



Gratitude Gazette

Winter 2011

Published Quarterly by the Gratitude Gazette Committee of Eastern Missouri AA

New Area Servants!

Area Officers were elected by Third Legacy Procedure at the Fall 2010 Assembly.

Delegate Laura V.
Alt Delegate Larry N.
Chairperson Marge D.
Alt Chair Ian S.
Secretary Gene M.
Registrar Phil K.
Treasurer Jim F.
Asst. Treasurer Karen S.

Pending Approval by the Assembly, the following individual will serve as committee persons for Eastern MO.

Archives
 Chair Pat D.
 Alt. Nancy J.

Bridging the Gap
 Chair Dan D.
 Alt. Mike D.

Cooperation with Professional Community
 Chair Dave M.
 Alt. Shirley H.

Correctional Facilities
 Chair Kurt K.
 Alt. Bob L.

Grapevine
 Chair Perry T.
 Alt. Gary B.

Gratitude Gazette
 Editor / Chair Pamela K.

Public Information
 Chair Mike P.
 Alt. Mac M.

Special Needs / Accessibility
 Chair Russell L.
 Alt. Terry L.

Treatment Facilities
 Chair Mary W.
 Alt. Ben C.

Webmaster Bruce V.

AA in the Digital Age

Technological and communication advances in society have far reaching implications on Alcoholics Anonymous. In embracing new technology, there are tremendous benefits along with possible unintended consequences and differing ideas about how AA principles are applied. Social media sites and blogs have given individuals with no particular skills in mass communication to publish just about anything online; including membership and opinions about AA, photos of AA functions and opinions about any subject "outside" of AA published as an AA member.

The way AA and its members interact with the general public as well as personal anonymity have been matters of serious deliberation since our fellowships earliest days. As it becomes easier for an individual to transmit messages for worldwide consumption, the benefits and risks increase. This year, the General Service Conference is discussing "AA in the Digital Age" and encouraging the fellowship to take part in discussions to help prepare our delegate.

Interestingly, as a fellowship, AA has always relied heavily on experience rather than being proactive. "Our experience suggests that...." Seems to be how we qualify much of the knowledge we share as an organization. Given this organizational style, plus our large autonomous collection of groups and members, its nearly impossible to make changes as quickly as our society has changed. One article about blogs stated that there are 57,472 blogs started within a 24 hour period. Micro-blogging is even bigger with an estimated 600,000 new members per day on Facebook.

In looking at this topic, it's easy to focus on the defensive perspective on how we can preserve our fellowship and see how our civilization communicates as a problem; particularly if one doesn't use the internet. Talking with others, there have been countless stories of people connecting with "old friends" and sharing the program with them. One old friend contacted his former sponsor on Facebook and started working the program again from 1000 miles away. Others tell of stories of reconnecting with old home group members that later found the need to come back to AA after initially making contact with those friends still sober through social media.

For other AA entities such as Central Offices or districts, being able to develop email databases to pass along information in digital format on a regular basis helps keep members informed of events, helps share meeting directories, shaves costs, and simply makes AA more accessible to the suffering alcoholic.

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Chairperson's Chatter

Best wishes to everyone in the New Year and welcome to our new rotation! We have seen several changes at the Area: office, Assembly location, new trusted servants joining us, and most of us rotating onto different positions. What remains unchanged is our mission of service.

When I was speaking recently with several long-time, respected members of the AA community about becoming involved in general service, I was dismayed when a gentleman said to me, "I have no idea what you're talking about." Over time, I have heard similar statements from other members of the Fellowship. This, once again, demonstrates to me the need of continuing to carry the message of service involvement to our AA members. Here, I'm preaching to the choir; I'm saying nothing that has not been said more eloquently many times before. This is a perennial issue: the need for participation – involving the uninvolved.

We carry the message of AA beyond the church basement door. The message suffering alcoholics hear before they get to AA, is due, in large part, to the work of committees – Public Information, Cooperation with the Professional Community, and so forth – educating the clergy, doctors, law enforcement officials, employers, schools, neighbors, providing media PSAs. According to periodic membership surveys, large percentages of our membership first heard about AA through third parties.

I once heard a Trustee say, based upon his observations, that only about 10 percent of AA members in the US and Canada participate in general service. While we know that there are many ways to be involved in AA, all of us in general service are the boots on the ground – the ones who roll up our sleeves. Why do we go beyond our comfort zones: give up a Saturday for the Assembly, go to District meetings, leave our warm homes in the evening and drive to prisons to carry the message behind the walls, ignore our anxieties about public speaking and volunteer to speak to schools, to professionals, and so on? Because we love AA. Because we are grateful. Because AA was there when we needed it, and we want to do our part to help ensure that AA will be here for our future suffering alcoholics.

When I have asked AAs to join in "service opportunities" (always accentuating the positive), I have often waded through many "nos" before someone said "yes." Some folks are not interested in general service ... they don't know what they are missing. I have been called a "service geek" ... that's OK. Fortunately, I do encounter people who want to participate. Some of the happiest AAs I know are trusted servants in service. We are enthusiastic and grateful. I find a sense of purpose in general service; it is a wonderful antidote to any "AA malaise" that might want to encroach upon my life. This is a great solution for the AA members who might be bogged down in ennui ... do service: carry the message of hope into treatment centers and jails, speak at non-AA meetings, get involved.

A DCM said awhile ago, "It's time for everyone to get up off the couch." Will I get off my soap box? Probably not. I'm glad to be a "service geek."

Welcome New General Service Representatives!

Talk of the Town

Each year, our area sends a delegate to the General Service Conference in New York to discuss, guide, and act for AA as a whole. Part of the conference that usually has an impact on our work in groups, district, and area discussions is the topics used for workshops and discussions at the conference. This year, the preliminary presentation topics are as follows:

1. Alcoholics Anonymous in a Digital Age:

- a) Practicing Our Traditions in a Digital Age
- b) Carrying A.A.'s Message Online
- c) Grapevine – "A.A.'s Meeting in Print" and More ...

2. An Informed Group Conscience: The Voice of A.A.:

- a) Self-Support – Where Do Money and Spirituality Mix?
- b) Humility – Accepting the Group Conscience
- c) An Informed Group Conscience – Using the Three Legacies

3. Diversity in A.A.:

- a) The Language of the Heart is Spoken Here
The Hand of A.A. – Inclusive Never Exclusive
Tradition Five – Our Primary Purpose

4. Sponsorship:

- a) Importance of a Home Group
- b) Leading by Example – Attraction Not Promotion
- c) Recovery, Unity, Service

2011 Workshop Topic

"How to Increase Participation in A.A. – Striving for Self-Support in All Our Affairs"



“Plugged In” to AA

When I first became the General Service Representative of my Home group, attended my first assembly, and began to read the AA Service Manual, I was overwhelmed with information about how AA groups work. I heard how the structure of the group is important to the structure of the whole of Alcoholics Anonymous. With or without some rigid structure, I had always loved my home group. There was a genuine love and service evident to us all. The spirit of AA filled our meeting every week.

We never really had the structure that some groups do. The idea of a group structure was not too popular with some of the members. "Keep it simple," people would say, and, "every group should have the least possible organization." I didn't know what the 'right' thing to do was. I enjoyed being involved in district service. I couldn't understand why the group seemed so disinterested in the legacy of service. Some of the older members seemed opposed to changing the 'purity' of the group by reading my reports or asking for group members to attend service workshops and meetings. I took a great deal of this to heart. The controversy was felt deep within me as I pondered my own actions. Was I trying to add some useless part of AA into the group, or was I just facing the brunt of the alcoholics' 'love for change'?

The importance of maintaining personal recovery is always paramount in service work. We must remember we are carrying the message, instead of the disease. I had been pressuring myself for quite some time to figure out a solution to my group dilemma. One day while meditating, as our basic text promised, the answer came.

My answer was that it wasn't my decision I couldn't simply fix things. I should present my concerns to the group and let the group decide what course to take.

I had heard about group inventories through reading material sent out through the intergroup. I shared my concerns with the group and proposed that we take a look at ourselves. The group agreed. We followed a general format found in the AA Group pamphlet. The theme was in line with the Fifth Tradition: "Our primary purpose is to stay sober and help other alcoholics to achieve sobriety."

Things didn't change at once, but they certainly did change. After two years of working with my group to suit its own needs, our group conscience meetings have the support of a majority of the group members. The level of participation in the group has increased so that almost everyone has something to do. We are involved at the district and area level in several activities aimed at helping the alcoholic find the way to recover in our program. Almost all of our group members are involved in carrying the message into some type of institution or another, be it a prison, treatment center, or school. Our group structure has increased from two overworked members to a full structure of hard-working alcoholics. Though still in its early stages, our group service structure seems to be focused on service, rather than just filling the positions. The fruits of our action is the satisfaction of knowing we are part of the solution, rather than a part of the problem.

I can truthfully say, it's because we got out of ourselves at the group level and 'plugged in' to Alcoholics Anonymous!

What Are You Doing in 2025?

At the 2010 International Convention, lots of fun was had as we gathered together to celebrate 70 years of Alcoholics Anonymous. One friend stopped by and we discussed the selection process. Having submitted a bid in 1995 for the 2005 International, the subject of how cities bid has always been of interest. Our friend filled us in on the next two locations of the event and said "If you want to bid for 2025, you'd better get moving!" It turns out that GSO will be asking all areas if they are interested within the next year.

There's been a lot of talk about whether St. Louis can handle this event and why we didn't get the nod back in 1995.

When we submitted a bid for the 2005 Convention, it turns out that we had been given a "second option" on the facilities needed for the event. What that means, simply, is that another convention was planning their event for the same weekend and beat us out. As it turned out, the 7th Day Adventists Church held its worldwide conference the same weekend that many of us were celebrating in Toronto.

Another reason discussed was our lack of life in the Downtown St Louis area. Since then, over 5 Billion dollars have been reinvested into the Downtown St Louis area with many more projects in the pipeline. More hotels, more night life, more residents, CityGarden and the Old Post Office Plaza, and over 100 new restaurants serve the area. An additional 2,500 downtown hotel rooms have been added since 1995 with 230 being built presently and more in the pipeline. In the past few years, the Downtown area has been given several international awards for its rebound. There's definitely a new energy and hosting 60,000 drunks is no problem.

One thing our friend told us in San Antonio is the need for volunteers can be a challenge, citing that GSO asked for 4,000 volunteers to assist with guests needs. In 1995, our bid included letters of support from all other areas in our region, plus Southern Illinois support.

Anyone interested in seeing the AA International in St Louis for 2025 can send an email with contact information to Chris G. at tgb-aa@sbcglobal.net to help plan for this historic event.



Bulletin Board

5 Corners Convention

Armory, S. Main Street, Sikeston
February 18-19, 2011.
Convention is free. banquet.

Eastern Area Office & ARCHIVES

Open every Wednesday 1-6pm
Area Archives Work Sessions
3rd Saturday of each month 10-Noon
14 Sunnen Dr. suite 144 in Maplewood

5th SMICYPAA Mini-Conference

Hyatt Regency, Downtown St Louis
April 22-23, 2011; Rooms \$89/night
Registration is \$10 or Free if travelling over 50 miles or registered for 53rd ICYPAA

St. Louis Intergroup Meetings

3rd Tuesday of the Month, 8pm
14 Sunnen Dr Suite 144; Maplewood
EXPANDED OFFICE HOURS
Wednesdays 'til 7 & Saturdays 9-noon

3rd Annual SPRING FLING Conference

HILTON FRONTENAC, 1335 S LINDBERGH BLVD
MAY 27-29 \$15 Pre-Registration \$79 Rooms
Visit SpringFlingSTL.com for registration

60th Annual Missouri State Convention

Capital Plaza Hotel, Jefferson City
August 5-7th; mostateconvention.org

St Louis Central Services POTLUCK

Saturday ,February 5 @ Grace Episcopal
514 E Argonne in Kirkwood Dinner at 6
Open Meeting at 7

2011 Eastern Area Assembly

Dates and New Location

January 15
April 2
July 9
October 1

Assemblies Located at The Holiday Inn Southwest (the Viking) at 10709 Watson Rd At the intersection of Lindbergh Blvd and Watson Rd.

VISIT EAMO.org for Area News



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AA in the Digital Age

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Prior to the introduction of the 12 Traditions, the range in our efforts to spread the AA message varied greatly. Some AA's did everything they could to make news; the other end of the spectrum was an entirely secret society. We had no means of coming to decisions other than members consulting with founders or other "old timers", or not. One thing was certain: Alcoholics Anonymous needed to consider how its message could remain consistent, clear and focused on its principles and not its 'personalities'.

In the early years of the internet's push into mainstream use, AA was faced with similar concerns. "AA Sites" were popping up that had no link to any group, district or area and there were concerns about how these sites represented AA. When the matter was brought to the Eastern Area Assembly in the '90's, we had to decide if having an internet presence was appropriate and necessary for Eastern Missouri AA. The statement that caught my attention was "we need to do it, or someone else will!". Ad-hoc committees were formed to decide on the subjects "Do we need an online presence?" followed by other ad-hoc committees on how to further define our scope and other details.

Just like our area did in the 90's, we can't turn a 'blind eye' to the continuing changes in media. "AA in the Digital Age" tells us that whether we like it or not, whether we understand it or not, whether we participate or not; AA **IS IN** the digital age. Through the next few months, it's our job as an area to prepare our delegate for the job of helping in the conference process of how AA will respond to the benefits and challenges. What will hopefully come of this is more useful guidance on how we as members can continue to share and apply the Traditions, plus more lessons on why the Traditions help build our fellowships unity.

GSR School

On December 11, 2010 I attended the District 2 -Eastern Area GSR training. I went expecting to learn about the role of the GSR, but left with a bit more than that.

Being relatively new to AA (11 months sober at the time) I was searching for the next thing to keep me active in this program. I was just starting to feel like I had my footing in the program and thought it was time for me to learn and do more. I felt this was a perfect opportunity for me to learn how to give back to a program which has given me so much.

What I learned is the GSR is the home group's main line of communication between other local groups and the General Service Office. Basically, the GSR is the mechanism by which my voice is heard through the group conscience to first to the district and to A.A. as a whole. Beyond that we learned about A.A. structure and how our individual groups fit in.

In summary the workshop was well worth the time. Now that I have a year in the program, I am ready to serve as A.A. needs me outside of my group and this workshop was an excellent introduction to A.A. I suggest anyone who is looking for avenues to get involved outside of their home group look attend the next GSR workshop.



The Gratitude Gazette is published by the Gratitude Gazette committee, Eastern Area of Missouri of Alcoholics Anonymous. Opinions expressed herein are those of the author and not A.A. as a whole. A.A. has not endorsed the materials contained

Editor, Gratitude Gazette c/o Eastern Area Office 14 Sunnen Dr., Suite 144; St. Louis, Missouri 63143