what this deal is all about. I notice I'm less reluctant to say "yes" these days. What fun! Marathon meetings, new friends, spontaneous dance parties, real-deal speakers, lots of activities that would make anyone feel young. I loved it — had a great time. Sometime later, I find myself in a SMICYPAA business meeting and I'm nominated for a service position. I'm working on a service committee to bring an International Conference to St. Louis. This changed my view on the AA service structure, which before had looked like some weird land of budgets and blah-blah-blah. It took on new meaning and I am quite passionate about it now.

*Yours in service, Sean T., Co-chair
of the SMICYPAA Outreach Committee*



Enthusiasm and Gratitude in Action

The Missouri State Convention's theme for 2009 (above) is a reflection of the Conference theme as is traditionally adopted. We are renewing a past tradition this year in asking that the Alternate DCM of each district volunteer as a contact person for the MO State Convention to assist in distributing information to the groups in their District. Please contact the P.I. Chair, Aaron F. with your District's contact

at public-information@mostateconvention.org. We are having a new type of featured speaker this year that will include photography in support of the presentation. This is to illustrate the historic nature of the presentation which will include A.A. history.

We look to have a larger turnout this year with an expanded dance event and larger suites available in the hotel. See you there on July 31- Aug. 2, at the Capital Plaza Hotel in Jefferson City MO.

Ed M., 51/38, MO State Convention Chair

2009 -2010 Area Officers

Delegate: Jim F.
Alternate Delegate: Laura V.
Area Chair: Larry N.
Alt. Chair: Marge D.
Secretary: Mike N.
Registrar: Gene M.
Treasurer: Phil K.
Assistant Treasurer: Ian S.





SWRAASA 2008

Southwest Regional AA Service Assembly in review ...



As I sit here and write this report I can't help but wonder if the event was a success or a bust. Did it benefit the Area in any way or was it a waste of time? Well, one thing is for sure, it's over. Area 38 hosted the 11th SWRAASA on October 10th - 12th, 2008 with 609 members of AA in attendance. If you missed the opportunity to attend here in St. Louis, don't worry, you will have the chance to do it again in 2030 when our Area will again have its chance to host it.

The effects of the SWRAASA, in Area 38, may be seen in the next weeks, months or years. I can't tell you if any one attendee will have been so moved by what they saw and heard that they will want to become more involved in helping on any of the many committees that serves AA. I can't tell you that even one person in attendance will be there to help make sure that the hand of AA will be there for the next person wanting to get sober. I can only share my experience with my first SWRAASA and tell you that because of the exposure to the service structure, I got involved.

Please ask someone who attended this event if they thought it was worth their time and money. In fact, why not ask more than one? I hope that they can share with you the same enthusiasm to become involved that I felt back in 1990. Who would have thought that a drunk like me, still trying to learn how to live, would be asked 18 years later to chair such an event? For the first time in years, I didn't get to spend a lot of time sitting in on the workshops and sharing sessions. Like the rest of the members of the 2008 Committee I was busy making sure that everyone else had what they needed to enjoy the event.

We kicked off the SWRAASA Friday night with our Southwest

Regional Trustee, Conley B. and the 11 SW Region Delegates serving on Panels 56 and 57. Each Delegate shared on a topic of this year's Conference theme "Communication & Participation" followed by Conley's report to the Assembly. He answered questions from the floor and we adjourned for the night to eat ice cream.

There were 36 workshops and sharing sessions during the day Saturday. No one had much free time until the dinner break Saturday evening. Even that didn't last long and we were back into session for a fantastic presentation on the Concepts. I did attend this session. It was the best presentation on the Concepts that I have seen at any of the SWRAASAs. Following a question and answer session we broke for the night to, you guessed it — eat more ice cream and share one on one with other people interested in service.

Sunday morning we had the honor to hear from past Trustees of the Southwest Region and to ask questions of them. We ended the weekend with a business session that was filled with "Communication & Participation."

I would like to thank all the Groups, Districts and individuals that contributed both time and money to make this event self-supporting — well almost self-supporting anyway. I will reveal more in the final report to the Area Assembly on January 17. Also, I would be derelict in my responsibility if I didn't say thank you, to the Area, for allowing me this opportunity to once again be of service to Area 38 and the Southwest Region of Alcoholics Anonymous. Oh, and by the way, yes I believe it was a success and worth my time and money to attend.

*Yours in service, Chip B., 55/38 Eastern Missouri
& 2008 SWRAASA Host Committee Chair*

Around-the-Campus: New Rotation

The Gazette asked Area service veterans (and a few people new to general service) to share their feelings about this subject. An anticipated short article mushroomed. The many generous responses — rich with experience and insight — have been published on our website; space in this publication permits just a sampling. In most instances, we all were initially outside of our comfort zone, but, as Bill W. encouraged us to keep moving forward — we change and grow.

1. What were (or are) your feelings when first starting out in general service? Confident ♦ Both nervous and enthusiastic when starting my first foray into general service — slightly more so the latter... Felt a little over my head, and that I had a lot of catching up to do. ♦ Humbled, honored, grateful. ♦ Doubtful... not sure that what I was doing was right for me or AA but I was told I needed to do it if I wanted to be "sober." I needed all three legacies of the program for sobriety. ♦ No one position scared me to death because I didn't feel that the jobs were too difficult to do since I hadn't seen any-one fail at one yet. ♦ Reluctant. ♦ Challenged.

♦ Excited, but confused. I really didn't know what all the acronyms and abbreviations meant. I was also grateful about the opportunity to serve. I was impressed by the quality of the people

involved and their sobriety. ♦ Trying to not mess up but eager. ♦ Anxious about doing something totally new. Scared about interacting with a lot of new people.

2. What were (or are) your feelings when starting out in a new rotation? Eager to learn new tasks. ♦ Each job had some anxiety involved, but that quickly dissipated as I got into the actual work. ♦ I'm like an old Lab: fetch sounds like a lot of work until someone tosses a Frisbee, then... ♦ What have I gotten myself into THIS time? ♦ Nervous... concerned about doing a good job. ♦ Excited, yet apprehensive. I had a hard time in the beginning with letting go of my past position. I got mad the first time they replaced me as the coffee maker with a "newbie". Every time I left a position there was always something else for me to do. ♦ Always excited because I know I'll receive many benefits from my new opportunities for service and I'll become closer friends with more people in the program. ♦ Excited and anxious to learn. Knowing that this was just another job to do. ♦ Always enthusiastic and excited when starting a new rotation, as well as relieved to be done with the previous rotation. ♦ As assignments progress, one gains confidence to perform in whatever capacity asked. ♦ Afraid of failing in front of everybody. ♦ Grateful that I'm able to serve.



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Published by the Gratitude Gazette Committee of the Eastern Area of MO, Area 38 of Alcoholics Anonymous. Opinions expressed herein are those of the authors only and not AA as a whole. AA has not endorsed the materials contained herein, unless specifically cited.

Rotation (continued from pg. 3):

3. What helps — or has helped — you? Those who preceded you can certainly be a wealth of information, if they haven't broken and run once their job was done. I have a service sponsor who can help see the big picture. And I also got to know many past Delegates, who have held a number of positions and could share their experience, strength and hope. ♦ If you simply show up for all of the meetings, etc., you'll be doing better than most people — that took some of the pressure off. ♦ Definitely prayer and the support/advice of other service veterans. ♦ Acceptance... what will be, will be. ♦ Frequent prayer and the practice of anonymity as a spiritual principle were my lifeline. ♦ Examples of the overall

energy level of commitment and great sobriety of others. ♦ We all "take our turn in the box," to pass the message along. It's what we do to stay sober. ♦ SERVICE SPONSOR!!! ♦ Those leading the next rotation. ♦ I learned to listen to those that had gone before me. I have an expression that helps me a lot when it comes to service work and rotation. That phrase is "It's not my job." I have to live it; I have to let the new person do their job and concentrate on doing the best I can in mine. ♦ Inventory about my service experiences and the benefits I've gained fill me with gratitude and assure me that I will receive even more in the future, in my new rotation. ♦ Speaking directly with the outgoing servant is always the most beneficial... Speaking with my service sponsor, reading the literature on the position, and prayer (as always) is helpful. ♦ Willingness & availability of predecessors is the key. I asked; they shared. I must do the same for the next group. Not to dominate and control but to edify and encourage. ♦ AA service literature has helped the most. If our service literature and traditions are read, understood and followed, these positions are doable and one can have a successful term... Of course, nothing can be accomplished or rewarding without close contact with one's higher power. (Please see the expanded article at www.eamo.org. Click on Gratitude Gazette)

ARCHIVES:

2683 Big Bend Blvd., Rm. 3, St. Louis, 63143.
archives@eamo.org. Open 1st Wed/ month 1P-6P.
 Working sessions 3rd Sat./mo: 10A-12N. Drop in to visit or to volunteer. *Traveling Archives are available for your AA event.*

25th ANNIVERSARY

St. Louis AA Women's Luncheon



SAVE THE DATE
May 3, 2009

At the Airport Hilton

More information soon. Watch for flyers.

Check the Area Website: eamo.org

AREA BULLETIN BOARD

2009 ASSEMBLY DATES:

January 17

April 4

July 11

October 3

First Annual SPRING FLING CONVENTION AA ♦ Al-Anon

May 22-24, 2009, Hilton Frontenac, 1335 S. Lindberg Blvd., St. Louis, Mo;

www.springflingstl.com

for info & online preregistration.

Room reservations: call 314-993-1100

or register on-line: \$79 convention room rate

Speakers ♦ Banquet ♦ Al-Anon Lunch ♦ Ice

Cream Social ♦ Breakfast ♦ Fellowship

SMICYPAA

MINI CONFERENCE 3

January 23 -25, 2009

at the YMCA Trout Lodge & Camp Lakewood (off Rt. AA in Potosi, MO).

mini@smicypaa.org, or visit

www.smicypaa.org/mini.htm.

Join a great week-end!

See article on page 2

28th Annual "5" Corners Convention Feb 20 & 21, 2009



FREE Registration

Sikeston Armory 300 S. Main Sikeston, MO

Hotel: Days Inn 1330 S. Main Sikeston: 573-471-3930

Rooms (1 - 4 People) \$57.00 plus tax
 Check eamo.org; click on Area Events



July 31-Aug. 2, 2009

Capitol Plaza Hotel, 415 W.

McCarty St., Jefferson City.

www.MOstateconvention.org

MONTHLY IR MEETING:

3rd Tuesdays, 8PM

St. Mary's Hospital Cafeteria 6400 Clayton Rd., St. Louis

Great River Roundup 2009 — "There is a Solution"

March 6 - 8 Pere Marquette Lodge, Rt. 100 Grafton, IL.

Great River Roundup, PO Box 522. Wood River, IL 62095

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