

# MARGENSER

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

## Opportunity Time

by Ron M, Area 29 Alternate Delegate

Along with the New Year comes the opportunity to participate in the life saving organizational structure we call Alcoholics Anonymous. On an annual basis representative elective members from all over North America meet in New York to review and potentially modify, change, update and/or clarify the guidelines under which we all participate. This year the meetings will be held in New York City April 20 – 27. Area 29 will be ably represented by our duly elected delegate, Bob C. In order to be properly and fully prepared with the Area 29 group conscience, our service manual provides for and directs that six (6) regional panels be established and each assigned topics pertinent to the agenda items to be discussed at the General Service Conference.

The forty- seven (47) districts that make up Area 29 are carefully split geographically and with the twelve (12) agenda topics put forth by the General Service Office each panel is therefore given two (2) topics to discuss and review in depth. Every two years (on the even years) the topics are reassigned in order to allow each panel an opportunity to review and comment on different and various parts of the conference agenda. The district assignments to the vari-

ous panels can be viewed either in the Area 29 service manual or the 4th Quarter 2012 issue of the MARGENSER.

An Area 29 Committee meeting is set to convene on February 9, 2013 in District 6. During that meeting, time will be set aside on the agenda for the panels to meet and caucus in order to identify a chairperson, recording secretary and meeting dates. By that time a preliminary, and possibly a final agenda should be available from the delegate. Although possibly not final, it will give the panels a fairly good idea of the general content of their assignment. As soon as possible the panels should arrange to meet and fully discuss their assigned topics. Each panel has a past delegate assigned to act as mentor and help, but not chair the panels as they discuss their topics. In addition to the aforementioned mentors the current delegate and alternate delegate hope to attend each panel meeting in order to gain insight as to the thoughts and reasoning behind the conclusions reached by the panels. The newly assigned topics will be available on a handout at the February meeting and the background material pertaining to the final General

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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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Service Conference agenda will be distributed to the panel chairpersons as soon as possible after it is received by the delegate.

It is important that panels meet as soon as possible in order to complete their assigned task and be ready to present their reports at the Mini

Conference that will be held in Annapolis on April 13, 2013. At that meeting each panel will have the opportunity to discuss their topic assignments and conclusions and/or recommendations.

From the foregoing it should be obvious that time is of the essence in

moving along and completing the panel assignments. Although panels are assigned leading the tasks each and every member of Area 29 is encouraged to participate, especially the various committee chairs that can provide valuable insight into their special areas of expertise. ▲

## Leveraging Conference Agenda Items to Spark Home Group Interest

By Bob C., Area 29 Delegate

Currently, only about half (yes, *one half!*) of Maryland's 47 districts have regularly meeting district committees. In at least four of our districts, GSRs are now working toward reactivation, and a fifth recently relit. That's good news, but about 20 of our 47 districts still have essentially no general service activity whatsoever. Much remains to be done, then, because groups in non-participating districts have absolutely no voice in the group conscience of A.A. as a whole, and conversely, because A.A.'s general group conscience is weaker for lack of input from those groups.

*The purpose of this article is to provide you with a simple, low-pressure way to attract members from non-participating groups to the idea of having a GSR. We can do this by using current issues in A.A. to spark member interest and participation in districts, the area and the Conference process. Experience shows that invoking current issues often strikes a chord with members, where speaking in generalities ("The future of A.A. depends on your participation") or even citing historical anecdotes ("The Concepts are in the Big Book because a 6-member home group in Roanoke, VA got involved") may not resonate.*

Conveniently, a list of current issues to which many members may be quite sensitive is readily available in our Conference Agenda Items. We can discuss many of the possible or likely agenda items as "hot-button" issues during "the meeting before the meeting" or "the meeting after the meeting" in our local areas. By using these moments to

stir up quality conversations about current topics in A.A., we can spur interest in district and area participation, as well as in Regional Panels and the Mini-Conference (see the accompanying article by our alternate delegate in this issue).

In conversations with members whose groups don't have a GSR, I've found it's easy to throw in some of the issues below (all *possible* agenda items from 2012 Board Reports) to show why I want my home group to have a GSR:

- A plan for shared resources and efficiency of Grapevine and GSO, *possibly* including corporate realignment or creation of a Trustees' Committee on the Grapevine;
- A *possible* plan for selling Conference approved literature through online vendors (e.g., Amazon);
- *Possible* revisions in the section "Proof of Attendance at Meetings" in, "If You Are a Professional..." to reflect current A.A. experience;
- *Possible* consideration of a draft pamphlet manuscript focusing on spirituality, including stories from atheists and agnostics sober in A.A.;
- A *possible* follow-up on last year's agenda item suggesting revised language on the dust jacket of the Big Book;
- A *possible* request to change wording in "Questions and Answers on Sponsorship" about "when newcomers resist the spiritual side of the program;"
- *Possible* consideration of a future A.A. Facebook informational page;

- A *possible* proposal to change the wording of the short form of Tradition Eleven.

In carrying the message of service, it's important to speak to any prospect just like to a newcomer: Stick to my own story, and provide something to identify with. Hence, the words I choose for service work are important. I can avoid sounding preachy or condescending by saying, "I want *my* home group to have a GSR because..." rather than, "You need a GSR because..." I can refer to "unrepresented" groups or "reactivated" districts, avoiding "lit" and "dark" which can offend old timers who dearly love this fellowship and don't realize those words aren't meant pejoratively. If asked, I can explain how general service participation has changed my life a second time, and that it doesn't require nearly as much time as most folks think. Instead of starting with obscure generalities like "How Concepts I and II relate to Tradition 2" (as I used to do!), I go straight to current, hot-button issues that attract without promoting.

So how do we have these conversations? They all start when we ask another member, "Does your group have a GSR?" If the answer is no, the question becomes, "Did you know that at last year's group conscience for A.A. as a whole, there was an agenda item to *set up a Facebook page for A.A.*? Or to change the Traditions? That since my home group has a GSR, we have input into (and visibility of) what's going on at A.A.'s group conscience (the General

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Service Conference, in case anyone asks)? That a GSR is how my home group keeps tabs on what the GSO and Grapevine are doing with A.A.'s money?" If you can get your "prospect's" eyebrows to go up, incite a little concern in his or her voice, elicit a response like, "Why the heck would we want to do *that?*", then you have lit the fuse in an inactive group. All that remains is for that group to elect a

GSR to give it a voice in deciding these questions.

As a society, A.A. is still young; its future remains in limbo. In this last quarter of our first century, we are still working out how we need to communicate about A.A., both among ourselves and with the outside world. If our Conference Agenda Items are appropriately selected, they reflect the make-or-

break issues for the coherence of our fellowship and the consistency of our message. Hot-button issues like those above will determine whether A.A. remains here "for the child born tonight, destined for alcoholism." *Please bring the issues above into your conversations with friends at meetings in your local area, and contact your DCM or any officer when you find members who want more information!* 🍷

## Service Opportunities for all Ages within MDYPAA

By: Dina R., Margenser Committee Member

The best definition I've heard for a "Young Person in AA" was conveyed by a long-time sober member of the program who had attended the ICYPAA conferences 20+ years ago: "A young person in AA is anyone who is still learning." By that definition, I believe we are all Young People in AA.

The International Conference of Young People in AA, now in its 55th year, will be held in Phoenix, Arizona in 2013. To date, an ICYPAA conference has yet to be held in Maryland, despite the diligent efforts of a committee of AAs who have worked together since 2005 to bid for ICYPAA to come to our state. According to Michelle G., who has served on every Maryland bid committee ("MDYPAA") since its inception, "this committee was formed originally as the 48th ICYPAA which was set to occur in New Orleans, but was cancelled due to the devastation caused by Hurricane Katrina. So we have been in existence for 5 of the 7 years since 2005, the 49th (a two year committee) 53rd, 54th, and 55th. The acronym "MDYPAA" started being used in or about 2010 as another method to describe us, MD YP in AA."

In a July 1955 Grapevine article, Bill W. wrote, "an AA service is anything whatever that helps us to reach a fellow sufferer." MDYPAA and ICYPAA are both AA services that have reached many alcoholics. Katie E., who has served on the Maryland bid committee for two years relates her experience, "I have learned so much about service work since being involved in MDYPAA. It's been a huge part of my sobriety and my spiritual growth. There have been moments in sobriety where I

have struggled with life, and being a part of MDYPAA, my home group, and having an institution commitment kept me in the middle of AA."

Michelle G. further adds, "MDYPAA was extremely influential to my getting involved with Area level service, obtaining a Service Sponsor, and becoming a student of the Traditions. It was at a young people's conference where I first heard that Area level service was something someone my age could be involved in." In addition to her service work with MDYPAA, Michelle's other service positions have included, "Washington Area Intergroup Co-Chair, various positions in my home group, current 28th Annual Fall Conference Workshop Chair for Area 29, member of the Baltimore Intergroup Activities Committee, and the Area 13 Public Information Chair."

Although the Maryland bid committee has so far not won the bid to bring ICYPAA to Maryland, they faithfully continue to try, and learn from every year's experiences. Elections for the bid committee to bring the 56th ICYPAA to Maryland are already scheduled for January 13th, 2013. The former committee members are always actively seeking new committee members and committee chairs.

At the August 2012 Area 29 Assembly in Annapolis, Michelle G. presented the assembly with a thorough and engaging presentation about MDYPAA, emphasizing the many opportunities for service work available for AA's of all ages. At that time, the host city for the 55th ICYPAA had not yet been named, and the Maryland bid committee was not just continuing

to work toward winning the bid, but proactively seeking volunteers for the service opportunities that would need to be fulfilled if the conference would indeed come to our state. These same service opportunities are available now that the 56th committee is being formed, and the committee will need more help when they win the bid and bring the ICYPAA conference to Maryland.

An undertaking of this sort requires the efforts of many volunteers. Creativity and ability to donate time and resources is helpful, but willingness to step up and be of service is really the only requirement. Rob McG., who served as Co-Chairperson for the 55th bid committee, described some of the events their committee hosted to help raise funds necessary to complete and submit a qualifying bid proposal: "We are constantly brainstorming amongst ourselves and working with the Areas and Intergroups on ideas for events. We are a very events driven group. We hold dances, workshops, dodge ball events, picnics, BBQs, anything we think may attract a group and provide an opportunity to carry the message. The events are not about income, but we remain self-supporting. Ultimately our primary purpose is not to win a conference, but to carry the message of AA by forming a committee to bid for and be awarded a conference."

For more information on MDYPAA and the formation of the committee to bring the 56th ICYPAA to Maryland, visit [www.mdypaa.org](http://www.mdypaa.org). To learn more about ICYPAA, visit [www.icypaa.org](http://www.icypaa.org). 🍷

# The A.A. Home Group

By Ron M. Area 29 Alternate Delegate

Do you belong to a Home Group or a meeting? Just what are home groups, and more importantly what is the group that we attend? Is it in fact an A.A. Group or just an A.A. meeting? What is the difference? Over time the words group and meeting have somehow become interchangeable. They are, however, vastly different and without taking an in depth look at their makeup and activities it is probably impossible to differentiate one from the other. Originally, the gathering of alcoholics at various times and locations seemed to be for protection and sharing. They all had a common goal, sobriety, and how to stay that way! Although these gatherings met their immediate needs there was little or no other interaction outside of those rooms. As is commonly known the growth of Alcoholics Anonymous was initially very slow. The growth and guidelines of Alcoholics Anonymous usually evolved over time which included pain, mistakes and problem solving. As A.A. expanded and acquired more and more members, many letters poured into New York requesting clarification of numerous questions and problems. Some of these pertained to the structure and operation of the fledging groups that were springing up. Initially, there was no guidance whatsoever other than a letter to Bill W. in New York. The period between 1939 (the first printing

of the Big Book) and 1952 (the copyright and printing of the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions) generated sufficient questions that in 1965 the General Service Conference finally produced a service piece entitled "The A.A. Group, where it all begins" This valuable piece jumped right into the fray and answered questions and problems that had been plaguing the ever growing membership.

The most obvious question was "What is an A.A. Group?" The service piece draws a strong distinction between a group and a meeting. Although both groups and meetings usually gather for the purpose of A.A. discussions, the main difference between meetings and groups is that the A.A. Home groups continue to exist outside the prescribed meeting hours, ready to provide Twelfth Step assistance when needed; whereas meetings disband at the conclusion of their business and possibly do not have further contact or any type of interaction until the next meeting.

There are other distinctions regarding A.A. meetings that are not well understood but again discussed in detail in the above mentioned pamphlet; specifically open and closed meetings. Unless discussed from time to time the distinction seems to fall by the wayside. Open meetings are available for anyone having an interest in the program of Alcoholics Anonymous;

however a nonalcoholic may only attend as observers. Closed meetings are for A.A. members only or for those having a desire to stop drinking.

There has been a lot of discussion regarding A.A. groups over the years and it is highly recommended that every A.A. member become familiar with the literature and service pieces that address the previous problems as they have presented themselves over the years. Most of the problems and issues come from the ground roots of A.A. otherwise known as A.A. GROUPS. These groups are the very foundation of all that happens in Alcoholics Anonymous. In their wisdom, years ago, the General Service Conference graphically displayed the structure of Alcoholics Anonymous in a display commonly known as "THE UPSIDEDOWN TRIANGLE". The A.A. GROUPS dominate the top of the triangle reinforcing and sending the message that the A.A. GROUPS dictate the structure and organization. This is done by developing and submitting potential items for incorporation into the overall General Service Conference held each year.

Hopefully the foregoing synopsis of the home group and its desired and potential function will be sufficient motivation to "GET INVOLVED" and be part of an A.A. GROUP and not just a meeting. ▲

## 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.  
PO Box 20177  
Baltimore, MD 21284-0177

# General Service Matters

By Don B., *Happy Risers Group, Ocean City, MD*

The theme for our 63rd annual General Service Conference in New York City from April 21-27, 2013 is "The General Service Conference Takes Its Inventory -- Our Solution in Action." As the Big Book points out on page 64, an inventory is "a fact-finding and a fact-facing process. It is an effort to discover the truth. . . If the owner of the business is to be successful, he cannot fool himself. . ."

Steps Four, Eight, Ten, and Twelve encourage us to write down our personal inventories. The Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions reminds us that inventory-taking is a "lifetime practice" (page 50) and that spot-check inventories, daily inventories, "annual or semiannual housecleanings," and "an occasional retreat from the outside world where we can quiet down for an undisturbed day or so of self-overhaul and meditation" (page 89) eventually "become a regular part of everyday living, rather than something unusual or set apart." (page 90)

Why all this emphasis on inventory? Well, page 64 of the Big Book gives the best reason first: "A business which takes no regular inventory usually goes broke." This axiom is as true for A.A. service bodies as it is for any commercial enterprise or for any individual recovering from alcoholism. We need to conduct regular inventories of our A.A. services in order to determine how effective we are in discharging our primary purpose of carrying the A.A. message of recovery to the alcoholic who still suffers.

That is why, in 2011, the 61st General Service Conference approved a three-year plan for taking inventory of the A.A. Conference process. Each year we will consider eight major areas of concern: A. Effectiveness of the Conference/Conference Process Overall; B. Composition of Conference; C. Committee System; D. Yearlong Process Effectiveness; E. Conference Preparation (background, content, delivery, etc.); F.

Conference Week Schedule; G. General Service Board/Corporate Boards (A.A.W.S. & A.A. Grapevine); and H. Leadership.

Each of these eight areas has one or more specific inventory questions which will be considered during the next three months leading into the Conference itself at the end of April. Additional questions in each of these eight areas will be considered in 2014 and 2015 (as per 2012 Final Conference Report, pages 6-7).

This ongoing inventory need not, and should not, be limited to the General Service Conference. The spiritual principles embodied in the 12 Steps, the 12 Traditions, the 12 Concepts for World Service, and the A.A. Service Manual apply equally to all levels of service -- personal, group, intergroup, district, area, and region. That is why Area 29 (Maryland General Service, Inc.) spent several hours at the Area Assembly in October 2012 considering these issues. The General Service Conference theme is the topic of the Northeast Regional A.A. Service Assembly in Lancaster, Pennsylvania on February 22-24. Our District and our local Ocean City Area Fellowship Intergroup will be presenting a joint workshop on individual and group inventories on March 30. Preparing our Area Delegate for the General Service Conference is the primary purpose of our Area 29 Mini-Conference in Annapolis on April 13. Various inventory questions will be discussed by our Regional Panels between now and late April.

We are encouraging every A.A. group in our District to conduct its own group inventory, as well. Unless our groups are active participants in the overall inventory process, the whole idea of a General Service Conference-wide inventory becomes a farce. And then, it is not too far-fetched to imagine that A.A. as a whole could go broke. Regardless of whether such a bankruptcy is financial

or moral in its character, it is a specter that almost no sober alcoholic would care to witness.

That is why our local District has retrofitted this year's General Service Conference inventory questions so that they are more applicable at the group, district, and intergroup levels of service. Here are twenty questions that each one of us might wish to discuss within our own home group, district, or intergroup:

1. Reflecting on Concept I and Tradition 2, how do we ensure that we accurately reflect the conscience of those whom we serve?
2. How well are our regular business meetings serving us?
3. Reflecting on Concept X, how well is the authority of our service body defined?
4. How well are we fulfilling the principles of the General Warranties of Concept XII?
5. Should our service decisions be more consistently based on the number of home group members involved?
6. Could our committees be improved to more effectively provide services and introduce changes, and if so, how?
7. What improvements could be considered to make sure our A.A. services are more effective?
8. a. How well do our service committee members communicate to the Fellowship about why we have a service structure and how it works?  
b. How could we improve this communication?
9. a. How well do our trusted servants discharge their rights of decision and participation under Concepts III and IV?  
b. How could we improve these practices?
10. How can we improve the way time is allotted during our meetings for reports, proposals, presentations, and discussions?

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(General Service Matters) continued from page 5...

11. How are leadership and participation affected by our schedule of business and group conscience meetings?
12. a. Is the current makeup of our service structure still the most effective?
  - b. If not, what changes should we consider?
13. How could we improve the methods used to attract volunteers in order to get the most appropriate people interested in the positions?
14. What more could be done to insure that our service body remains transparent and thorough in reporting to our members?
15. a. Reflecting on Concept IX and Tradition 2, are the qualities of leadership, as identified in the leadership essay in The A.A. Service Manual, still the qualities we should try to encourage in our trusted servants?
  - b. If so, how successful are we in encouraging these qualities?
  - c. If not, what changes should we consider?

By the time you read this, our District will have completed its inventory. When—if you haven't already done so—will you be taking yours? ♣

## Why the Archives Hold a Special Place in my Heart

By Kelley K

Coming into AA for the 2nd time in my life, I really had that gift of desperation.

I grew up in AA. My dad was an active sober member of AA for 30 years, and died sober on May 10, 1993. I was 21 when my dad died. Seventeen years later I came into this fellowship for myself. I knew dad lived and breathed AA and his primary purpose was always to help others.

I always was a "date" person, and I took my sobriety date of April 11, 2010 very seriously. As a kid, I did not know my dad's exact sobriety date, but had always wanted to know. I would ask my mom, but the only answer she could give was "it was in the winter." Every night I would pray to my dad and ask him to somehow "send me his sobriety date." Curiosity got the best of me. As my sobriety grew, so did my closeness to my father. I truly felt closer to him than ever before, now that we shared this same common bond.

My friend Bill in the program had heard me share on several occasions that my dad got sober at the 857 Club in Baltimore. From a conference, Bill emailed me one day and said, "Hey

Kelley, there's an 857 Club book here and I found your dad's signature." It was so awesome. Bill emailed me a picture of William Kerrigan's signature. I felt so blessed.

The Maryland State Convention in Hagerstown was a few months later, in June 2012. I purposely drove the hour to Hagerstown to see for myself that amazing 857 Club book. In my heart I thought there might be a chance that somewhere in that book my dad's sobriety date would be listed.

I prayed on the way there, talking to both my dad and my higher power who I call Jesus. I went to the archives room where Bill found me and showed me the 857 Club book. I teared up as I found my dad's signature in several places. He had a very unique signature and I hadn't seen it written in many years. He had signed it in some places as "Sarge" which was a nickname he got while in the service of WWII. In other places he had written his full signature, "William Kerrigan." (Everyone either called him Bill or Sarge.)

While turning the pages, I saw his signature from a 25 year "old timers" anniversary meeting. Right next to it

was a column where everyone had written the date of the anniversary meeting. The last column was their sobriety date. After spending a good full hour in the archives room I saw it: William Kerrigan -Sobriety date February 5, 1962.

I felt my heart fill with joy! I called out, "Bill, look! I found it!!" I said a prayer of thanks to my dad and my God. Bill was also excited that I had found it. He looked at me and smiled while he said, "You know that's my sobriety date, too, right?" Of course I knew that, because like I said, I am a date person and remember most of my friend's sobriety dates, but the excitement had made me forget.

How cool is that? The man that helped me discover this book and my dad's date has the exact same date (different year) as my dad! The joys that sobriety has brought me both spiritually and mentally are beyond my wildest dreams. Dreams do come true in sobriety. The archives now hold a very special place in my heart.

I have my dad and AA to thank. And another member of the program also named Bill, just like my dad. God is good. ♣

# MARYLAND GENERAL SERVICE, AREA 29

## 2013 CALENDAR

Area Committee	February 9	District 6 St. James Parish 5757 Solomons Island Road Lothian, MD
NERAASA	Feb 22 - 24	Lancaster, PA
NERD	March 9 – 10	Baltimore, MD
Area Assembly	March 23	District 9
Mini Conference	April 13	District 22 - Annapolis, MD
General Service Conference	April 20 – 27	New York
Area Assembly (Report Back)	May 4	District 11
NERF	June 7 - 9	Cromwell, CT
MD State Convention	June 13 – 16	Hagerstown, MD
Area Committee	July 13	District 36
Area Assembly	August 10	District 31
Area Committee	September 21	District 40
Area Assembly (Elections)	October 19	District 22
Fall Conference	TBD	Hagerstown, MD
Area Committee	November 16	District 32
Area Assembly	December 14	District 37

### 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](mailto:Margenser@marylandAA.org) or mail to Maryland General Services, PO Box 20177, Baltimore, MD 21284-0177. The submission deadline for the next issue is March 4, 2013.

### 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.

# MARGENSER

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