

MARGENSER

Fostering Unity and Carrying the A A Message in Area 29 MARYLAND GENERAL SERVICE

Delegate's Corner... "Our Spiritual Way of Life: Steps, Traditions & Concepts"

Linda J., Area 29 Delegate

I just returned home a couple of days ago from New York, and my heart is overflowing with gratitude for the opportunity to serve as your Delegate to the 66th General Service Conference, which met from April 16-23rd. I am so proud of all the time and commitment by an unprecedented number of members in Area 29 who participated in the CARC and Mini-Conference process to prepare me so well to attend Conference.

My goal in this article is to give a quick snapshot of the main events in the hope that you may aspire to serve as the Area 29 Delegate someday. Reflecting back on my week at Conference, there was a lot of excitement, long hours with tough decisions, a very full agenda to accomplish, high emotions, new friends, bonding with old friends, and an immense amount of commitment, responsibility, and Love & Service.

Conference Roll Call was taken on Sunday morning at 10 a.m. and marked the official opening of the 66th General Service Conference. When my name was called following the words "Area 29", I knew I truly was "present". I have to say it was a moving experience, both intellectually and spiritually. This year's Conference was comprised of 134 voting members, including Delegates from the 93 Areas in the United States and Canada, 25 Trustees, AAWS Directors &

Grapevine Directors, and 16 General Service and Grapevine staff.

Following roll call, David Morris, Treasurer (non alcoholic) provided a detailed PowerPoint on the Finances regarding AAWS, GV, GSO and GSB. Only 40.3% of the groups contributed in 2015, as compared to 41.6% in 2014. If each member contributed \$7.14 in 2015, services provided by AAWS would have been fully self-supporting. Excerpts of the full report may be useful for 7th Tradition and Self-Support discussions with groups and districts. Please contact me for the full report.

Opportunities for Communication – There were numerous opportunities during Conference week to discuss current issues and promote communication throughout all 93 Areas. Some of those were the Remote Communities meeting, trip to our General Service & Grapevine offices, General Sharing Sessions, meals where we were encouraged to sit with someone new for each meal, Area Highlights, presentations, as well as Board and Committee Reports. In addition, there were eight workshop sections to further assess the Feasibility Study and report back to the body following what proved to be an intensely informative session for all. A full report will be available in the near future from the General Service Office.

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MARGENSER STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

The Area 29 MARGENSER newsletter is published to foster unity and facilitate communication among AA members, groups, districts, and intergroups within the Maryland General Service Area. The MARGENSER aims to be instrumental in carrying the AA message. This quarterly newsletter seeks to publish AA-related material, including personal stories of experience, strength, and hope. Material will be reviewed by the MARGENSER committee chairperson or by a member of the committee. Nothing published in the MARGENSER should be thought of as a statement of Area 29 or AA policy. Finally, publication shall not constitute endorsement by the newsletter itself, Area 29, intergroups, districts, local groups, or AA as a whole.

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Conference Committees – Each delegate sits on at least one of the 13 Conference Committees, which discusses, deliberates, and molds the Agenda items (submitted by members, groups, districts, areas, trustees or staff) into Committee Recommendations or Additional Considerations. On my Conference Finance Committee, five different Regions of North America were represented which added global insight into the issues we discussed. Finding common ground based on the principles of the program was difficult at times, but arriving at substantial unanimity was a very rewarding process.

There was an incredible amount of work facing the Conference this year. The Final Agenda consisted of a total of 66 items for the 13 committees. Each Conference Committee worked from six to nine hours in their individual committee discussing and formulating recommendations for the Conference members as a body to vote on. During these discussions and ultimate votes of the Conference body, the annual informed group conscience of Alcoholics Anonymous as a whole emerged.

A couple of the highlights from

Conference actions which members of Area 29 expressed an interest are:

- ❖ 2017 Conference Theme ~ ~ “Supporting Our Future”
- ❖ Consider ways to convey the financial message of Self-Support using technology
- ❖ Add the Self-Support Flyer (F-203) and the Birthday Plan envelope to the Self-Support Packet
- ❖ A new Corrections video entitled “A New Freedom” was approved
- ❖ Develop a plan to systematically review recovery literature items
- ❖ Develop a proposal for implementing a google-for-Non-Profits and a Twitter account for carrying the message of A.A. to the public and bring back to the 2017 Conference Committee on Public Information

Keep an eye out for Workshops, Sharing Sessions, and Newsletter Articles on these and other topics designed to raise the Fellowship’s awareness of the struggles, challenges and opportunities currently facing Alcoholics Anonymous as a whole. Increasing awareness and participation in our 7th Tradition of Self-Support in AA as a whole is of

paramount concern. Also the area of technology is a hot topic. Currently, there are more questions than answers on how A.A. can move forward utilizing technology while maintaining our anonymity in this digital age.

Although much work was accomplished at Conference, my local work is just beginning. Communication is the key!! The Delegate Report Back from Conference will be on May 14th at the Area Assembly. Thereafter, I will travel throughout Maryland providing an abbreviated report from the Conference to all the Districts, Intergroups and members of the Area. Remember, this is a “year long process” and not merely a “week long event”.

We are so blessed to have so many talented, enthusiastic and committed members who serve the fellowship in Area 29. There are no words to express what an honor and privilege it was to not only represent Area 29, but to serve Alcoholics Anonymous as a whole at the General Service Conference.

Please feel free to contact me with any questions or requests for further information.

Linda J., Panel 66, Area 29 Delegate
~ (delegate@marylandaa.org). 📧

Staying Involved

Doug W., Area 29 Treasurer

When I finally arrived in Alcoholics Anonymous - to stay - in the Spring of 1998, I was a useless, hopeless, and helpless shell of the person that my parents raised me to be. Fear and insecurity, disguised in attitude, arrogance and anger dominated my personality. I didn’t realize that I was dying of spiritual starvation. I thought I was just tired of being me and existing in the life and the small world that living a life of self will had produced. Thank God something happened to me in that last institution in Emmitsburg, MD, something spiritual that I could-

n’t explain, something that gave me a touch of willingness and hope. God intervened, even though I didn’t realize it at the time.

Leaving that place, I knew what I had to do, I had to return to Alcoholics Anonymous, something that I wasn’t necessarily enthused about, but knew I HAD to do. It was the only place for me. I was scared of drinking and I knew AA was my only hope for sobriety. So I got a home group, a series of sponsors, one of which I actually worked the 12 steps with and asked God to give me the strength to stay

sober a day at a time. At some point, for reasons that I can’t recall, I agreed to be my group’s Intergroup Rep. I can’t remember what led me to that position, I only know that I ended up going to the Monthly West Central Intergroup meetings in Frederick. I can remember being intrigued by how things worked there, the “interesting” personalities that came to work together to host Gratitude Breakfasts, answer the Office Hotline, print “Where and Whens”, sell Literature, print Newsletters, etc..

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There was something in those meetings I was attracted to. I began to enjoy learning how things worked in AA, the protocol that was followed, the information and experience passed on from those in the room that had held positions in the past, but stayed because they were attracted to service and could be helpful to those of us who didn't know. At that time in my sobriety, I was still full of fear and was certain that I had nothing to offer anyone on a personal, sponsor-sponsee level. Self-centeredness in the extreme will do that to a drunk. But that position made me accountable, gave me some place to be, made me feel a part of for one night a month. I wasn't ready to hang out with "you people" on a personal basis, but business was business, and I "needed" to be there.

Next thing I knew I stood for and was elected WCI Treasurer. How did that happen? No idea. I don't remember, not because I was still foggy or that it's been that long, it's just because I have a horrible memory. Anyway, being Treasurer was the perfect service position for me. Quickbooks, Spreadsheets, P.O. boxes and check books didn't talk back. They didn't scare me or make me feel uncomfort-

able either. So, I could be by myself, keep the books (black and white, right or wrong), and yet still be of service. Still be accountable. Still have to suit up and show up. Having that service position helped me stay sober despite hanging on to MANY old ideas, not letting go absolutely and half-measuring the "We" in our 1st step.

As I look back, something was happening to me, something that I didn't realize. I was becoming involved, in spite of myself. My world was getting larger. I was becoming part of a spiritual whole, rather than being adrift on a spiritless island. I was meeting people I would not have otherwise met. People that I wouldn't have necessarily chosen to hang out with. But that's the point, I was hanging out with these people because I had a responsibility. I was becoming part of the process of Alcoholics Anonymous, outside the home group. It began a process that put me in the middle of service, our third legacy, a place that I have stayed ever since. It got me out of my comfort zone, off the couch, out of my house, out of the places where I am the most comfortable.

From those days fairly early in my sobriety, I have held several different service positions, at different levels in our service structure. Every time I think I am moving away from service,

something comes up that leads me back, to the next thing. The next job. The next Convention. I think they call that "rotating on". I have learned to get in front of a crowd, do presentations, and speak from the mike, despite not being particularly good at it. Less fear, more faith – and purpose. All in spite of myself. I have learned from those that have been attracted to service, those whom I respect.

Most importantly, I have found that I am NOT one of those people that can go to a couple of meetings a week, and be comfortable in my own skin. God and I cannot cultivate my own spirituality, I need people in between. I need to be around you, doing what we do, staying involved in the process of "We". Had I not been involved in service, I would not have written this article. I may have spent these hours otherwise thinking about things I can't control, or what might happen, or what I can't have, rather than trying to communicate what Alcoholics Anonymous has done for me. Spirit vs. Self.

Alcoholics Anonymous has given me a second life, and I will be forever grateful to those folks that were in those early Intergroup meetings, doing the business of AA, showing me what it is like to be "a part of" rather than "apart from." ▲

From the Registrar

Mike S., Registrar Area 29

I first want to thank everyone for letting me serve as your area registrar. I had a slow start but things are moving right along. I want to also thank Terri our Webmaster for his help with the forms that you can use on the Area 29 website. We have added one which is for committee members and modified the others so they are unable to submit without a contact and full postal address. Email and phone are optional but that helps us to cut down mailing cost and inform you of last minute changes in Meetings or Area business.

The Regional Directory list the number for contact for the traveling Alcoholic. May was the cutoff for the updates to go into the directory but always having the Fellowship New Vision (FNV) database updated is helpful because we use that for all of our contact information.

The GSO also mails GSR Kits and New Group Kits when you register on the FNV at no charge. There is also the Box 459 newsletter to the main Group contact containing information on what is going on in AA in general. This is to

help the group stays informed on what is going on in AA as a whole. All this information is treated with the upmost confidentiality and only used for communication of AA business within AA.

Remember this is to keep us informed and educated on what AA is and what it is doing with the ever changing world. With this we can get the message to the Alcoholic who still suffers and maintain our traditions of which kept AA alive throughout the 80 plus years it has been in existence. ▲

Change We Must or Die We Will

Bill H.

On the weekend of February 26th, a large contingency from Area 29 went to Springfield, MA, for the Annual NERAASA conference.

I was looking forward to the trip for reasons beyond serving AA.

Springfield, MA is the birthplace of the Springfield bolt action breech loading rifle which changed the balance of power of the Civil War and many wars that were yet to come. Change was inevitable.

I went to the first panel to hear the speaker discuss connecting with the newcomer. When he was done, I was physically and emotionally shaken.

The number of new AA members is down. Donations from home groups to intergroups and the General Service Office are down. Sales of all types of literature, including the Big Book "Alcoholics Anonymous" are down.

I have heard all this before, but this time it hit me harder and deeper than ever before. We, all current recovering alcoholics, may have to review our own sobriety from top to bottom.

From how much I put in the basket to how I portray AA in my everyday life, I have to do a complete inventory and check it every day. I have to under-

stand what sponsorship really means. I must dedicate myself to service with a smile, no matter how inconvenient, insignificant, or boring it may be.

For AA to survive, we must do what seems to be an oxymoron. We must stay true to the traditions and yet change in order to stay abreast with the times.

It seems hard but it is rather simple. Live by the suggestions of the 12 steps, the 12 traditions and the 12 concepts in all aspects of our lives. There seems to be a greater need than ever for a new call to arms. Change we must or die we will. ☺

MARYLAND GENERAL SERVICE

AREA 29

2016 CALENDAR

Thursday-Sunday
Annapolis

46th Maryland State Convention
June 16-19

Doubletree by Hilton Hotel
210 Holiday Ct
Annapolis, Md 21401

Saturday
July 16, 2016
8:30 am-Registration
9:00am- Start

Area Committee

TBD

Saturday
August 20, 2016
8:30 am-Registration
9:00am- Start

Area Assembly

Severna Park United Methodist
731 Benfield Road
Severna Park, MD 21146

Those Special Purpose Meetings

by Bob C., Area 29 Past Delegate

At an area committee meeting in November, the chairperson asked me to answer a question in the Ask-It-Basket: When a man shows up at a women's-only group needing a meeting, what should the group do?

Answering this question is not straightforward. Multiple Traditions might apply to this question, so we need to figure out which applies most strongly. First, Tradition 4 can be used to invoke group autonomy, unless other groups or A.A. as a whole are affected. That seems to be a stretch: Individual members are affected, but not other groups, and Tradition 1 rates individual welfare as a close second to our common welfare. "A.A. as a whole" (a phrase used by Bill W. in paragraph three of his Concept I essay) refers to all the groups of A.A., and no single special purpose group, by turning away one member, can affect all the groups of A.A., whether one agrees with that action or not.

Another tradition that might apply is Tradition 5, "one primary purpose – to carry its message to the alcoholic who still suffers." This tradition was obviously carefully worded, using "its message" instead of the more natural word choice, "the message," to avoid being directive. For a women's group, "its message" means the group is saying, "This is a safe place for women to come, where if you do these simple things, you never have to drink again."

Another tradition that might apply is Tradition 3, "The only requirement for A.A. membership is a desire to stop drinking." The third tradition doesn't infringe on group autonomy: It's about A.A. membership, not membership within any particular group, nor about an individual's "right" to attend just any meeting in town.

So the Fourth Tradition is a trump card that's held by the groups. There are no A.A. police to enforce anything. If we disagree with a group's decision

on how to run its meetings, our only hope is for the group to exceed the Traditions so greatly that it eventually collapses. Thus, the GSO and Conference (and area and districts) ought never dictate to a group. "Service boards or committees" can advise (especially when invited) and can monitor and control their own meeting lists, but they ought never butt in.

Bill W. wrote something, somewhere, to the effect that special purpose meetings are both acceptable and necessary. From that piece, I clearly recall his claim that meetings of the Alcoholic Foundation – now our General Service Board – were A.A.'s first special purpose meetings. Bill's point was that if the trustees can have special purpose meetings with restricted attendance, then so can any A.A. group. Now, Board meetings are business meetings, not recovery meetings per se, so his analogy may be a stretch; but I like his logic. (I wish I could find that piece, but I can't, so I've e-mailed the GSO asking for help. "More will be revealed.")

Many men don't understand why women would want to hold women's-only meetings. That may be because few men have experienced life as a woman in today's society. Many women come to A.A. completely beaten up – physically, emotionally, or both. Unfortunately, John Lennon's characterization of the status of women is not yet an anachronism. I know many women in A.A. who feel they need a safe place to go to get sober, where no men are present. When I hear their stories and see the terror in their eyes, I realize I am in no position to make that call. So I support special purpose meetings for any demographic group whose members feel they need a safe place.

When a man shows up and asks to attend a women's meeting that's duly identified as such in the local Where & When, the group needs to have discussed that eventuality beforehand.

It needs a pre-established group conscience, so it won't be trying to formulate one on the fly. The group has hospitable options. It can tell the person he can't stay, while providing a meeting list showing where to find a general meeting of A.A. It can make an exception for that one meeting, but only if that decision was made ahead of time, so no one feels under pressure to conform.

Other things a special purpose group needs to discuss beforehand include how to respond to trans, cross-dressing, or genderqueer individuals. Do those A.A. members qualify to attend the women's-only (or men's-only) meeting? This is clearly something for each group to decide. But it's better to discuss these questions in advance, rather than when the pressure is on.

Occasionally, I wonder whether this is all too confusing. It would be just too easy to label sex, gender identity, gender expression and sexual orientation as "outside issues" and forget it. However, the real issue here is safety in A.A.: For alcoholics who arrive on our doorstep with a history of physical or emotional abuse, feeling safe in A.A. can never be an "outside issue."

Thus, I hope A.A. groups will continue to provide safe places for all types of people who come to A.A. to get sober. This article has dealt primarily with the question from the Ask-It-Basket – about men attending women's only meetings – but I will conclude by generalizing: Whether people are female, male, transgender, transsexual, gay, lesbian, straight, bisexual, queer, black, white, Hispanic, Native American, atheist, agnostic, or pink-purple-polka-dotted, they are all human beings who have a right to the life-saving message of this glorious fellowship. Assuming that, then we need a lot of different meetings for a lot of different people, in order for A.A. to provide everyone with safe places to get sober. ♣

WANTED: AREA 29 ABLE-BODIED MEMBERS OF AA MEN AND WOMEN

(NON-ABLE-BODIES ARE ALSO WANTED)

The Public Information Committee are looking for enthusiastic members of AA throughout Area 29 to

Become members of the PI committee. This includes people already involved in the PI process at the home group and district level and newcomers to the process.

Please contact pi@marylandaa.org

We are also in need of the following specialized areas:

A member, who can read, understand, write and speak Spanish to bring Spanish groups into MGS Area 29

A member who is willing to help carry the message to ethnic groups in area 29

A woman to go into the women's groups in Area 29

A member in AA to help bring in the young people in AA into MGS Area 29

Life-Changing Moment

Bill H.

Hi, I'm Bill Herold and I am an alcoholic. Anyone who knows me even slightly knows that I could write three 800 page books describing my efforts and experiences with Corrections and Institutions as related to AA.

My first institution commitment was when I was a member of the Manasota Monday Night AA home group. It was at a correctional facility affectionately and sarcastically known as the "Cut". The meeting was on the bottom floor of the building in which the inmates were incarcerated. The date was February 24, 1990. The inmates and I were locked in a room for at least an hour. I was terrified. We sat around a small table. With me were two bright and personable members of AA and three inmates. I was terrified and scared out of my shorts.

There were other cells all around us. The mood of the meeting, at least for me, was tense, yet exciting. I really don't remember much else except for the fact that I was so glad to get out of there.

When I was finally outside and could breathe fresh air, a peace and calmness

came over me that I had never experienced before, and have not experienced again, since that meeting. I was on fire and determined to make institution commitments one of my priorities in AA. I soon became institution rep for my home group. In October 1990, I sponsored the commitment at Central Laundry in Sykesville. This was the first, in a long series of sponsorships of meetings in prisons, half-way houses, detox facilities, and mental institutions that continues today.

I have been the co-chairperson of the Baltimore Institution Committee, Chair of MGS Corrections Committee for four years, and served as a member of the Corrections Committee at the General Service Office from 2001 to 2005. And you know, these positions are not the highlights of my passionate commitment. I have seen people be released, get their families back and succeed with their sobriety and life.

For example, I met a man in New Jersey over 20 years ago and have seen him approximately 3 times since. But

every year on my AA anniversary, he calls and wishes me a happy anniversary. He is 80 years old, give or take a year or two, and remains busied with and active in AA. He has helped thousands by faithfully carrying the message into prisons. Yet every year he takes time to remember my anniversary.

These are the kind of people who get involved in corrections work. They are selfless, kind, loving, and dedicated. And if you want to know why, it is because they realize two important facts: the people in prisons and other facilities usually have no one, and by a simple twist of fate they could be imprisoned instead of them.

I have been lucky to get sober without having to spend any time incarcerated and I do owe these beautiful forgotten AA members, my time, my effort and my sincere interest in them and their sobriety.

Give it a chance; it will too change your life forever. Like a character in an old TV commercial about a breakfast cereal once said: "Try it, you'll like it." ♣

Carrying the Message In To Institutions...

Pat S., Area 29 Secretary

I am privileged to carry a meeting into the jail near my hometown each month. I have met women that are curious about Alcoholics Anonymous and some that are desperate for Alcoholics Anonymous. When I go into the jails, I have the feeling, "But for the Grace of God" that it could easily be me in here. I have kept in touch with a few of the women that I saw on a regular basis. Two of them I now sponsor. I have shared Grapevines on many occasions with the inmates. I usually have one or two books that I bring to give away; The Big Book, The Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions and Daily Reflections. I have been corresponding over the past two and a half years through the mail with 5 women inmates. I recently received through the GSO Corrections Correspondence Program, a woman

inmate to correspond with that is in another state. What a great program. I received a woman through this program that was in need of hope, and Alcoholics Anonymous provided me the opportunity to carry the message to her. We are working the steps and sending passages back and forth from our literature. We talk about pain and loss from the disease of Alcoholism and the benefits of working a strong program of recovery. Even in Prison, there are temptations all around you and it is very difficult to stick to your program, especially when there are only two AA meetings a month going into the prison. If more people got involved in the Corrections Correspondence program through your Corrections Chair, then the men and women in the jails and prisons would be working a program prior to

their release. In addition, they too carry the message to other suffering Alcoholics inside the jail/prison. Hope can be carried by anyone who is willing to share what has so freely been given to them. When we carry this message, we are telling the inmates that they are worth another chance. I had an inmate that was in need of meetings because the prison had stopped meetings from going in for a while. So I sent her hand written pages of "How It Works", "The Promises", "More About Alcoholism", "The Twelve Traditions", and the format to run a meeting. I also included a long list of suggested topics for her meetings. I don't know if they started allowing meetings to go back in but I do know that she and a few other inmates held their own meetings. "It Works If You Work It." ▲

THE MARGENSER IS YOUR NEWSLETTER

The MARGENSER Committee welcomes submissions. We are here to serve you. Submissions should be no more than 750 words and about service or recovery. Please include your first name, last initial and home group. Email all correspondence to Margenser@marylandAA.org or mail to Maryland General Services, PO Box 2651, Westminster, MD 21158. The submission deadline for the next issue is July 20, 2016.

REACHING OUT TO THE "DARK DISTRICTS"

Many of our neighbors do not actively participate in Area 29, nor are their voices heard within AA as a whole. We encourage you to reach out to those districts without active GSRs or DCMs, sharing your experience of service beyond the home group and carrying the message one-on-one. Area 29 welcomes your ideas on how we can best do this and offers our support.

SEND YOUR CONTRIBUTIONS TO...

In accordance with the 7th Tradition and abiding by the group conscience of your home group, you may send contributions in support of Area 29 to:

Maryland General Service, Inc.
P.O. Box 2651
Westminster, MD 21158

MARGENSER

P.O. Box 2651
Westminster, MD 21158



Return Service Requested

MARGENSER Mailing List Update Form

Send to _____
Address _____
City/State/Zip Code _____
E-Mail Address _____

<input type="checkbox"/> New	<input type="checkbox"/> Correction	<input type="checkbox"/> Individual	<input type="checkbox"/> Group
<input type="checkbox"/> Change	<input type="checkbox"/> E-mail Only		

Email form to: Margenser@marylandA.org or
mail to Maryland General Services, P.O. Box 2651
Westminster, MD 21158