

MARGENSER

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

We are Responsible for A.A.'s Future – Let It Begin with Us

Nancy B, Panel 60 Delegate, Area 29

The title of this article is the theme for the 61st General Service Conference which I am preparing to attend as the Panel 60 Delegate from Area 29. The Conference will be held at the Crowne Plaza in Times Square, New York City, from May 1 – 7. The Conference is like a large A.A. business meeting; the group conscience of the A.A. groups in the United States and Canada. Each year approximately 130 voting members attend including 93 Area Delegates (representing over 2/3 of the eligible voters), Trustees, Non-Trustee Directors and staff from the General Service Office and A.A. Grapevine.

As with most business meetings, this one follows an Agenda. The trustees have been reviewing and discussing agenda suggestions from groups, districts, areas, GSO staff, trustees, and A.A. members since the weekend after the General Service Conference LAST year. The Agenda was finalized and sent to the delegates on February 12. I shared it with the area by e-mail that day and provided hard copies at

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2010 MGS Treasurer's Report

Bob C, Area 29 Treasurer

The annual MGS treasurer's report for 2010 was presented at the Area 29 Committee in District 9 on February 19, 2011. In the interest of communicating to members and groups, this article summarizes that report. For a copy of the complete report, see contact information at the end of this article.

Income

Total income from all sources was \$47,159.09, or 98.2% of the 2010 budgeted total (\$48,000). This is broken down below as "Contributions from Groups" and "Other Income".

Contributions from Groups totaled \$38,340.85 from 389 different groups (including other A.A. entities such as individual members, intergroups and districts). Financial participation was essentially unchanged from 2009, when 391 groups participated.

Approximately 36.4% of Area 29's groups supported MGS financially in 2010, using the figure of 1,068 "Active" and "Unknown" groups in the Fellowship New Vision database as of March 5, 2011.

The 389 participating groups averaged an annual total contribution of \$98.56 per group during 2010. Taking into account all 1,068 groups (both contributing and non-contributing ones), the average annual contribution per group was \$35.90.

In 2007, Area 29 had approximately 15,000 A.A. members (2007 AAWS survey results), meaning MGS received approximately \$2.56 per member during 2010. 15,000 members x 36.4% yields an estimate of 5,463 members in contributing groups, so MGS received an average of approximately \$7.02 per member of contributing groups in 2010.

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If You Don't Know, You Don't Know

Tammy F, Area 29 Chair

I have now been your Area chair a little over a year. I have been reflecting on the good and not so good of the past year. (10th Step work.) There have been some great moments and some foot in mouth moments. I have left some meetings grumbling and others elated at the work accomplished for the Area. Yes, in other words, I have been growing, and more action is required to continue this growth spurt.

One of my favorite statements is; "if you don't know, you don't know". Just because things are written in books, pamphlets and web sites, doesn't mean people know the concepts and principles contained within such things. (Did you know s.e.x. is mentioned in the Big Book? It is. Go find it after you finish reading the MARGENSER.)

One of the resounding comments from the Area Inventory was more education. This goes hand in hand with my catch phrase. Just think back

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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.

Father Ed

Ron M, BYOL, Easton

The beginnings and evolution of Alcoholics Anonymous over the years can be attributed to numerous people that probably cannot be identified or recognized. There are some, however, that stand out and possibly can be labeled as icons. One of those persons is Father Ed Dowling, S.J. Although never a member of A.A. he provided tremendous spiritual guidance to Bill W., especially in the early years and continued to do so until his death at Memphis Tennessee, April 3 1960 at the age of 60.

Father Ed was born on September 1, 1898 in St. Louis Mo. In his early years he worked as a factory laborer and served in the army during WWI. After his military service he worked as a reporter for a short period at the St. Louis Globe Democrat. In 1919 he entered the Jesuit Order. He later taught at Loyola Academy in Chicago. He was ordained in 1931 and for the next number of years he served on the staff and travelled and taught around the world in various and numerous capacities.

Possibly, among other reasons, he was attracted to A.A. because of his personality traits. Some of his cohorts considered him a disorganized, intellectual lightweight. Not only did he experience suffering from his arthritis and judgments from his fellow Jesuits, but also from his own compulsive smoking and overeating. In 1944 his St. Louis A.A. friends asked him to stop smoking and by using the twelve steps he was able to do so. He subsequently wrote to Bill stating "I've stopped smoking, but I am becoming as fat as a hog." It is reported that twice he was seen finishing a quarter pound of butter with a whole box of saltines. Late one evening he ate all the strawberries for the entire Jesuit community and became so sick he had to receive the last rites. He wrote a friend, "I have been anointed twice for gluttony." He is reported to have maxed out at 242 pounds and had to treat food as an alcoholic treats alcohol. He once asked Bill and Lois to start a group called "obese obvious" for him and "nicotine nobodies" for Bill. As it turned out these very same compulsions hastened the deaths of these two men. It is believed that Bill had the 1955 convention in St. Louis because of the failing health of Father Ed.

In the very early years of A.A. history, just shortly after the first printing of the new book "Alcoholics Anonymous", Bill and Lois were living upstairs over the New York club house. In November of 1940 on a very rainy and cold evening a visitor arrived knocking on the door. A handyman answered and the visitor requested to see Bill. Bill was upstairs alone as Lois had not yet returned home. Bill was in one of his infamous depressive moods and admitted he did not want to see "another drunk" that evening. In spite of that thought he told the handy man to send the visitor up. Walking up the stairs and wrapped in a wet coat Bill was confronted with a short stubby man with a noticeable limp. Taking his coat off revealed a clergy collar and Bill was introduced to Father Ed Dowling. It turns out that Father Ed had gotten hold of a copy of the book and after reviewing it felt that it held a great deal in common with "The Spiritual Experiences of St. Ignatius" As a result he was moved to visit the author and investigate the author's source of information. This unexpected and unorthodox meeting was to grow into a lifelong friendship. Bill obviously fell under the spell of Father Ed and continually used him as a confidant especially in spiritual matters. From that point on each and everything Bill produced was first sent to Father Ed for review and critical comment. An interesting fact is that when Bill started to see the need, and write the traditions, he constantly and routinely consulted with Father Ed for content and editorial comment.

After the publication of the "Big Book" and the meeting with Father Ed in 1940 Bill was prone to deep depressions and the years between 1944 and 1955 are reported to be one of the worst periods. It was during this time frame when Bill recognized and readily admitted his problems with depression. He readily credits a breakthrough as a result of his close association with Father Ed and working with others as he had learned to do with the alcohol problem. It was shortly after he started to feel better that he was to publish the now famous article in the 1958 Grapevine entitled "The New Frontier, Emotional Sobriety" With Father Ed's help he was now able to confront another major problem in his life. ♣

(Delegate's Corner...) continued from page 1...

the Area Committee on February 19. In addition to the Agenda, there are over 700 pages of information providing background for the Agenda Items. This background information was provided on CD to Area Officers, Past Delegates and the leaders of the six Regional Panels in Area 29 which will discuss the two agenda topics they are assigned.

By the time you read this article there may be only one or two Regional Panel meetings left to attend. But you will still have the opportunity to participate in discussion of the Agenda Items by attending the annual Area 29 Mini Conference on April 16 in Severna Park (see flyer in this newsletter). The A.A. Service Manual states in Chapter Six: "As voting members of the Conference, delegates bring to its deliberations the experiences and viewpoints of their own areas." The annual Mini conference is where A.A. members will provide the conscience of the area to their delegate (me) and receive information on topics of importance to help carry the A.A. message.

This year there are 66 items on the Agenda for the General Service Conference. Following are just a few which might peak your interest. The members of the Conference will consider:

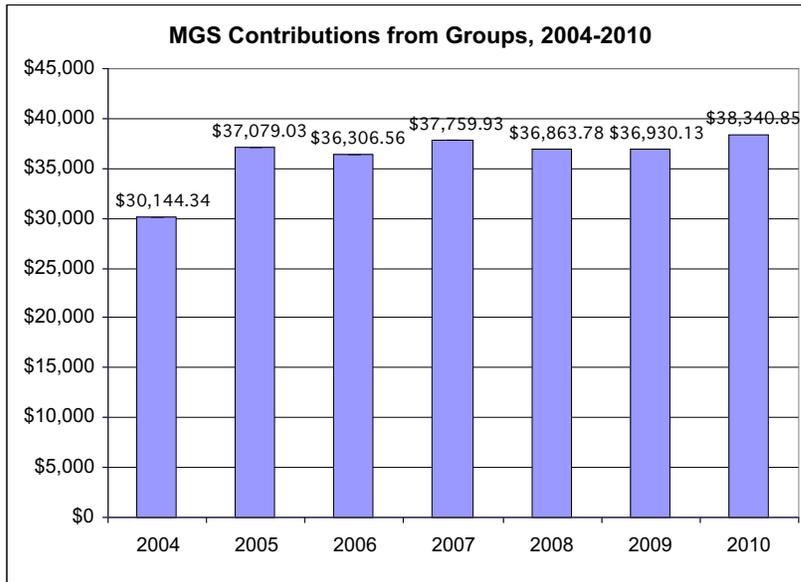
1. two suggested revisions to the "pie chart pages", 12-13 in the pamphlet "Self Support – Where Money and Spirituality Mix". (One of these suggestions came from a Regional Panel in Area 29.)
2. the suggestion to develop a Finance Workbook to assist group, inter-group/central offices, districts and area service workers in carrying the message of our shared responsibility for the 7th Tradition. (This item was submitted by Area 29.)
3. a request (from Area 29) that the trustees' Finance Committee convert Self-Support packet F-19 to a comprehensive Finance Kit." This would be similar to the three ring binders utilized by other standing committees like PI and Corrections.
4. permitting A.A. Grapevine, Inc., to accept contributions limited to the same General Service Board contribution policy, to be used for operation expenses with excess funds continuing to be forwarded to the Reserve Fund.
5. that A.A. Grapevine, Inc. be permitted to utilize digital channels and current

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(Treasurer's Report...) continued from page 1...

A year-by-year comparison of Contributions from Groups for the past seven years is shown in Figure 1.

Other Income includes: Seventh Tradition basket at Area Assemblies and Committees, \$940.95; lunch proceeds at Area Assemblies/Committees (for which a \$5 contribution is suggested), \$2,647.00; Convention return of seed, \$4,511.11 (including \$445.89 from the 2009 Fall Conference); Assembly-approved accounting adjustment, \$452.32; other sources (interest, International Convention Coffee Can, etc.), \$266.86.



Expenses

MGS expenses in 2010 totaled \$47,006.57, or 91.0% of the 2010 budgeted total of \$51,659. Officer expenses were \$12,711.71. Additionally, \$2,000.00 was sent to the General Service Board to support the Area 29 Delegate's attendance at the General Service Conference. Expenses of Standing Committees were \$4,658.82, and expenses of Ad Hoc Committees were \$25,367.03. In addition, \$176.41 was spent to hold Regional Panels, during which Agenda Items for the General Service Conference are discussed in preparation for the Mini-Conference. Unbudgeted expenses totaled \$2,092.60 (\$357.60 for Public Information and Grapevine Committee expenses carried over from 2009, \$699.00 for an Area-approved purchase of A/V equipment, \$36.00 in bank fees, and \$1,000.00 put on deposit with a hotel against future state conventions).

Notable itemized expenses include: seed money for the 2010 State Convention and 2010 Fall Conference, \$4,000.00 (which was returned

in full, plus \$65.22 overage, after the conventions); direct expenses for the Mini-Conference, where the groups and delegate communicate on agenda items for the General Service Conference, \$1,057.97 (excluding costs borne by officers and other committees who took part); Margenser Committee printing, \$4,815.16 (to produce four quarterly Area newsletters and the revised MGS Handbook, the latter expense occurring every other year); Registrar expenses, \$2,134.55 (primarily for maintaining contact with GSRs by mailing area meeting notices); the International Convention Hospitality Room, \$3,958.12 (of which \$2,500.00 was carried over from the 2009 budget in a special reserve); and Area 29 Committee and Assembly direct expenses, \$5,264.53 (rent and food costs, largely offset by Seventh Tradition and \$5 lunch contributions at those meetings; see above under Other Income). Additionally, \$900.00 was spent for MGS Archives rent and \$500.00 for accounting fees; these were Standing and Ad Hoc Committee expenses in 2010 but are shown separately as Overhead Expenses in the 2011 budget.

Functionally, expenses provide for: MGS Assemblies and Committees (rent, printing, etc.); maintaining contact with groups (delegate/alternate delegate travel, mailing contributions acknowledgements, and the MGS website); participation in the Northeast Regional Alcoholics Anonymous Service Assembly; services to members, groups and districts (such as workshops, district and intergroup visits, group visits, the Mini-Conference, the State Convention, the Fall Conference, the International Convention Hospitality Room, the Margenser, maintenance and display of Area 29's Archives); and other services that make twelfth step work possible (such as the CPC Committee's 2010 participation in an expo for mental health professionals).

Year-End Financial Position

A.A.'s "prudent financial principle", as stated in Concept XII, Warranty Two, is "sufficient operating funds, plus an ample reserve." On December 31, 2010, MGS, Inc. had sufficient operating funds of \$11,834.67 (checking account + petty cash) and a prudent reserve of \$10,011.66 (savings account), for total liquid assets of \$21,846.33. In addition, MGS has \$1,000.00 on deposit with the state convention hotel. The MGS treasurer's report excludes the value of inventories of the Grapevine and Literature Committees, which are reported directly by those committees. This compares to the January 1, 2010 starting position of \$16,693.81 (checking) and \$5,000.00 (prudent reserve), for a starting total of \$21,693.81.

For more information

A.A. members may obtain copies of the full treasurer's report, including breakdowns of contributions by groups and of receipts and expenses by cost center, by writing to treasurer@marylandaa.org or MGS Treasurer, P.O. Box 701, New Market, MD 21774.

The treasurer and finance chair need your input and want to answer any questions you or your group may have about MGS finances. Please include your phone number in any correspondence and we will call you. If you think it would be useful, we are eager to arrange a visit to your group or district. ☺

Concept Five—Minority Opinion—Are We Listening?

Service presentation given at the 55th General Service Conference on Concept Five.

When I read the topic, my mind immediately focused on our Area committee and assembly meetings as well as other Areas' events and meetings I have attended. I replayed in my mind the various instances I had witnessed Concept Five in

action. I could clearly see the chairman, of each meeting that was running through my mind, ask for the minority opinion after each vote had concluded so my gut reaction to the question was yes – we are listening. Then I had to ask myself what I was listening to. The answer that came back to me was more often than not, silence. I can't tell you the number of times I have sat through a group conscious, district or area meeting with no one saying a word when the minority opinion was called for. After the meeting

concluded or during the next smoke break, it was obvious that whatever topic had just been discussed and voted on may or may not have had additional information to be discussed. However, the topic closed and we moved onto the next item of business. I wonder if the silence is because of apathy or fear? My instincts tell me that it's not apathy.

I know that Concept Five provides the vehicle to use if I'm disturbed or unsettled by an

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Accepting the Informed Group Conscience

Arnold R

The essential ingredients to an informed group conscience are that all the relevant facts are present for discussion that everyone has been given a full and fair hearing on the matter, and that we only act on serious matters when we reach substantial unanimity. Please notice, however, that the emphasis here is on the word "informed." We can satisfy all these requirements, yet we still do not get a guarantee that we have reached a right decision. Majorities, as well as minorities, can be wrong. It is possible to be "fully informed" and "wrong." Bill W. recognized this. Warranty Four states, "That all important decisions be reached by discussion, vote, and whenever possible, by substantial unanimity." In discussing this Warranty further, Bill said, "And when a decision taken in substantial unanimity does happen to go wrong, there can be no heated recriminations. Everybody will be able to say, 'Well. We had a careful debate, we took the decision, and it turned out to be a bad one. Better luck next time!'"

When was the last time you heard those sentiments expressed by someone in your home group, in your district, in your Area

Committee, or in your Area Assembly? Try it sometime. You might be lucky enough not to be hit by a flying chair or coffee mug. Unfortunately, we all too often fall short of this ideal of civility that Bill W. held out to us. I think what Bill was pointing out here is that the extraordinary rights we grant the minority and the deliberately slow process we use to reach a decision are designed not to guarantee that we will always be right, but that we will always seek to preserve A.A. unity. I believe that the minority's right to be heard is vital in preserving our unity as a fellowship, but like any right that we enjoy in a democratic society, it must be exercised responsibly.

How then can the minority misuse this cherished set of rights that we all enjoy? I think that all of us recognize that the informed group conscience should be trusted rather than any one individual's opinion; no matter how knowledgeable the person may be about a subject or how passionately they feel about it. However, I recognize in myself that it is precisely when I consider myself knowledgeable about a topic or when I am most passionate about an issue, that I am least likely to be willing to accept a group conscience that is contrary to my position.

It is at these times that I am most in danger of falling into the trap of believing that because the majority disagreed with me, they

must be uniformed or misinformed. If they had just listened a little more closely to my arguments, if they had only progressed to the point where they understood my interpretation of A.A. principles to be the right one, then they would have come to their senses and agreed with me, as any right thinking person must. Thinking this way, I can continue to lobby for "my way," while giving lip service to the principle of working for A.A. unity through the informed group conscience process. In reality, I now find myself in the position of believing the group conscience is informed only if it agrees with me. Although I may have no conscious awareness of it, just think of the spiritual arrogance I have attained. Essentially, I am saying, because you disagreed with me, you are uniformed; and it is my duty to point out and correct the error of your ways.

By now, I feel perfectly justified in stepping outside of the group conscience process and engaging in any number of tactics to win on the issue, all for the good of A.A., you understand. At the level of the Conference, since the process is flawed and I certainly don't trust the committee system, I could directly lobby all of the Delegates through a letter writing campaign for my position. If that doesn't work, I imagine that I could even

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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, P.O. Box 701, New Market, MD 21774. The submission deadline for the next issue is June 1, 2011.

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 701
New Market, MD 21774

**"WE ARE RESPONSIBLE
FOR A.A.'S FUTURE -
LET IT BEGIN WITH US"
MINI-CONFERENCE 2011**

HOSTED BY AREA 29 - MARYLAND GENERAL SERVICE

- Where:** Severna Park United Methodist Church
731 Benfield Road
Severna Park MD 21146
- When:** Saturday, April 16, 2011
7:30 am - Registration opens (free donuts, bagels & coffee available)
8:30 am to 5:30 pm - Sharing on Agenda Items
which affect AA and our fellowship
6:00pm - 8:00pm Spaghetti Dinner & Open AA Speaker Meeting
SPEAKER: *Billy N. - Springlake Heights, NJ*
- Cost:** Registration - FREE!
Lunch will be provided for a \$5 donation
Dinner - \$15; pre-registration required



ALL A.A. MEMBERS are welcome and encouraged to attend and participate. Has your voice been heard???

Contact: altdelegate@marylandaa.org or visit the Area 29 web site at www.marylandaa.org

Why Do We Need a Conference?

The late Bernard B. Smith, nonalcoholic, then chairperson of the board of trustees, and one of the architects of the Conference structure, answered that question superbly in his opening talk at the 1954 meeting: "We may not need a General Service Conference to ensure our own recovery. We do need it to ensure the recovery of the alcoholic who still stumbles in the darkness one short block from this room. We need it to ensure the recovery of a child being born tonight, destined for alcoholism. We need it to provide, in keeping with out Twelfth Step, a permanent haven for all alcoholics who, in the ages ahead, can find in A.A. that rebirth that has brought us back to life.

"We need it because we, more than all others, are conscious of the devastating effect of the human urge for power and prestige which we must ensure can never invade A.A. We need it to ensure A.A. against government, while insulating it against anarchy; we need it to protect A.A. against disintegration while preventing overintegration. We need it so that Alcoholics Anonymous, and Alcoholics Anonymous alone, is the ultimate repository of its Twelve Steps, its Twelve Traditions, and all of its services.

"We need it to ensure that changes within A.A. come only as a response to the needs and the wants of all A.A., and not of any few. We need it to ensure that the doors of the halls of A.A. never have locks on them, so that all people for all time who have an alcoholic problem may enter these hall unmasked and feel welcome. We need it to ensure that Alcoholics Anonymous never asks of anyone who needs us what his or her race is, what his or her creed is, what his or her social position is."

Page S20, A.A. Service Manual Combined With Twelve Concepts for World Service
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**** MINI-CONFERENCE 2011 **** REGISTRATION

SATURDAY, APRIL 16, 2011

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

Registration: FREE

Spaghetti Dinner: ____ x \$15.00 = \$ _____

Mail your Registration and check (if purchasing spaghetti dinner) payable to MGS to:

Area 29 Mini-Conference 2011
c/o Maryland General Service, Inc.
P.O. Box 3623
Crofton, MD 21114

*** Photo copies of this registration form will be accepted.

41st Annual Area 29 Maryland State Convention

Hosted by
Maryland General Services, Inc.
with Al-Anon Participation



June 16-19, 2011

41st Annual Area 29
Maryland State Convention
Celebrating 76 years of AA

Clarion Hotel and Hager Hall Conference Center
901 Dual Highway
Hagerstown, Maryland 21740

Workshops—Speakers—Banquet—Alcathon—Archives—Fellowship—and more!

AA Speakers

Michelle G.
Silver Spring, MD

Fred A.
Baltimore, MD

Billy N.
Spring Lake Hgts., NJ

Edith P.
Omaha, NE

Mari G.
Ontario, Canada

Bobby C.
Philadelphia, PA

Bill C.
Greensboro, NC

Al-Anon Speakers

Kay C.
Greensboro, NC

Bob F.
Louisville, KY

*Schedule

Thursday, June 16

12:00 p.m. Registration Opens
4:00 p.m. Open AA Speaker Meeting
6:00 p.m. Alcathon Begins
8:00 p.m. Open AA Speaker Meeting
9:30 p.m. Fellowship & Fun
12:00 a.m. Last Daily Alcathon

Friday, June 17

6:00 a.m. Alcathon Begins
8:00 a.m. Registration Opens
8:15 a.m. Prayer & Meditation
9:00 a.m. Open AA Speaker Meeting
11:00 a.m. Open Al-Anon Speaker Meeting
1:30 p.m. AA and Al-Anon Workshops
2:45 p.m. AA and Al-Anon Workshops
5:00 p.m. Dinner—Buffet
7:00 p.m. Combined AA & Al-Anon Workshop
8:30 p.m. Open AA Speaker Meeting
9:30 p.m. Ice Cream Social & Fellowship
10:00 p.m. DJ Dance
12:00 a.m. Last Daily Alcathon

Saturday, June 18

6:00 a.m. Alcathon Begins
8:00 a.m. Registration Opens
8:15 a.m. Prayer & Meditation
9:00 a.m. Open A.A. Speaker Meeting
11:00 a.m. Open Al-Anon Speaker Meeting
12:00 p.m. Barbeque Lunch
1:30 p.m. AA Old Timers Panel
1:30 p.m. Al-Anon Workshops
2:45 p.m. AA and Al-Anon Workshops
6:00 p.m. Banquet Dinner—Buffet
8:00 p.m. Sobriety Countdown
8:30 p.m. Open AA Speaker Meeting
9:30 p.m. Ice Cream Social & Fellowship
10:00 p.m. DJ Dance
12:00 a.m. Last Daily Alcathon

Sunday, June 19

6:00 a.m. Alcathon Begins
8:15 a.m. Prayer & Meditation
9:00 a.m. Last Daily Alcathon
10:00 a.m. Open AA Speaker Meeting

**Schedule is subject to change.*



Registration information on back

Advance Registration

Advance registration, postmarked by June 1, is required to receive the reduced fee.
Forms may be copied. Thank you.

First Name _____ Last Name _____

Street Address _____ Email _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____ Phone _____

I have special needs (please be specific): _____

AA Registration \$27 (\$29 at door) x _____ = \$ _____

Al-Anon Registration \$27 (\$29 at door) x _____ = \$ _____

Friday Night Dinner* \$20 x _____ = \$ _____

Saturday Lunch Barbeque \$11 (\$13 on site) x _____ = \$ _____

Saturday Night Banquet* \$27 x _____ = \$ _____

* Meals must be purchased in advance. Meal registration not available onsite.

Total enclosed: \$ _____

Please note check #: _____

Please make checks or money orders
payable to and mail to:

MD State Convention
P.O. Box 348
Abingdon, MD 21009

41st Annual Area 29 Maryland State Convention

Hosted by
Maryland General Service
with Al-Anon participation

June 16 - 19, 2011
Clarion Hotel and Hager Hall Conference Center
901 Dual Highway
Hagerstown, Maryland 21740



41st Annual Area 29
Maryland State Convention
Celebrating 76 years of AA

Lodging Information

Clarion Hotel and Conference Center—301-733-5100

The convention room rate is \$85.00 per night.

*Other hotels (within 1 mile of the event):

Hagerstown Hotel (formerly Four Points)—301-790-3010

Comfort Suites—301-791-8100

Days Inn—301-739-9050

Hampton Inn—301-739-6100

Sleep Inn & Suites—301-766-9449

*Mention the MD State Convention for reduced rates, which are available for reservations made by May 10, 2011.

Friday Night —Build Your Own Pasta Buffet

\$20.00 per person—must be purchased in advance

Caesar Salad—Meat Lasagna—Veggie Lasagna—Meatballs—Linguini—Alfredo Sauce—Marinara Sauce—Shaved Parmesan and Italian Spices—Hot Garlic Toast—Brownies—Cookies—Coffee/Tea—Iced Tea—Water

Saturday Afternoon BBQ Lunch—Outside in Gazebo

\$11.00 if purchased in advance—\$13.00 if purchased onsite

Pit Beef BBQ—Grilled Hot Dogs—Kaiser/Hot Dog Rolls—Condiments—Home-Style Cole Slaw—Potato Chips—Ambrosia—Cold Beverages

Saturday Night Banquet—Buffet

\$27.00 per person—must be purchased in advance

Tossed Garden Salad—Stuffed Flounder with Crab Meat—Chicken Cordon Bleu—Green Bean Almandine—Roasted Red Potatoes—Assorted Warm Rolls and Butter—Sheet Cake—Regular and Decaf Coffee/Tea—Iced Tea

Ice Cream Social (Friday and Saturday)—\$5.00 onsite

Admittance to all functions requires a name badge

All children require adult supervision. Thank you!

For additional information, email: stateconvention@marylandaa.org

Musings...

Pat H, DCM, District 10

There are so many topics I am tossing around in my head. What to write about? The theme of this year's general Service Conference "How to Increase Participation in A.A. – Striving for Self-Support in All Our Affairs", is only one.

This is a great topic and I must admit I still have so much to learn about our thirty-six Spiritual Principles. Actually, this is a good thing. It means that I am still teachable.

Little by little this thought is sinking into my thick skull: If you want to help increase participation in this life-saving Program then that means that you have to be open to help all those who God puts in your path no matter how young or how old, no matter how lovely or how ugly. This brand of thinking promotes a self-inventory.

When I am asked to speak, do I just want to make myself sound and look good to others?

Am I really willing to put my proverbial nose to the grindstone, and put my money where my mouth is and do the service work that is asked of me?

Can I stand up at my group conscience meeting and speak on contributing to all the service arms of A.A. in the spirit of self-support? Along that same line, can I speak on increasing our personal contributions when the basket is passed?

Can I share the information I garner from our District meetings and our Area Assembly's with my home group members even if some of them may be bored by the subject?

That brings me to the topic of an informed group conscience. Do I do my level best to inform my group members on all that is taking place in our Fellowship today?

To put it truthfully, I can answer "yes" to most of these questions. To those that I am uncertain of I shall keep my ears, heart and mind open to those who are "walking the walk" and continue to learn from them. There are many. ♣

(If You Don't Know...) continued from page 1...

to your first AA meeting. Did anything make sense? Did you understand our slogans or the Steps and Traditions? Now, when you go to a meeting, you know these things, or think you do. But, remember the newcomer? This is true of the Area as well. In response, at the Area meetings, we are going to be having mini-workshops or sharing sessions to help educate our GSR's and DCM's.

I wish to share 2 brief stories of real groups in Area 29 that drive home this point.

1. A new group had formed in an urban region. Several people with less than 1 year formed this group. After the rent and coffee expenses were paid, any excess money was used to go out to eat after the meeting. Once this information reached the DCM, the group was visited. First he had to confirm this was not A.A. lore, and second, to make sure they were at least informed of some other suggested uses of 7th Tradition monies. Upon discussion it was suggested that the Group put aside the money as a prudent reserve, and anything above the reserve be sent to the service entities. (District, Intergroup, Area, and G.S.O.) It was left up to the Group to decide what to do, as each Group is autonomous. Some didn't care for this idea and others saw the merit to it. I have not heard the final outcome yet. But at least the Group can no longer say they didn't know.
2. For years, an old-timer's group had not been having Group Consciences or sending anything to the various service

entities. Another old-timer joined the group and she could not believe they didn't participate in A.A. as a whole. She had just heard me at a workshop say that if a Group can only afford to send \$2.79, send the \$2.79. A big check is nice, but so are a lot of little ones. If we each do what we can, we can do wondrous things together. She informed the Group that she could not be part of a Group that did not participate in A.A. as a whole. So, they had a Group Conscience to discuss more than coffee makers and who will chair next month. They voted to send money to Intergroup, Area, and G.S.O. Most of the Group members knew what to do, they just needed reminding. And maybe a little spirit of rotation with the treasurer too.

Some of the changes our Area has made have showed an open-mindedness and willingness to change when necessary. The 2011 Mini Conference has been shortened to a 1-day event. The Area 29 Host Committee once again prepares the meals for the Area Assembly and Committee meetings. The Grapevine Committee has been setting up at various functions across the Area. And as of 2010, the Fall Conference is once again nestled in the hills of Hagerstown.

March is our first Area Assembly for the year. Lots of 1st time DCM's and GSR's will be there. Our Delegate's report back will not be until June this year, due to the lateness of the General Service Conference and Easter.

We hope to see lots of new smiling faces over the next few months. If you are one of those faces, please do not be afraid to ask questions. If you don't know, and don't ask, you won't know. ♣

Tradition 4

David R

"Each group should be autonomous except in matters affecting other groups or A.A. as a whole."

The name of our District's newsletter, Connections, suggests an important spiritual principle for our home groups. The purpose of the District itself is to provide connection between the Groups and the rest of Alcoholics Anonymous. Whether you allow that to

happen, or not, is your choice. You and I as A.A. members are autonomous, and according to this Tradition so are our Home Groups. A.A.'s autonomy is precious. Ever since John D. Rockefeller refused to bankroll us we've answered to only one ultimate authority, a loving God as we understand Him. Personal and group autonomy, however, can be a slippery slope taking us back to self will if we don't pay close attention to the constraints we've voluntarily placed on ourselves. The second phrase of Step 9, "except when to do so would injure

them or others" tells us that there's a spiritual principle...placing the well-being of others before our own... that forces us to consider how our personal housecleaning impacts those with whom we might be about to make amends. Likewise, this principle applies in the Tradition that constrains us as A.A. groups. There's nothing but great Suffering (under the lash of alcohol) and great Love (for each other, warts and all) enforcing those limits. How do

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(Group Conscience...) continued from page 4...

circumvent the Conference completely. I'm not quite sure how I would do this, but maybe a direct mail campaign aimed at inter-groups would accomplish my objectives. However, I don't know if I wish to be seen as that extreme, so perhaps I should incite others and have them do that for me.

I do not believe we can ever achieve a truly informed group conscience when the majority does not allow a full and fair hearing of the minority opinion, nor when the minority having been fully and fairly heard on an issue and failing to convince the majority, refuses to accept that the group conscience has spoken and tries to win the argument by sowing discontent and exhausting the other side with constant demands to revisit matters already decided until, by a process of attrition, others give in. To me, we as a fellowship have to seek to avoid both this tyranny of the majority, as well as this tyranny of the minority.

I do not expect that there will ever be uniformity of opinion within the fellowship regarding many of the great issues to come before us at any of our many service levels. These are certainly matters capable of debate. People with equal love and concern for the fellowship can find themselves on different sides of these issues. I am more than happy to engage in a dialog with anyone on the facts of this or that issue and the application of A.A. principles to those sets of facts or situations. However, when there is a long history of time and effort devoted to seeking an informed group conscience on an issue, both at the level of the General Service Conference and throughout the fellowship, I usually find that by this time I have long since ceased to try to win converts to my way of thinking. At this stage, my primary purpose in engaging in such a dialog is to allow myself and others to answer these questions:

- Has the minority opinion been given a full and fair hearing?
- Has the minority been allowed to exercise all of its traditional rights of appeal?
- Having heard the minority opinion one more time, has my thinking been changed?

Each of us must answer those questions for him or herself. I trust that each of us in answering these questions, will then be able to act in a way that permits us to carry the message to the still suffering alcoholic and to preserve A.A. unity.

These days, I really feel as if I am beginning to cease fighting anything or anybody. I do not know whether this is as a result of wisdom gained from experience, or of exhaustion brought on by advancing years, or of the inevitable physical decrepitude that has reduced my once extremely complex philosophy of life to this one simple proposition --- that one should never pass up an opportunity to go to the bathroom. But whatever the cause, I find myself increasingly tolerant of ambiguity in my life and in those around me. I actually feel more comfortable around people who appear capable of at least occasionally changing their minds. I find that more and more I can bring a historical perspective to the dialog. What can seem like such a life-and-death issue in the heat of the debate cools considerably in the light of this historical perspective. For example, I like to remember that just a few years ago I was listening to countless members of the fellowship announce in doomsday tones that we could not survive without the circle and triangle as a way of identifying Conference approved literature. Well, there appears to be quite a bit of life left in this old fellowship yet. Remember the predicted demise of A.A. that was going to result from the vans of treatment center patients and court slip bearers who were being dumped at the front doors of our home groups? How many other alcoholic Armageddons are but faded memories for us now? One by one, an informed group conscience has allowed us to weather these storms or a loving God has removed them from our path.

I believe that when an informed group conscience has been reached on an issue, one can agree or disagree with the outcome. But if we are wrong, I believe a loving God will reveal that misstep to us in time. In the interim, our job whether we are in the majority or in the minority is to work for A.A. unity. I pray always that I never become so passionate about, or ego-invested in an issue that I am willing to tear this fellowship apart in proving that I am right. And finally, in those really tough times when you or I am absolutely convinced that we are right and everyone else is wrong, I pray that we be granted, with at least a modicum of grace, the ability to accept the informed group conscience, wrong though we may think it to be, and the wisdom to wait patiently for the opportunity to say, without rancor, "Better luck next time!" ▲

(Tradition 4...) continued from page 5...

our groups' decisions enhance or detract from our common welfare, and where do we draw the line?

District 10 consists of 22 home groups with a conservative estimate of 400 total members. It stands to reason that so many people with common sense and goodwill might decide to handle many things in many different ways with no negative impact upon each other. Does it matter that Harford Road Thursday Night reads a selection from the Big Book before the Chairperson starts talking while Better Way of Life reads it while the baskets are being passed? Are there drunks left suffering because No Equal has strawberry shortcake at their members' anniversaries? Hardly.

However - a group's decision to isolate itself from the rest of Alcoholics Anonymous is a decision that harms Alcoholics Anonymous as well as that group's own members. There are many ways a group can disconnect from and directly undermine A.A.'s primary

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(Delegate's Corner...) continued from page 2...

- (commissionable) support and distribution technologies such as, but not limited to, smart phones, tablets, e-readers, applications, and commissioned online stores for the sale and distribution of magazines, books and products.
6. a request to develop an item similar to the Self-support "green card" to help promote the use of our literature as a Twelfth Step tool.
 7. a request to reconsider the 2010 Conference Advisory Action that "the trustees' Literature Committee develop literature which focuses on spirituality that includes stories from atheists and agnostics who are successfully sober in Alcoholics Anonymous."
 8. a request to include the A.A. Preamble in the front inside pages of the Big Book.

We hope to see many of you at the Area 29 Mini Conference to discuss these Agenda Items and many more. PLEASE let your voice be heard on these important matters which affect the fellowship and A.A. as a whole. I need and value your input. According to Concept I "The final responsibility and the ultimate authority for A.A. world services should always reside in the collective conscience of our whole Fellowship." ▲

(Concept Five...) continued from page 3...

action of my home group, district or area. It is my responsibility to question the decision or action and make my voice heard through the minority opinion that is guaranteed by Concept Five. That being said, the answer of silence began to bother me. Why aren't members speaking up? "On an issue of grave importance, the minority has the duty of presenting its views. This "Right of Appeal" recognizes that minorities frequently can be right; that even when they are in error they still perform a most valuable service when they compel a thorough-going debate on important issues. The well-heard minority, therefore, is our chief protection against an uninformed, misinformed, hasty or angry majority." (The Twelve Concepts for World Service Illustrated) I can't help but speculate that at times the "hasty or angry" majority may be silencing the minority. I don't believe that this is done on purpose; I simply believe it is the nature of an alcoholic.

Similar to the obsession I had for alcohol, I can get obsessed with an idea, thought or action. Once in this state, it's my way or the highway. I'll use the Steps, Traditions, or Concepts as my weapon to try and discredit you and keep the majority convinced that I'm right and you're wrong. This happens without even realizing it.

This repeated behavior will either drive those in the minority away, or keep them silent.

Bill's subtle but effective statement in Concept Nine reminds me "...a fine plan or idea can come from anybody, anywhere." As a trusted servant, it is my responsibility to encourage the minority opinion by voicing my own even when it's uncomfortable or unpopular. I need to show the concepts in action by speaking up and more importantly listening to what is being said. If I'm listening, my mind is open and I am considering the words being spoken and not thinking of how wrong the other person is because they happen to have a another view from mine or their idea is different than how we've done things in the past.

When we take Step Three, we turn or will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood Him. Through the rest of the steps we begin to trust and build a relationship with this God until we can pray "...only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out." in Step Eleven. The practice of these steps and the belief in a loving God is evident in Tradition Two by showing us that "... there is but one ultimate authority – a loving God as He may express Himself in our group conscience."

How many times have you heard in a meeting the statement, "My God speaks to me through people" or something similar? If this is true, the minority opinion can often times be a

loving God expressing himself. It is up to us to ensure we allow others the freedom to express themselves without fear of upsetting the majority or stating an opinion that goes against the grain. I need to be mindful of the loving God who may be trying to speak to me through the home group member I'm not the fondest of, or the GSR/DCM who is going to extend the meeting another half hour, or longer, because they do bother to voice a minority opinion that causes a reconsideration of a motion. It's my responsibility to keep an open mind and listen to the information regardless of the messenger God chooses.

Being in the minority is not a popular place to be. However, it is clear in Bill's writings of his own experiences throughout the years that he spent a large portion of his sobriety in the minority when it came to the development of the Traditions, the Concepts and the service structure for Alcoholics Anonymous. Bill never gave up, as he knew the future of Alcoholics Anonymous depended on all Three Legacies and principles that guide our fellowship. Without his tireless, and sometimes emotionally charged efforts to have his voice heard, I'd hate to think of where we would all be today without that voice.

So now my question is to you, are you listening? 

(Tradition 4...) continued from page 6...

purpose. Not having an Intergroup Rep., failing to take an Institution commitment, avoiding Maryland General Service, and not encouraging sign-up for the 12 Step list are all ways to say, as an active alcoholic would, "Hurray for Me and To Heck with You." The members are denied the opportunity to serve and the work is left to others, members of groups that do reach outside themselves.

Sometimes the work doesn't get done at all. When nobody piles in a car to go down to a Jessup prison commitment the Sponsor has to carry the meeting alone. The Public Information Committee cannot send someone to speak to a group of student nurses if not enough GSRs find out about such outreach at the Area Assembly. If those GSRs don't attend the Mini-Conference to let the Area Delegate know what their groups think about a new Spirituality pamphlet the informed Group Conscience of A.A. is harder to find.

The essence of my alcoholism was the Fear that I'm alone in this world. The essence of my spiritual awakening is the certainty that I'm actually connected to everything in the Universe. A Home Group, especially a District 10 Group where we know how to do A.A., should be connected too. 

MARYLAND GENERAL SERVICE AREA 29 2011 CALENDAR

Area Assembly	March 26	District 20 Bethel UMC 21006 Twin Springs Dr. Chewsville, MD
Mini Conference	April 16	Severna Park UMC 731 Benfield Road Severna Park, MD 21146
General Service Conference	May 1 – 7	New York
NERF	May 20 – 22	Sturbridge, MA
Area Assembly (Report Back)	June 4	District 1 Dunkirk Baptist Church 11275 Southern MD Blvd. Dunkirk, MD 20754-9546
MD State Convention	June 16-19	Hagerstown, MD
Area Committee	July 9	District 34
Area Assembly	August 13	District 7
Area Committee	September 24	District 28/29
Area Assembly (Elections)	October 22	District 40
Fall Conference	Oct. 27-30	Hagerstown, MD
Area Committee	November 12	TBA
Area Assembly (Rotation)	December 10	District 31, Annapolis

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