

MARGENSER

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

Keep On the Firing Line

By Calvin J.
Chairperson, Area 29 Maryland General Service

We don't need to pull them out of barrooms or from the drunk tanks. You can find them in your workplace, your church, your school; they are all around us, the alcoholics who haven't found the truth. It's not enough to show up at meetings in your home groups. Most of the people we encounter there know the truth, and as my sponsor would say, "It's repetition that got us here and keeps us here."

A program of attraction – if they like what they see, and what we say, they will follow. We can't attract very many people if we stay among ourselves. As my friend Betty would say, "You can't help another drunk while sitting at home looking at television." We would truly be as our name implies: anonymous, a secret society of alcoholics. We all know, however, that we need to remain anonymous to the public at large, yet be available when we can be of service. Sure we need to make ourselves available to the new person who shows up at our meeting place. But what about the alcoholic who is on the ward of a hospital, in the lock-up at the detention center, or just going in and out of consciousness in front of the television. How do we reach these alcoholics who have not been given the truth?

In my mind this is what general service is all about, reaching the alcoholic who hasn't found us. Making ourselves available for a Public Information presentation at our local schools, churches, and community centers will certainly go a long way informing the public where to find us. Join a Correctional or Treatment Committee carrying meetings into one of these institutions. Become a temporary contact with Bridging the Gap, where we attempt to introduce the incarcerated alcoholic to a new way of life on the outside with a new supporting cast. One of the ways the Cooperation with the Professional Community Committee makes a connection between the professional and Alcoholics Anonymous is through members of the committee carrying a professional-in-training to an open Alcoholics Anonymous meeting. We can also cooperate with professionals by being a resource for someone in the religious or medical community with whom we've formed a relationship. Your shared experience can provide an opportunity for someone who hasn't been given the truth to receive the message of hope.


I believe that it is our duty, for those of us who have found a new way as the direct result of the interaction with our fellows, to provide these services for the alcoholic still in the grips of his or her disease. This is repayment, if there is such a thing; we perform these services because of our gratitude. This gets back to the statement that Alcoholics Anonymous is a program of attraction. It not what we say, it's what we do. 

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Tradition Three and Singleness of Purpose

Nancy K, Area 29 Delegate

The long form of the Third Tradition includes: "Our membership ought to include all who suffer from alcoholism. Hence we may refuse none who wish to recover. Nor ought AA membership ever depend on money or conformity. Any two or three alcoholics gathered together for sobriety may call them selves an AA group provided they have no other affiliation." Our Singleness of Purpose is defined within the pages of our Fifth Tradition, that our primary purpose is to carry the message to the alcoholic who still suffers.

In its beginning, our fellowship saw many of the same problems we face today. *AA Comes of Age* discusses the fear that drove some groups to establish rules for membership. They wanted to be sure that nothing but pure alcoholics entered the rooms. Undesirables, such as criminals, prisoners, beggars, tramps, drug addicts, and fallen women would not be allowed into the fellowship for fear they would tarnish and somehow destroy AA. If these rules had been enforced, I doubt our fellowship would be in existence today. If it had survived with the rules in place, I wonder who would not be here today because they had been turned away. As a criminal, beggar, tramp and fallen woman, I know I wouldn't.

Our early members learned through experience that, regardless of what path a person took to get to AA, that person could not be kept from entering and becoming a member, if they have a desire to stop drinking. The same holds true today. Our experience has taught us that we must refuse no one, if we do, we may

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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.

It Came Alive Through Experience

From a talk given by then-Panel 46 Delegate Arnold R

It really came alive for me when I went to my first General Service Conference as a Delegate in 1996. Until then I had been involved in service for nine years and had read much of the Service Manual. When I came to the Conference, I was able to put names and personalities to positions I'd been reading about. Suddenly it made sense.

The business of the Conference may seem like a mysterious process. One thing read frequently at service meetings is something called "Why Do We Need a Conference?" It was a brief blurb written by a past non-alcoholic Chairperson of the General Service Board of Trustees. He said:

We may not need the General Service Conference to insure our own recovery. We do need it to insure the recovery of the alcoholic who still stumbles in the darkness one short block from this room. We need it to insure the recovery of a child being born tonight destined to alcoholism. We need it to provide, in keeping with our twelfth step a permanent haven for all alcoholics who in the ages ahead, can find in AA, that rebirth which brought us back to life.

For me, General Service Conference work is making a twelfth step call on a person who may show up on our doorstep twenty years from now. It's making sure AA's message is there for that person. So a lot of general service work is an act of faith. You're doing work you don't necessarily see the results of right away. Because it can be so future-oriented, Conference work can sometimes seem a lot like "politics." Honestly, there is some of that. Politics happens any time you have two or more people gathered. Nevertheless, we have built certain safeguards into our structure that hopefully reduce politicking.

When I first heard about the Conference, it sounded like this enormous heavenly host of really spiritual beings that met in New York once a year. I pictured this vast hall of old timers voting – but it's not. Ninety-two Delegates from the United States and Canada make up the Conference body. They are people who come from an Area, a geographic part of North America. Sometimes an Area is an entire state.

We also have a Board of twenty-one Trustees. Seven of them are non-alcoholic; fourteen of them are alcoholic, eight who serve as Regional Trustees. The Areas are divided into eight Regions. There are six Regions in the United States and two in Canada. Delegates from each Region, along with other Conference members, elect a Regional Trustee. We also have Trustees-at-large, one from Canada, one from the United States. In addition, there are four alcoholic General Service Trustees who come from among our AAWS and Grapevine Directors. Other voting members of the Conference are certain staff members of the General Service Office and non-Trustee

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My Delusional Thinking Sledgehammer

Larry H., Glen Gardens Group

I have avoided virtually all the 'never yet's' – no arrests, DUIs or DWIs, lost jobs, broken relationships, broken bones or accidents.... I'm not better than anyone else; it's just the way it is.

But I have had four binges requiring medical detox and other less well-remembered 'mini' binges from which I self-detoxed. The last two binges could have killed me. That's why I'm here today, scared to death that I might think it's safe to have another frosty beer. Dealing with lawyers, judges, and doctors is far easier than dealing with the fear I experience when in one of those binges, drinking 24/7, afraid to stop, afraid to continue, and afraid of everything else as well. Words just don't seem to do that paralyzing fear justice.

The Big Book says, "We learned that we had to fully concede to our innermost selves that we were alcoholics. This is the first step in recovery. The delusion that we are like other people, or presently may be, has to be smashed" [Alcoholics Anonymous, p. 30]. I had to admit to my soul that I am an alcoholic.

I regularly hear "It's not how much you drank; it's not how often you drank; it's what happened to you when drank." Those with a string of crashed automobiles, DWIs, lost jobs, broken relationships, or whatever should have no problem with that definition. Yet surprisingly, many do!

For me, other than occasional binges, not much happened. Note that the near self-destruction of the binges was easy for me overlook. Also, it *was* how much and how often I drank, especially when I was younger and in the grips of a horrible binge. The frequencies and quantities I drank were toxic. The sometimes long periods of sobriety and 'normal drinking' between binges and the 'never yet's' made it all too easy to deny my alcoholism.

It took me 20 years, but today I know deep down inside I'm an alcoholic. But if I am to continue believing, I need a reason – rock solid, undeniable. The generally accepted explanation didn't work for me. I needed something a lot stronger and far more personal.

The Big Book to the rescue: "Therefore, the main problem of the alcoholic centers in his mind, rather than in his body" [Alcoholics Anonymous, p. 23]. My problem is my thinking. I'm an alcoholic because I don't think normally about alcohol. There could be some argument about what constitutes 'normal thinking,' but fortunately, I am so far over the normal line that it quickly becomes a moot point.

So here are some reasons why I know I'm alcoholic: I see absolutely nothing wrong with having a beer for

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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. Send all correspondence to Margenser Catonsville, MD 21228 or via email to margenser@marylandaa.org. The submission deadline for the next issue is March 1, 2005.

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have signed that persons death sentence.

I was 25 when I arrived at my first AA meeting. As a newcomer in this fellowship I had no understanding of our traditions and introduced myself like I had heard other people introduce themselves: "I'm an alcoholic and an addict; I'm an alcoholic and I'm dually addicted; I'm an alcoholic and I'm cross-addicted." I honestly didn't know what being dually addicted or cross-addicted meant, but it sounded cool. I just wanted to fit in and be "a part of." Thank goodness AAs with knowledge and understanding of our traditions and with a love for this fellowship shared with me the meaning and importance of Tradition Three.

They explained that by doing this, I was setting myself apart from the rest of the members in the room. I thought they were jealous because they couldn't sound cool like the rest of us. I also considered them hard-nosed AAs and thought that if they weren't so old and had experienced life a little, they might just understand where I was coming from.

After I began to put some days of sobriety together, I could begin to read to comprehend. I read the Big Book and finally began working the steps with a sponsor. Not long into my journey, I began participating in service functions within my Area. It was at these functions I began to hear talk surrounding those Tradition things. They sounded like they actually had meaning, so I thought I should investigate.

I picked up the Twelve and Twelve and began to understand what those people in the beginning were trying to tell me. The story of the man who approached an old-timer about joining a group even though he had other addictions worse stigmatized than alcoholism made sense to me. The old-timer discussed it with others in the group, and the answer was "What would the master do?" According to the story, this "strange alcoholic" never bothered anyone in the group with his other addictions. He worked the steps of Alcoholics Anonymous and passed the message of recovery from alcoholism on to others. Once I understood this concept, I was no longer an apple and a banana; I was an alcoholic and nothing more.

My journey hasn't been for very long, but I have seen this issue come up over and over again. Like with the early members, fear has taken hold, and there are those who believe we are falling prey to issues that will destroy this magnificent fellowship – drug addicts, court systems, treatment centers, prescription medications, mental illness, etc. I can only wonder if people with these "other issues" aren't really like the undesirable criminals, prisoners, beggars, tramps, or fallen women our early members faced. Do we have the right to judge them and prevent them from coming to our meetings or, worse yet, ask them to leave when they arrive? Isn't the bottom line that we must refuse no one? Our membership ought to include all who suffer from alcoholism.

At meetings, I see alcoholics suffering debilitating diseases other than alcoholism, and there is

nothing but compassion from other AAs. How many of us in this room turn our minds off and roll our eyes in disgust at the guy or gal who shares about the problems they have with the medication they take for a mental illness, yet swarm over the person who shares about problems with the chemotherapy he or she has for treating lung cancer. These may seem extreme examples, but are they really? Why are we so quick to scorn the individual with the problem requiring medication and not the one undergoing chemotherapy? Both are problems other than alcoholism; both divert us from our primary purpose. The pamphlet "Problems other than Alcoholism" makes clear: "Sobriety which is freedom from alcohol – through the teaching and practice of the Twelve Steps is the sole purpose of an AA group." Bill Wilson goes on to say, "AA members who are so inclined should be encouraged to band together in groups to deal with sedative and drug problems, but they ought to refrain from calling themselves AA groups. There seems to be no reason why several AA's cannot join if they wish, with a group of straight addicts to solve the alcohol and drug problem together. But, obviously, such a dual-purpose group should not insist that it be called an AA group, nor should it use the name AA in its title."

The theme was "Our Singleness of Purpose – The Cornerstone of AA" at the General Service Conference in April. We held workshops and heard presentations on this topic. What I took away from the experience was that I couldn't continue to live in fear of AA being destroyed by individuals coming into AA with problems other than alcoholism. What I can do is continue to educate those in my home group, District, and Area that we have a fellowship that turns away no one. I also have another responsibility to educate those in the professional fields that interact with AA about what we can and can't do. I need to take time to educate those who may not know that Tradition Three defines who we are and Tradition Five describes what we do. Simply, we are a bunch of drunks who have a desire to stop drinking, and our purpose is to carry the message of recovery from alcoholism to those who wish to recover. We are.... "a fellowship of men and woman who share our experience, strength and hope with each other so that we may solve our common problem...." The common problem is to help others recover from alcoholism. "Our primary purpose is to stay sober and help other alcoholics achieve sobriety." That means sobriety... just plain sobriety.

"In AA Tradition: How it Developed," Bill Wilson warned us, "AA's unity will not preserve itself." We are all responsible to do that. In AA Comes of Age, Bill wrote, "[T]he Twelve Traditions also point straight at many of our individual defects. By implication they ask each if us to lay aside pride and resentment. They ask for personal as well as group sacrifice." As members of a fellowship, we all have a responsibility to open our arms to all who enter. However, that responsibility does not allow members to say and do anything. How we introduce ourselves and what we share from the podium

or around tables does matter. It mattered in the beginning of AA; it matters today; and it matters to those yet to join us.

Upholding our traditions is not always the popular thing to do. It can be uncomfortable and difficult. Looking at the alternatives, I'd rather be uncomfortable than drunk. Bill Wilson envisioned what he called "one world of AA" guided by the "language of the heart." He believed that this would protect AA from any outside influence. In Warranty Six he adds, "It is probable that we AA's possess more and greater freedom than any fellowship in the world today. We know that we personally have to choose to uphold AA's Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions or else face dissolution and death, both as individuals and as groups."

I currently sponsor a woman born with one leg, another with a mental illness, a woman battling cancer, an anorexic, and several alcoholics. The common theme with all of them is that they all have a desire to stop drinking. One-on-one, we discuss all other issues in their life. I personally have no experience with mental illness, cancer, anorexia, or loss of a limb. However, as these are real challenges in each of these ladies lives, I cannot very well sponsor them without the topics coming up. None of them bring these issues up in a meeting, but again, they are everyday issues they face that could lead each one of them back to a drink. So, too, are the issues of drug addiction, sex, gambling, and the like. Although they are separate issues from our Third Tradition, individuals suffering these other challenges and issues, who have a desire to stop drinking, are welcome in our fellowship.

Through sponsorship, we can help these individuals not take a drink one day at a time while facing chemotherapy, mental illness, gambling, or any other life-altering event. That's our job – help those who have a desire to stop drinking – help them not take a drink no matter what comes down the pike. The key I believe is to focus on the solution and not the problem. I believe we should be all inclusive, not exclusive. But with that come responsibility to share with each other that the only thing we have to offer is recovery from alcoholism and nothing else.

I'm not sure about any of you, but I go to a dentist to get a cavity filled, I hire a plumber to fix a leaky toilet, and I go to a mechanic to have the oil changed in my car. This simple philosophy can be applied to AA. Through love, tolerance and sponsorship, I try to help others understand that I don't visit a mechanic to get a cavity filled; hire a dentist to fix my leaky toilet; and ask a plumber to change the oil in my car. If you have a desire to stop drinking, I can help you. However, the only experience I can share is recovery from alcoholism, and the only thing I can offer you is sobriety. If you have problems other than alcoholism, we'll work together to find you the help you need – outside of AA. My job will be to get you through whatever you face, one day at a time, without a drink because "I am responsible, when anyone, anywhere reaches out for help, I want the hand of AA to always be there and for that, I am responsible." ▲

Area Inventory

The following is an overview of discussion from the annual Area Inventory conducted October 9, 2004. As is customary, normal Area business was suspended to conduct the survey:

WHAT IS THE BASIC PURPOSE OF THE AREA COMMITTEE AND AREA ASSEMBLY?

No response.

WHAT CAN BE DONE TO IMPROVE THE AREA ASSEMBLY/AREA COMMITTEE MEETINGS? WHAT MORE CAN BE DONE TO CARRY THE MESSAGE?

- Problem: seems to be a lack of GSR participation; lack of communication from GSRs to groups; lots of Groups do not hold Business Meetings
- Need to interest more AAs in service work
- Area 29 sees a lot of new folks showing up, proving that our Area is doing well
- Assemble DCMs and GSRs to discuss problems within Districts
- Establish a list of objectives for committees
- Question: Are we having too many meetings?

ARE ALL DISTRICTS WITHIN THE AREA ACTIVE? IF NOT, WHAT CAN WE DO TO GET THEM ACTIVE?

- Area 29 needs to utilize active members in committees
- Perhaps use buses or vans to transport AAs
- Hold Area meetings in "dark" (inactive) Districts
- Inform members of difference between Intergroups and MGS

DO WE EMPHASIZE THE IMPORTANCE OF SERVICE SPONSORSHIP? HOW EFFECTIVELY? HOW CAN WE DO BETTER?

Some members seem to be unaware of Service Sponsorship

HOW CAN WE INFORM GROUPS OF THE IMPORTANCE OF A GSR? WHAT ABOUT THE SERVICE STRUCTURE?

- Use literature available from GSO
- When sharing at meetings, give personal information on experience in Service work emphasizing the importance of the link between the GSR and GSO

DO ALL AA MEMBERS HAVE ADEQUATE OPPORTUNITY TO SERVE ON COMMITTEES AND TO PARTICIPATE IN AREA 29

ACTIVITIES? WHAT IS AREA 29 DOING TO PROMOTE SERVICE OPPORTUNITIES?

Regional panels are intended for GSRs and all interested AAs

HOW WELL ARE OUR GROUPS INFORMED ABOUT WHAT IS HAPPENING IN AA WORLDWIDE?

- The Delegate's report very helpful and informative
- Some Districts synopsizes Delegate's report in Intergroup newsletter
- Encourage GSRs to attend and participate in Regional Panels

HOW CAN WE ENCOURAGE GROUPS TO SUPPORT AA AS A WHOLE FINANCIALLY?

- Inform groups through literature and GSRs about contributions, using announcement time to share about the opportunity to make contributions
- Share MGS financial report concerning group contributions with groups
- Educate groups about prudent reserves
- Encourage the celebration of AA through Districts and at workshops
- Inform Groups of consequences of drops in contributions (e.g., price of literature)

DOES THE ASSEMBLY ACT IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE STEPS, TRADITIONS AND CONCEPTS?

Yes, we act in accordance with our MGS Handbook, incorporating the by-laws as acting members of MGS, Inc.


IS OUR INFORMED GROUP CONSCIENCE A REPRESENTATION OF THE AREA AS A WHOLE? WHAT DOES THIS MEAN TO US INDIVIDUALLY AND COLLECTIVELY?

GSRs need to communicate to Groups and vice versa

IS THE AREA ASSEMBLY ATTRACTING GROUPS FROM THE ENTIRE AREA? ARE WE SEEING A GOOD CROSS-SECTION REPRESENTED?

- There does not seem to be a good cross-section due to geography
- Growth in AA may have weakened groups
- There are many groups but fewer meetings

IS THE PRINCIPLE OF ANONYMITY ALIVE AND WELL IN AREA 29? IF NOT, WHY? HOW CAN WE MAKE A BETTER EFFORT TO INSURE CONFIDENCES ARE KEPT?

For the most part, anonymity is maintained 

AREA 29 MARYLAND GENERAL SERVICE CALENDAR

December 11	Area 29 Assembly	Westminster – District 9
January 8, 2005	Panel 54 Meeting	Arnold – District 31
February 19, 2005	Area Committee	Catonsville – District 18
Feb. 25–27, 2005	NERAASA	Newton, MA – Area 30
March 11– 13, 2005	NERD	Wilmington, DE – Area 12
March 19, 2005	Area Assembly	Aberdeen – District 30

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

District Reports (submitted, not presented)**DISTRICT 6 (GARY P)**

We will host a workshop on Oct. 16 on "Unity, Service & Recovery," from 11-2:30pm at St. James Episcopal, Tracey's Landing. Flyers on back table. New group: Tuesday at 5:30; "Edgewater Discussion" no longer "As Bill Sees It. At last District meeting, planned for the upcoming workshop, discussed finances and publishing a mini-Where & When. Prayers are requested for "Help Group" GSR Jim Taylor, who is in hospital. Call Jerry F for address to send card.

Attendance at the District meeting varies but is up. The workshop is our first event in two years. We hope it will build enthusiasm for further participation. Next meeting Oct 17, 3:30 at Davidsonville UMC.

DISTRICT 18 (BILL M)

At the last meeting, we discussed our current DCM situation; our DCM is very ill. We ask for prayers for Bill M for his speedy recovery.

DISTRICT 31 (JOHN B)

The last District meeting was Oct 5. We discussed the service workshop held Sept 25 and the picnic of Oct 3, which was a huge success. Brought in \$500.00 that will buy Big Books to pass out to groups in the area. Upcoming events are GSO trip and/or Founder's Day trip and Spring Workshop, topic to be revealed at a later date.

DISTRICT 34 (WAYNE W)

Our District meets the first Wednesday of the month at 7:00pm at 4th and Pontiac, Brooklyn, MD. There were 11 AAs in attendance, representing 7 groups, with 2 visitors from District 27. We discussed ways to revitalize our District. We would like to host an Area meeting. We would like to post the dates for the Area meetings at the Baltimore Intergroup Office and in the Intergroup Bulletin. I attended the service workshop in Linthicum and would like to say that Angela did a great job. A special thanks goes out to our panel members.

DISTRICT 36 (JIM T)

A history workshop is being planned for November 27 at Placid Harbor, Hollywood, Md. The workshop coordinator, Bruce Y, has invited Ray G. (Archivist/Curator from Dr. Bob's House in Akron, Ohio) to do a presentation. Other Area 29 "Oldtimers" will also be present to share about AA history in Maryland. A Sadie Hawkins dance will be held Nov. 6 at St. Mary's Church, Bryantown, Md. The last District meeting was held on September 14, 2004, with 15 of 31 groups represented and 3 visitors. We requested committees to bring in their budgets for 2005, nominated a new Treasurer, and discussed Intergroup meeting schedules for District Committee usage. We will be requesting about 500 Where & Whens from Intergroup. The next meeting will be held October 12, 2004 at 6:30 at Placid Harbor. ▲

Just Around The Corner: The Crofton Open Group

Compiled by Frank Z, DCM, District 42

How Crofton AA got started is a message in itself. Ginny B's husband had a drinking problem, and she became dedicated to Al-Anon. She personally delivered Al-Anon literature to churches in the Crofton community. One minister, Rev. Fred Wood of the Prince of Peace Presbyterian Church, wanted to get meetings going at his church. Ginny and Bob M met with Rev. Wood to discuss starting a meeting there. Ginny rounded up interested AA and Al-Anon members, and the Crofton Open Group started up in July 1974. Along with Ginny and Bob, Jay B, Bob O'C, Nancy B, and Bob R were involved. Wes T offered guidance along the way. It is believed the Bob M led the first AA meeting. Paul B then became involved, along with Adam B, John H, John K, Vince S, Gail Y, Richard H, Michael H, Fred M, Tom C, Dave B, and Gene H. Pat and Al L were two members who left to form the Crofton Monday Night meeting.

Back then, the AAs met in the kitchen, Al-Anons in the big meeting room. On the first Friday of every month, there was a speaker meeting in the large room. The meeting averaged around 20 people. Grace B, Jack B, Joe G, Rick R, Joe & Kay McM, Morgan J, and others joined the home group.

During Crofton Open's 30 years, other groups formed, mostly as the result of a "resentment and a coffee pot." Some of those groups include the Crofton Monday night meeting, the Tuesday night Crofton Step Meeting (actually an offshoot of the Monday night meeting), the now defunct Bowie Grace Step meeting, and the Bowie City Hall meeting.

The Crofton Open Group still meets at the Prince of Peace Presbyterian Church at Ardsley Place and Crofton Parkway every Friday night at 8:30 pm. The meetings consist of Al-Anon, an Open Discussion meeting, and an AA

Step meeting. The main focus of the group continues to be carrying the message to the still-suffering alcoholic, while Al-Anon continues to carry its message to the suffering family and friends. Having both fellowships meet in the same place has provided an opportunity for families to recover together.

Each September, the group celebrates its anniversary with a joint AA/Al-Anon speaker meeting, preceded by a covered dish buffet before the meeting. ▲

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AAWS and Grapevine Directors.

Delegates comprise two-thirds of the voting members of the Conference. That's because a two-thirds majority is traditionally required to make something binding upon the Board of Trustees for a decision. By law, The Trustees still have the power to ultimately decide what happens, but it's been tradition that a two-thirds vote of the Conference will result in an advisory action, which is binding upon the General Service Board.

While it may sound like a government, it's not governmental in the sense that one layer can't necessarily tell the other layer what to do. Instead, it's geared toward sharing information and experience. It's a way for us to come together as a fellowship, just like you might at your home group's group conscience. The General Service Conference is really like having a group conscience meeting of all of the fellowship.

In your home group, it's unlikely that someone would be told what kind of coffee buy. Similarly, the Conference does not attempt to tell the GSO, Grapevine, or AAWS how to run its business in everyday affairs. The conference is there primarily to discuss matters of policy, such as serious deviations from AA traditions.

For example, at last year's Conference we talked about the public information survey. You may have seen the pamphlet that's published every three years called "A Survey of the AA Membership." That's done by the General Service Office. We don't tell them how to go about the survey. What we do is talk about what questions should be on it, and what is the purpose for the survey. We don't get into the day-to-day "How are you going to carry it out?" What we're really trying to do at the Conference is keep AA on track.

So how does business come to the General Service Conference? One way is through your group. When the group has an idea, they take it to their District, and the District says, "Yeah, that's a good idea." The District then brings it to the Area, and the Area agrees. The Area sends this idea on to the Conference Coordinator, saying it is something they'd like the fellowship as a whole to discuss. The Conference Coordinator gets together with the Chairperson and the Vice Chairperson and discusses the best way to handle that suggestion. Is this best handled as a workshop topic? A presentation-discussion at the Conference? Refer it to the appropriate Conference Committee?


We use a committee system at the Conference because so much business comes to it. Each Delegate, when elected, is randomly assigned to one of eleven Conference Committees. Each committee has about eight or nine Delegates. The committee agenda, or what needs to be discussed, is set prior to coming to the Conference. The

committee may decide that an agenda item needs more development and send it back to the Trustees. Or, it may decide that an idea has merit and is ready for consideration by the Conference as a whole.

The first half of the Conference week is committee work, the Delegates going through agenda items within their committees. The second half of the week is when the Conference meets as a whole and actively considers those agenda items that passed through the committees. Once the discussion starts on the floor, it's pretty much just like what happens at intergroup, District, or even home group meetings. Simply, what we try to do is decide what's best for AA as a whole, right now, with this issue. ▲

NERAASA '05

**Fourteenth Annual
Northeast Regional Alcoholics
Anonymous Service Assembly**



**2005 General Service
Conference Theme**
"Basics of Our Home Group -
Recovery, Unity and Service"

**Newton, Massachusetts
February 25th, 26th and 27th, 2005**

PURPOSE:
The purpose of the Northeast Regional Alcoholics Anonymous Service Assembly (NERAASA) is for GSR's, DCM's, Area Committee Members and Intergroup/Central Office Representatives of the Northeast Region to discuss General Service Conference related issues and concerns affecting A.A. as a whole, as well as pertinent aspects of recovery, unity and service common to the areas of the Northeast Region.

ALL A.A. MEMBERS are welcome!

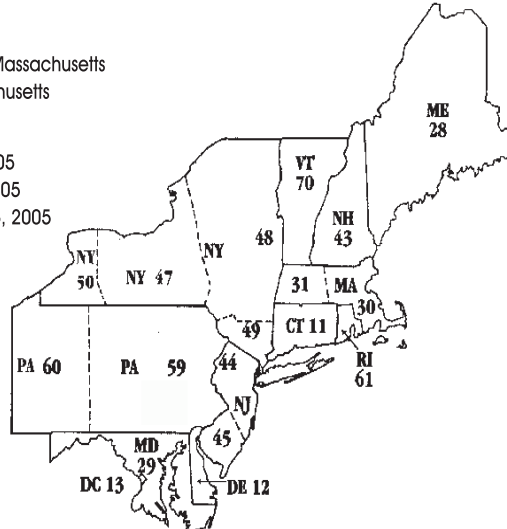
LOCATION:
Boston Marriott Newton - Newton, Massachusetts
Hosted By Area 30 Eastern Massachusetts

DEADLINES:
Hotel Reservation - January 27, 2005
Meal Registration - February 16, 2005
NERAASA Registration - February 16, 2005
by mail, otherwise on site

**ON SITE NERAASA
REGISTRATION:**
Begins at 1:00pm
Friday, February 25, 2005

FIRST PANEL:
Begins at 3:00pm
Friday, February 25, 2005

ICE BREAKER A.A. MEETING:
Thursday Evening, February 24, 2005



www.aemass.org/neraasa2005

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.

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