

MARGENSER

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

A Bridging-the-Gap Model For Area 29

By Calvin J.
Chairperson, Area 29 Maryland General Service

I first noted the term “Bridging the Gap” in a report given by Dr. Jack Norris in 1978 titled “Bridging the Gap Between Active Treatment and AA and Normal Living.” Dr. Norris served as a Class A Trustee on the General Service Board for several years. In Dr. Norris’ report, he presented some disturbing statistics concerning long-term recovery and efforts by the treatment community at-large to combat the alarming trend in the recidivism (relapse) rate. He stated that analysis indicated that the critical time period for the alcoholic being released into the community was the first 90 days.

“Bridging the Gap/Temporary Contact Programs” as we know them today evolved as a result of Dr. Norris’s report. Most “Bridging the Gap Programs” provide informational meetings to the patients or inmates and provide presentations to the institution’s staff. Any inmate or patient interested in AA when he or she is released, is asked to fill out a form that is faxed or mailed to a central Bridging the Gap number or address. It is through this central office role that the patient or inmate is paired with a temporary contact.

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The Role of the General Service Representative

ED: Perhaps due to the short period of time between the 1st- and 2nd-quarter issues of the “Margenser,” no article has yet been submitted on the link between the individual and AA as a whole through the home group’s GSR. In its place, the following is an excerpt from the “Area 29 Maryland General Service Handbook,” found on page 8. Stay tuned for more.

The GSR is the two-way link between the group conscience and AA as a whole. The non-existent or inactive GSR deactivates the check-and-balance system for group self-honesty. Experience seems to indicate that the good intentions of the group were often the enemy of what was the best for the fellowship as expressed in the Traditions and the Concepts. The active GSR insures the liaison between the group and the worldwide fellowship, starting with group discussions that share the group’s experience of “carrying the message” at the District and Area levels.

GSRs are, in a sense, the service sponsors of their groups. They are as kind, non-judgmental and willing to share as they would be with a newcomer. Group sponsorship is the best

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Concept Five: Minority Opinion – Are we listening?

By Nancy K, Area 29 Delegate

ED: From a talk given on Concept Five of the Twelve Concepts for World Service

My name is Nancy, and I am an alcoholic. I am privileged and honored to serve as the Area 29, Panel 54 Delegate from Maryland. My home group is the Elkridge Monday Night Group of Alcoholics Anonymous, where I currently serve as the Institutions Representative for the group. I’d like to thank Eva for her loving invitation to participate in the Conference by preparing this service presentation on Concept Five: The Minority Opinion – Are We Listening?

When I read the topic, my mind immediately focused on our Area committee and assembly meetings as well as other Area 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

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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.

Just Around the Corner: Area 29 Trilogy

Easton AA Group

The Easton AA Group was started in June 1947. Art O'B, Howard A, and Leeland S had been going to Baltimore meetings, and that was in the days of the ferry. So they decided to start a meeting in Easton. At the time of the survey (1984), Leeland had 39 years of sobriety and lived in Florida.

In the first two years of the home group, the meeting was held at Leeland's house. It then moved to the basement of Christ Church in Easton, to the American Legion hall, then back to Christ Church in 1949. The group has never changed its name and is a speaker meeting.

Pocomoke City Group

The Pocomoke City Group started on November 16, 1972. Two of its original members were Bill T and Nancy H. The meeting is held on Thursday nights at 08:30 and is usually an open discussion meeting, except when there is an anniversary, when it becomes a speaker meeting. The first public meeting was held in December 1983, the group's 12th anniversary.

The group started off with attendance of about 8 to 10 people was averaging around 45 a meeting in 1984. The group has a good relationship with the church where the meeting is held, maintains an informed group conscience, and is conscientious of Traditions and its obligations to Maryland General Service and GSO in New York.

Elkridge Monday Night

One of the most active groups in the Area, Elkridge Monday Night was started on January 8, 1979. The original members of the group were Yvonne M, George S, and Gina Mc. The first meeting was a speaker meeting and then after that, it became an open meeting.

This group, like many in our Area, is a true reflection of AA, with an Intergroup Rep, GSR, and Grapevine Rep. The group is very active in its district and Area 29. ▲

Founder's Day In Akron – A Spiritual Experience

By Nancy B, Area 29 Host Committee Chair

It was "suggested" to my husband and me in 2004 that we go to Founder's Day in Akron, OH. Not that we CONSIDER going, but that we GO. I don't follow suggestions well, but since I had been laid off from my job after a 35-year career, I thought "Why not? I have nothing but time right now." Coincidentally, I had just read *Dr. Bob and the Good Old Timers*. So I wanted to know more about this man and the "home" of Alcoholics Anonymous. It was further suggested that we get there early and visit Dr. Bob's house before the crowds descended, and we did. What followed was an experience I will never forget.

We checked into our sparse, cell-like dormitory room early, dropped our suitcases, and left immediately. We parked one block from the unassuming yellow house and walked the brick sidewalk to the front steps leading up to the porch. There were many who had obviously been there before; they knew to hold hands or intertwine arms and count the steps (there are 12) as they leaped to the top. Being much more refined and in awe, we quietly walked up the 12 steps. At the top, we encountered an individual wearing the black tee shirt uniform of the Founder's Day volunteer. Expecting the usual greeter's handshake, I was surprised when my extended hand was taken in both of the volunteer's hands as he pulled me toward him and said "Welcome Home." I cry as I write this. It was that moving.

On the second floor landing of "our home," we were asked by a volunteer if we

would like to see Dr. Bob's daughter's bedroom. We thought "Well, sure," since Dr. Bob and Anne's room was occupied, which seemed strange. Entering Sue's room, we encountered several other visitors waiting...for what? The next thing we knew, we were on our knees, holding hands with the others. The volunteer asked us the same questions that were asked of the newcomers over 69 years ago before they were sponsored into their first meeting. After offering our affirmative answers, we then said the Third Step Prayer together...holding hands...on our knees...around the bed of the daughter of the co-founder of AA. We had surrendered just as those newcomers had so many years ago. I was overwhelmed and grateful for the precious gift God had given us – our sobriety.

The weekend was powerful, enlightening, spiritual, fun, and humbling. On Sunday morning, we arrived early (again) at Dr. Bob's gravesite. We had a front row vantage point to witness one of the members of the motorcycle motorcade perform "Coming Home" and "Amazing Grace" with the moving and chilling notes of his bagpipe. It was the 13th year he had just "shown up" to take action on his gratitude.

We will not be able to attend Founder's Day this year. God has blessed us with another opportunity – to attend the International Convention of Alcoholics Anonymous in Toronto, Canada. We have no expectations. We would not want to sell ourselves short. We will take it One Day At a Time as we have been taught and leave the outcome to God. ▲



Toronto Skyline

(Bridging the Gap) continued from page 1...

Before the doctor's report, there was an account of a Temporary Contact Program reported in the October–November 1976 issue of Box 459. The article describes a Canadian program called ACTS (After Care Temporary Sponsor). This program provided temporary sponsors for people being released from correctional facilities and going back home in Alberta.

The program chair for the ACTS program would send letters to neighboring AA Institutions Committee chairs explaining the program. Additionally, the letters would ask the committee to provide the name, temporary address, and release date of any AA who would be returning to Alberta. The program committee would then arrange for a temporary sponsor to get in immediate contact with the person being released. Also, if a person was being released from an Alberta facility and was headed for some other Canadian province, the Institutions Committee of that province was asked to sign up a temporary sponsor locally.

The reason I mention this model is that it is the Institutions Committees that carry our meetings into the facilities that could provide the communication link between the patient or inmate and the temporary contact. When appropriate, this model could provide a patient or inmate who wants to continue pursuing the AA way of life upon release “a bridge for success,” without substantial cost to the district or area. In the preceding sentence, I used the term “appropriate.” This model has its limitations, for example, in a

three-day recovery program. However, in most situations where there is at least one week between an expressed interest from the patient or inmate and their release date, I believe the model has merits.

For persons interested in starting a Temporary Contact Program please contact me at chairperson@marylandaa.org. Additionally, The 15th Annual Worldwide Bridging The Gap Temporary Contact Workshop Weekend will be held this year in St. Joseph, Missouri, on September 9-11.

I would like to leave you with an excerpt from the 1991 Conference Report from the then Chairman Michael Alexander:

“Our attention continues to be focused on the alcoholics who come to AA, but leave after an all too brief interval. An analysis of our triennial Membership Survey indicates that 50 percent of the alcoholics who attend their first AA meeting stay only 90 days. Many explanations are advanced for this phenomenon, but the General Service Board refuses to accept it as a normal condition in our Fellowship. With willingness, imagination, and the many resources of our program, we can make AA and sobriety attractive enough so that more newcomers will stay with us longer, while, at the same time, not overlooking those who have been in the program for an extended time. If we make up our minds to do so, then with the grace of God and the collective determination of the entire Fellowship, we will succeed in that effort as we have in others.” ▲

(Role of the GSR) continued from page 1...

example of the relationship of the GSR to the group in matters of service and unity. Because the GSR enjoys the trust of the group, they learn to listen and listen to learn. Their role is often reversed. They return to the group with the results of problems and solutions that could affect the unity, health and growth of AA. How well GSRs do their job can be measured by the way they listen to the group conscience and keep their group informed.

Active sponsorship experience is one of the most powerful experiences a GSR can bring to service responsibility. It indicates the ability to reach out and carry the message by working with others as suggested in chapter seven of the Big Book. The GSR needs to develop courage, emotional maturity and thick skin to carry the message of service. Experience and AA history provide this confidence.

A sense of humor about ourselves is most important to our service commitment and sobriety. We take the program and our sobriety seriously; we do not take our personal hurts or the rejection of our opinions too seriously. As Dr. Bob said, “Let us also remember to guard that erring member the tongue, and if we must use it, let's use it with kindness and consideration and tolerance.” ▲

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.

AREA 29 COMMITTEES NEED PEOPLE

Have an interest in a new service direction? Join us. Area 29 Maryland General Service has service positions to meet you at the level of your needs.

No prior experience necessary.
No resume needed. Just a willingness to offer Love and Service. Contact the Area Chairperson at chairperson@marylandaa.org.

continued from page 1...

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 conscience, District meeting, 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. The topic closed, however, and we had moved on to the next item of business. I wonder if that 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 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 guaranteed by Concept Five. That being said, the 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 weapons to try to 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 important, 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 to state 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 the 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 to you is “Are you listening?” 

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. Send all correspondence to Margenser ,Catonsville, MD 21228 or via email to margenser@marylandaa.org. The submission deadline for the next issue is July 25, 2005.

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 832
Arnold, MD 21012

Historical “Cure” for Alcoholism

How about a little interesting, if not downright strange, history of alcoholism treatment? In 1879, Dr. Leslie Keely opened the doors of the Keely Institute. According to one source, it was the first medical institution to treat alcoholism as a disease. In just over a decade, Keely Institutes could be found all over America and internationally. One of Dr. Keely's treatments follows. If I had only known how simple it could be....

Below is an excerpt from "Home Remedies" (circa 1880, author unknown). Thanks to Frank Z, past DCM for District 42 and recent Delaware resident for sharing this.

The Keely Gold Cure For Drunkenness

Formula of the Cure While the treatment of nervous exhaustion, alcoholism and so forth, is more particularly hygienic and dietetic, yet it is often impossible to dispense entirely with drugs. Recently the following formula has been widely recommended in such cases:

FORMULA

Arsenious Acid.....19 grains
Tribromide of Gold.....14 grains
Bromine Water.....sufficient
Distilled Water.....sufficient

Ten minims of this solution for injection, which equals one-thirty-second grain of gold tribromide. This should be administered hypodermically by a physician.

The physiological action of this remedy is most remarkable. It is an active tonic, powerful sedative and destroys the appetite or cravings for alcoholic stimulants. ▲

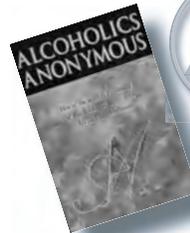
AREA 29 MARYLAND GENERAL SERVICE 2005 CALENDAR

May 14	Area Assembly	Baltimore – DIST 10 (Report Back)
May 20 – 22	NERF	Portland, ME - AREA 28
June 11	Area Committee	Calvert County - DISTRICT 1
June 16 – 19	MD State Convention	Hagerstown
June 30 – July 3	International Convention	Toronto, CA
August 20	Area Assembly	Frederick – DISTRICTS 40/41/43
September 17	Area Committee	Queen Anne's County – DISTRICT 24
October 15	Area Assembly	Dundalk – DISTRICT 16 (Elections)
October 27 – 30	MD Fall Conference	Hagerstown
November 12	Area Committe	Towson – DISTRICT 4
December 10	Area Assembly	Odenton – DISTRICT 26 (Transition)

35th Annual Area 29 Maryland State Convention

Hosted by
Maryland General Service
with Al-Anon participation

Our Design For Living



June 16th to 19th, 2005 • Clarion Hotel and Conference Center • Hagerstown, MD

AA SPEAKERS

Tim T.

Cleveland, OH

Bob D.

Las Vegas, NV

Michael E.

Evans, GA

Kathie M.

Henderson, NV

Lamar R.

Baltimore, MD

Micky R.

Forest Hill, MD

AL-ANON SPEAKERS

Janet D.

Pittsburgh, PA

Ann G.

Salem, VA

SCHEDULE

THURSDAY, JUNE 16th

NOON	Registration Opens
2:00 p.m.	Hands On Archives Presentation
4:00 p.m.	Open A.A. Speaker Meeting
5:00 p.m.	Alcathons Begin
8:00 p.m.	Open A.A. Speaker Meeting
9:30 p.m.	Fellowship & Fun
12:00 a.m.	Last Daily Alcathon

FRIDAY, JUNE 17th

6:00 a.m.	Alcathons Begin
8:00 a.m.	Registration
8:15 a.m.	Prayer & Meditation
9:30 a.m.	Open A.A. Speaker Meeting
11:00 a.m.	Open Al-Anon Speaker Meeting
1:30 p.m.	A.A. Workshops (2 to choose from)
1:30 p.m.	Al-Anon Workshop
1:30 p.m.	A.A. Play
2:45 p.m.	A.A. Workshop (2 to choose from)
2:45 p.m.	Al-Anon Workshop
4:00 p.m.	A.A. Workshop (2 to choose from)
8:00 p.m.	Open A.A. Speaker Meeting
9:30 p.m.	Dance to D.J.
12:00 a.m.	Last Daily Alcathon

SATURDAY, JUNE 18th

6:00 a.m.	Alcathons Begin
8:00 a.m.	Registration
8:15 a.m.	Prayer & Meditation
9:00 a.m.	Open A.A. Old-Timers Meeting
11:00 a.m.	Open Al-Anon Speaker Meeting
1:30 p.m.	Combined A.A./Al-Anon Workshop
2:45 p.m.	A.A. Workshop (2 to choose from)
2:45 p.m.	Al-Anon Workshop
4:00 p.m.	A.A. Workshop (2 to choose from)
6:00 p.m.	Banquet Dinner
8:00 p.m.	Open A.A. Speaker Meeting
10:00 p.m.	Dance to D.J.
12:00 a.m.	Last Daily Alcathon

SUNDAY, JUNE 19th

6:00 a.m.	Alcathons Begin
8:15 a.m.	Prayer & Meditation
9:00 a.m.	Last Daily Alcathon
10:00 a.m.	Open A.A. Speaker Meeting



Register in advance today! Walk-in registration will be \$25

Advance Convention Registration

Advance Registration Must Be Post-Marked By June 1, 2005

Mail your registration to: MGS State Convention Committee, P.O. Box 70364, Baltimore, MD 21237

First Name _____ Last Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone _____ Email _____

A.A. Registration _____ X \$22 _____

Al-Anon Registration _____ X \$22 _____

Saturday Buffet _____ X \$20 _____

Total Due: \$ _____

Please make checks payable to:

MGS State Convention Committee
P.O. Box 70364
Baltimore, MD 21237

&

35th Annual Area 29 Maryland State Convention

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Maryland General Service
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Our Design

For Living

June 16th to 19th, 2005 • Clarion Hotel and Conference Center • Hagerstown, MD

Lodging Information

Hotel Reservation Method

Our Host Facility is the Clarion Hotel and Convention Center.
Minimum two night stay at this hotel required to get convention room rate.
\$72 per room, per night.
Clarion Hotel Reservations Only: 888.528.6738.

Mention MD State Convention to get convention room rate.

Other Hotels in the Area:

Comfort Suites	301.791.8100
Days Inn	800.422.2754
Four Points Sheraton	301.790.3010
Hampton Inn	301.739.6100
Sleep Inn & Suites	301.766.9449
Quality Inn	301.733.2700

NOTE: Most hotels require 72 hours notice to cancel a reservation.

Buffet Menu

Tossed garden salad (with assorted dressings)
Lemon Pepper Chicken • Roast Sirloin of Beef
Chef's Choice of Potato & Vegetable
Warm Rolls & Butter
Freshly Brewed Coffee (regular & decaffeinated)
Hot Tea & Iced Tea
Dessert (served at individual tables)



Ice Cream Social Friday & Saturday Night

Vanilla Ice Cream topped with your choice of strawberries, chocolate sauce, pineapples, walnuts, peanuts & whipped cream.

Friday
Dances
Saturday

ADMITTANCE TO ALL FUNCTIONS WILL REQUIRE A NAME BADGE

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