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# OUR COMMON WELFARE

Fostering Unity and Carrying the A.A. Message in Area 29 Maryland General Service



## Maryland at the A.A. International Convention in Vancouver

Top: A woman reads a poster board in the Maryland Area 29 Hospitality Suite at the International Convention in Vancouver July 3-5. The Maryland room had 27 three-panel posters detailing service areas and (bottom) tables with thousands of swag items for the taking. A slide show presenting A.A. history in Maryland ran continuously.

**For more on the Convention see pages 8-9.**

## Anonymity: The spiritual foundation

Esther P., The Pender Harbour Group,  
Madeira Park, B.C.

(an abbreviated version of a panel presentation at the 2025 International Convention in Vancouver)

When I came to A.A. I understood anonymity only to be about protecting A.A. itself and A.A. members' identity. Years later, I realize that anonymity has a spiritual significance I did not understand in my early years in A.A. Anonymity teaches us basic A.A. spiritual principles that are the foundation of all our Steps and Traditions.

To be anonymous means a sacrifice of one's desire for personal power, prestige, and public honors. To practice anonymity we must practice the opposite of many of the usual alcoholic traits, behaviors, or attitudes. For instance, I can't practice anonymity and practice being the center of attention at the same time.

Anonymity teaches us many basic spiritual principles. I have noted five.

- To be just "one among many," a pebble on the beach, not the whole beach.
- That *everyone's* opinion matters. We listen to everyone's opinion and treat all with equal respect. There is no crosstalk in meetings. When taking a group conscience, often the group changes its mind after

See **Anonymity** on page 5

# District 36 hosts 'No Talent' Show featuring... a chicken wearing striped socks?



Mary F., Events Coordinator, District 36

Nearly 100 people showed up on Saturday, May 10, for District 36's 'NoTalent' Talent Show. And boy, does A.A. have some talent!

The event, held at St Andrew's Episcopal Hall near California, Md., was a huge success.

"We came up with the idea because one of our committee members, Kaki B., recalled a no-talent show held years ago in another area," said Mary F., coordinator of the District 36 Events Committee, which hosted the event.

The show featured ten acts, performed by members of A.A. from as far away as Baltimore. Performances included comedy acts, a ventriloquist act, and an A.A. lyrics parody act, as well as several singing and musical acts, and a couple of spoken acts.

The crowd enthusiastically applauded and cheered the local talent on! One participant graciously allowed us to use his audio equipment for the night. District 36 plans to hold a fall dance with a western theme (Sadie Hawkins style) and a fall picnic in September.

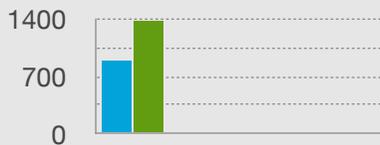


## Grapevine/La Viña subscriptions on the rise

### Maryland stats

#### Grapevine

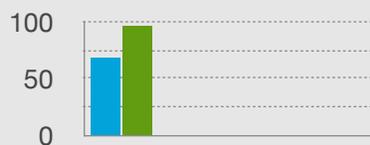
2024 2025



Up **63** percent

#### La Viña

2024 2025



Up **71** percent



Grapevine's display at the A.A. International Convention in Vancouver.

Subscribe to Grapevine and La Viña at <https://www.aagrapevine.org/store/grapevine-subscriptions>

# District 31 carries A.A.'s message by stocking 'Little Free Libraries'

Ginger A., DCM, District 31

When we began relighting District 31, we had no funds or direction for how to move forward. Fortunately, our first

treasurer located the district's bank account, providing us with some money for 12-step work.



Initially, we aimed to supply Big Books to local libraries, but

contractual restrictions prevented this. We started trying to come up with another way to get our message out. We started talking about Little Free Libraries. These are small boxes where people can place books and take other books out. Find out where there are Little Libraries in your area at <https://littlefreelibrary.org/map/>

We bought a case of small Big Books and labeled each with our district email, the AAIG Website and phone number, then put them in many of the Little Free Libraries in our area. Though these were picked up, they often got lost among larger books.

After all the books were taken, we considered alternatives: small Big Books, paperback versions of the Big Books, and *Grapevine* magazines. Due to cost and size issues, we decided on *Grapevine* subscriptions, and we ordered five subscriptions. When they arrived, we labeled them and placed them in Little Free Libraries and a local coffee shop. They have been being picked up from the Little Libraries and it seems to be going well. We hope that if a current member takes one that they will like it enough to get their own subscription.

Other A.A. groups, intergroups, districts, and areas are participating in similar Little Free Library initiatives, as well.



The Spring 2025 issue of *Box 4-5-9*, published by the General Service Office, includes a story about an A.A. district in central Oregon that used 7th-Tradition funds to buy Big Books and *Grapevine* and *La Viña* magazines for 25 Little Libraries. That was five years ago, and the outreach has continued and expanded to include all of Area 58.

"The feeling is amazing," Christine B. said in the *Box 4-5-9* article. She serves as District 5 IT chair and Area 58 Finance co-chair.

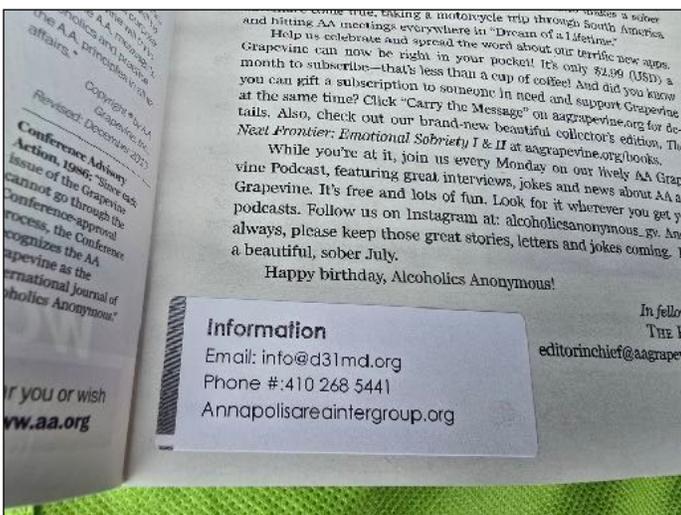
"You have no idea who you're going to touch." While the idea of these little libraries is to borrow a book and replace it with another, Christine said that when it comes to suffering alcoholics, her message is, "steal this book if you need to. You can always make an amends when you're sober."

To read the full *Box 4-5-9* spring issue, go here:

**[BOX 4-5-9 SPRING 2025](#)**

To find out where Little Free Libraries are located in your community, go here:

**[littlefreelibrary.org](https://littlefreelibrary.org)**



## Meeting founded in 1961 known as “The Smokehouse” – Guess why

**Randi B.**, Fort Cumberland Group, District 17

**“Our common welfare comes first; personal recovery depends upon A.A. unity.” (Tradition 1)**

*Our Common Welfare* is the newsletter for Area 29 Maryland General Service, published quarterly to foster unity and cultivate communication among A.A. members, groups, districts, and Intergroups within the MGS Area of Alcoholics Anonymous. *OCW* aims to encourage service and carry the A.A. message by publishing A.A.-related material, including personal stories of experience, strength and hope, and members’ encounters with service at every level.

Nothing published in *OCW* should be thought of as a statement of Area 29 or A.A. policy, and publication does not constitute endorsement by the newsletter, Area 29, Intergroup, Districts, local groups, or A.A. as a whole.

### Submission Guidelines

Submissions are welcome, including anonymity-protected photos, graphics, drawings, and articles. Written submissions can be up to 500 words – shorter is fine, too. All submissions will be reviewed by the Newsletter Committee chair and may be edited for length and clarity.

Send submissions and calendar items to [margenser@marylandaa.org](mailto:margenser@marylandaa.org).

**Feedback is welcome...**and encouraged. Let us know what you think. What else would you like to see in the newsletter?

Nestled in the heart of Western Maryland in Allegany County, the Fort Cumberland Group of Alcoholics Anonymous has been a beacon of hope and recovery since 1961. As one of Cumberland's oldest A.A. meetings, it holds a special place in the community's history.



Affectionately known for years as “The Smokehouse,” due to the thick cloud of cigarette smoke and the ever-present aroma of coffee in the air, it later became known simply as “the meeting on the hill.” No matter the name, the feeling has always been the same — you’re

greeted with a smile, a hug, or a firm handshake the moment you walk through the door.

Alcoholics Anonymous itself was founded in 1935 by Bill W. and Dr. Bob in Akron, Ohio. Since then, A.A. has helped millions of people around the world find a new way to live — one day at a time. The Fort Cumberland Group proudly carries that legacy forward. I’ve been coming here since I was five years old, holding my dad’s hand as he walked the road of recovery. He, along with so many others, helped pave the way for those still struggling today.

I chose this home group because I’ve always felt at home here. From the warmth of the fellowship to cherished traditions — like our old Christmas dinners, where Jun M. would dress up as Santa and hand out presents to all the kids — this group has never been just about staying sober. It’s been about family, connection, and love.

As I often say, *“This group played a huge role in giving my own father his life back—and in many ways, it gave me mine, too.”*

The Fort Cumberland Group continues its mission today, meeting every Tuesday and Friday at 8 p.m., offering strength, support, and a reminder that no one has to face this journey alone. We carry forward the spirit of the program with the same guiding words that have helped so many before us: *“One day at a time,” “Keep it simple,”* and *“We’re only as sick as our secrets.”* Whether newcomer or old-timer, you are welcome here—just as you are.



# 13th annual Hispanic States Convention of Alcoholics Anonymous



An estimated 150 people attended the 13th annual Hispanic States Convention in Baltimore on June 21-22. A.A.s from Maryland, Virginia, and Washington D.C. collaborated for the event, which included speakers and panels on a variety of recovery- and service-related topics.



**Anonymity** continued from page 1

hearing the contrary opinion. Group conscience means more than the majority rules.

- That no-one speaks for or represents A.A. I understand that my opinion is just my opinion, not the opinion of A.A. Only A.A. literature speaks for A.A.
- That every A.A. member matters equally. Some A.A. members are not more important than others. Our leaders are but trusted servants they do not govern. Everyone is asked to speak and we listen quietly and respectfully to all who share.
- Unconditional acceptance. It doesn't matter who you are or what your history is. A.A. is open to anyone who wants to get sober. We are not an exclusive club. Absolutely anyone can join A.A. Everyone is welcome in A.A. We don't question or approve you. You are an alcoholic and an A.A. member if you say you are.

As we understand and practice anonymity we gain in humility. The basic ingredient of all humility is the desire to seek and do the will of God.

My favorite definition of humility is the following: "Absolute humility would be a state of complete freedom from myself, freedom from all the claims my defects of character now lay so heavily upon me. Perfect humility would be a full willingness in all times and places to find and do the will of God."

To get sober it is necessary to subordinate our own will to the will of the group conscience. The need to take advice and accept direction leads us to right thinking, honesty, and genuine humility. Until A.A. our lives were devoted to running from pain and problems – escape to oblivion, via alcohol. We usually did not take advice or direction from anyone. Alcoholics typically

think they know it all and have all the answers. I realize that I usually don't even know the questions.

Our alcoholism itself and the A.A. Steps also give us humility. Hitting bottom usually is bad enough to trigger humility. The insanity of our drinking is a good motivator to acquire a degree of humility. It is why we tell "what it was like" when we take a cake – remembering the insanity will keep us humble. Steps Four and Five, sharing a searching and fearless moral inventory, deepens humility for most of us.

Along with practicing anonymity and working the A.A. Steps, I also had to give up:

- Defensiveness
- Beating myself up
- Shame as a constant companion
- Anger and rage as a problem solver or a cover up for pain
- High drama – everything as a life-or-death issue
- Magnification or minimization
- Blaming others

This change of attitude allowed me to move out of myself toward God – to move from self-serving to service to others.

We first reach for humility because we must if we want to stay sober. Then we practice humility because it is the right thing to do. Eventually we practice humility because we want it as a way of life.

When the Big Book was written, A.A. chose anonymity from fear of alcoholic stigma and fear of being overwhelmed with requests for help. This is evidence that choosing the right attitude and behavior works, regardless of why we chose it. The principle of anonymity led A.A. to the spiritual principles we practice in A.A. today.

# He loved and lost — and stayed sober through it all

Dave D., CSR, Hatchery Group, Towson

All of us have lost relatives. Most of us have lost friends in the Fellowship. On May 13th of 2020, shortly after celebrating seven years of sobriety, I lost the woman I love in a car accident.

That was a rough year for everyone. Because of the pandemic, social lives were shattered, employment was at risk, relationships were strained, and the landscape of Alcoholics Anonymous was revolutionized with online meetings. I lost an uncle that year to the virus, and a good friend to a relapse, but by far the most devastating was losing Alisha.

We met in 2015 and quickly became friends. My contact name in her phone became “Dave Awesomeness” when I helped her through a crisis in the middle of the night, and it stayed as such through our relationship. On October 11th of 2016, after much internal debate, I awkwardly asked Alisha if she wanted to be more than just friends. We were together for three-and-a-half years, until her unexpected passing. I never felt so much in common with someone, despite the vast outward differences in our lives. I truly loved her, and I forever will.

One night, I got phone calls from her roommate and her best friend. They said that Alisha was in a car accident, and she didn’t make it. Details were scarce at the time, and the exact cause is still unclear.

I called my sponsor, obviously. Then I called a friend who had been a social worker for decades. She’s not an alcoholic herself, but she has worked with many of us over the years. She said something that put things in perspective and has stuck with me since: “How would Alisha feel if you got drunk and attributed it to her?”

Once upon a time, I couldn’t stay sober after a minor inconvenience. Toward the end, I couldn’t stay sober on days ending in Y. But I managed to maintain my sobriety through the most devastating experience of my life. I prayed. I had many

conversations with her in the afterlife. And God—with a great deal of assistance from family and friends—helped me through this horrible event.

I felt that I wasn’t grieving properly because I was quite distressed by Alisha’s death, but I didn’t cry. That changed at her funeral. It was attended by a motley crew of people from her life, and I was the only one wearing a suit. I finally broke down crying. Seeing her in that casket made her passing seem real. I kissed her on the forehead and told her I’d always love her. Five years later, I very much do love her. I still talk to her and about her regularly.

In fact, two close friends and I were talking about her yesterday for several minutes.

One does not expect to lose an intimate partner at the age of 32. We discussed it during the relationship and agreed that marriage was unnecessary. She joked about having three weddings before and not needing another one. But some of our friends still referred to her as my wife. Losing the love of your life is something you think will never happen or will happen much further in time. Unfortunately, God had different plans for us.

I received plenty of the standard platitudes from everyone. “I’m sorry for your loss.” “She was a wonderful woman.” “I could tell you two really loved one another.” But A.A.s almost always followed it with something along the lines of “you have my number if you need to talk.”

I stayed sober through something I could never have imagined happening, much less surviving with my sanity relatively intact. (How intact my sanity has ever been is up for debate, heh.) Alcoholics Anonymous changed my life and my way of thinking, and it taught

me how to cope with life on life’s terms. I don’t wish to imagine how quickly and catastrophically I would have fallen apart if I was still drinking, although I never could have maintained a relationship that long back in the day.

The ability to experience true love, and the ability to survive the trauma of losing that love, are gifts of sobriety. I could not have done it without God, supportive friends, loving family, and the program of Alcoholics Anonymous.



The ability to experience true love, and the ability to survive the trauma of losing that love, are gifts of sobriety. I could not have done it without God, supportive friends, loving family, and the program of Alcoholics Anonymous.



# Arbutus' As Bill Sees It group closes after 40 years

**Kathleen W.**, Executive Director, Baltimore Intergroup

Do you have a home group? Do you think it is the best home group around? A long-time member I know says his home group is the best home group around, and “if you don’t think yours is the best, then find a new one.”

The only home group I have ever had, and the best in my opinion (over 16 years) just closed. The A.A. member mentioned above helped start the group 40 years ago and it had been his home group since then. I remember walking into that room for the first time. I was terrified and I didn’t want to be there, but I didn’t want to drink even more. I never thought I would stay long enough to be greeting a newcomer like me someday. I remember the old-timers that used to attend that meeting and the bits of wisdom I picked up from them and still talk about today. I met most of the women that have walked me through this program in that group.

I’ve heard the difference between a home group and a meeting is what happens after the meeting ends, and the next meeting begins. What does your group do outside of that one hour together? Our group was active in service with a GSR, Intergroup Rep, and even had an Institution commitment (with only four home group members). We contributed to intergroup, the district, area and the General Service Board. We saw each other at A.A. workshops and fellowship events. We called each other when we weren’t going to be at home group. We reached out to one another when someone was sick or having a tough time living life on life’s terms. Many of the home group members were at my wedding and watched my daughter grow up in the rooms. We were and will continue to be family.

It is sad to see a vibrant group not rebound from the pandemic. We regularly had 20-25 people in attendance before the pandemic locked everything down. After only a few weeks we had re-opened the meeting virtually and our attendance slowly grew back to what it was and more. We reached out to the older A.A. members who used to attend and helped them navigate the new virtual world. It was so good to see familiar faces during this time. Some of us even met at an outdoor parking garage at a local college to have “face” time together. Lawn chairs, masks and Big Books were all we needed.

I remember driving to Baltimore Intergroup to pick up medallions and books when our members were celebrating or needed something. I would take the items to their homes and drop them on the front porch. Through everything, we looked out for each other and supported each other while carrying the message.

We even had a new group member get sober online with us. It was such a great feeling when we met him in person after a year of virtual meetings.

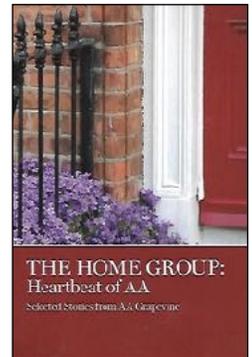
June 30<sup>th</sup> was a sad day for me. I had made Mondays at 5:30 p.m. a part of my week, my life. I only missed the meeting if I was out of town or sick. The last meeting of As Bill Sees It in Arbutus was attended by about 15 A.A. members. A few of those who attended the first meeting 40 years ago came back and few others came to say goodbye to a meeting that helped them stay sober over the past few decades.

The A.A. home group is defined in **The A.A. Group... Where it all begins** (P-16):

“What Is an A.A. Group? As the long form of Tradition Three clearly states, “Our membership ought to include all who suffer from alcoholism. Hence, we may refuse none who wish to recover. Nor ought A.A. membership ever depend upon money or conformity. Any two or three alcoholics gathered together for sobriety may call themselves an A.A. group, provided that, as a group, they have no other affiliation.”

I hope your home group is much more than just two or three alcoholics gathered together. I hope it is a place you look forward to attending each week. A place where you can be yourself, good or bad. A place that feels more like a home rather than a group.

As a trusted servant at the Baltimore Intergroup office, I have seen groups that have been around 50 years or more close over the past two years. Please reach out to those groups that have been serving A.A. for a long time. Some are thriving and some are not. I encourage members to support meetings that have been around for a long time and are struggling. Please consider being of service to them and help them grow, rather than starting a new meeting. There is history, experience and wisdom in those home groups.



# Welcome!

## to Area 29

### Maryland General Service!

**Kristin B.**, Chair, Area 29 Newsletter Committee

**E**verybody told us how awesome it would be when tens of thousands of A.A. members from around the world said the “Serenity Prayer” together during the Big Meetings at the International Convention.

And it was – it was awesome. To hear all those voices and see all those smiling, sober faces in the huge BC Stadium in Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada.

An estimated 35,000 people attended the Opening Big Meeting on July 3, and we watched as sober representatives from 88 countries carried flags across the stage, some dancing or fist-pumping to roars from the crowd. My husband texted me as the meeting was about to begin to ask what it was like. We had waited in line outside the stadium for close to two hours and had just settled into our seats with bags of popcorn, Twizzlers, and Peanut M&Ms.

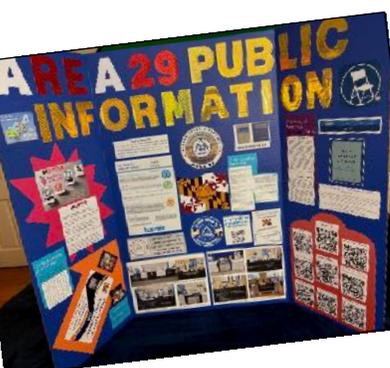
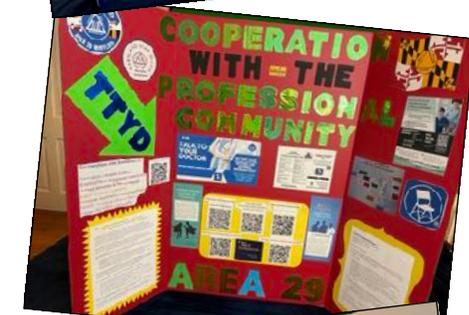
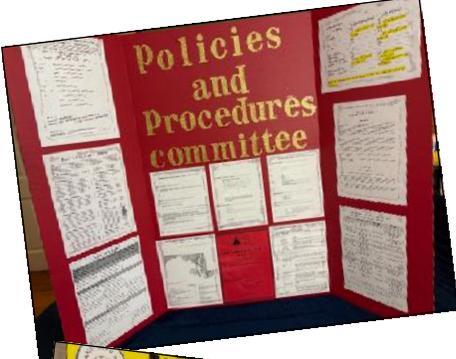
“Stadium’s getting full,” I told him. “They’re playing Journey, “Don’t Stop Believing,” and people are running around with flags and dancing...A lot of joy.”

To see so many recovering alcoholics together in one place was overwhelming, and I walked away inspired by how big this thing really is, how it really works if you work it, no matter where you live or what your life circumstances are.

Equally as moving for me, as a first-time International Convention attendee, were the one-on-one encounters with scores of alcoholics from everywhere. We talked on hotel elevators, on street corners, at restaurants and panels and meetings, and in lines to get into those places.

The most intimate conversations took place in the Maryland Area 29 Hospitality Suite at the Fairmont Hotel. An estimated 1,000-plus people visited Maryland’s room, where 27 colorful poster boards told the story of how Area 29 does A.A. service. A slide show of Maryland’s A.A. history ran on a loop.

(continued next page)



# Hospitality room showcases A.A. service

**// ...(We) are grateful for the great work you and your Hospitality Room Committee did by showcasing Area 29's commitment to service at the Vancouver International Convention. There are now many more A.A. members around the world who know that Area 29 is adept and focused on our primary purpose."**

**-David R.**

**27**  
poster boards

**+60**  
Volunteer greeters



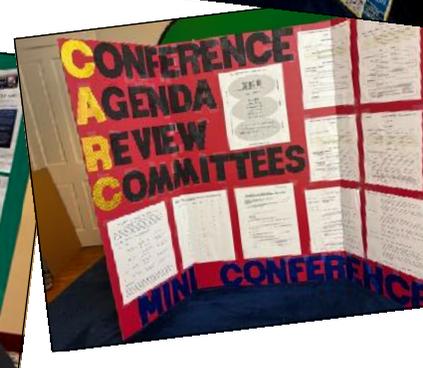
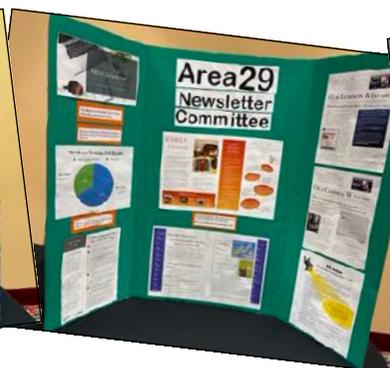
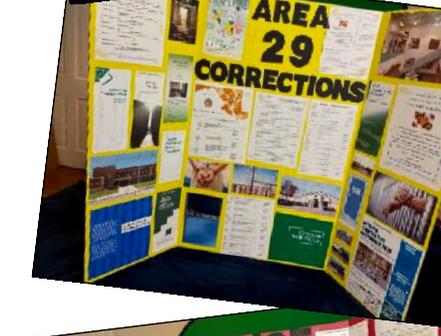
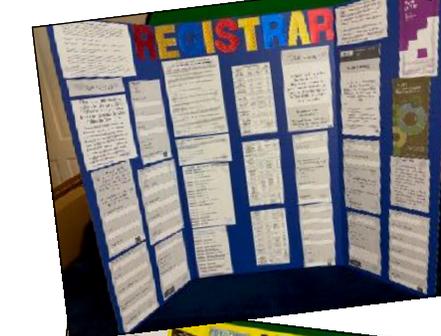
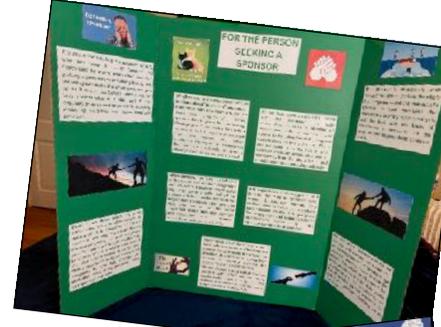
**+1,000**  
estimated visitors

**640**  
signed guest register

My traveling partner, Tina B., and I are both avowed and proud introverts, so serving as volunteer greeters was somewhat counterintuitive. In fact, it would have been a perfect nightmare for me in early sobriety, when I still craved a drink to get through social situations.

I'm so thankful that one of the gifts recovery has given me is truly valuing and finding joy in encounters with other people. And these encounters in the Maryland room were something special – connecting so immediately and so deeply with so many people who have found recovery through Alcoholics Anonymous, sharing this great gift of grace. That's what I'll cherish most from our trip to Vancouver.

The next A.A. International Convention is scheduled for summer of 2030 in St. Louis. Who wants to go?



# GET READY TO ROTATE!

## Humility at the heart of one of A.A.'s foundational principles

Frank M., Area 29 Chair, Panel 74

Being a servant leader in Alcoholics Anonymous is interesting. It seems as though once I get the hang of being a coffeemaker, group secretary, GSR, DCM, committee chair, and now Area officer, it's time to rotate out of that position.

Rotation is one of the key principles that underpins our beloved fellowship. This principle is so important. But why? If I like serving in a position and want to do it for another term, shouldn't I be able to serve?

Here are my thoughts: The practice of rotation not only fosters inclusivity and shared responsibility but also enhances the spiritual growth of members. Let's take a look at the history of rotation in A.A. and its myriad benefits, both practical and spiritual.

The principle of rotation within Alcoholics Anonymous can be traced back to the early days of the fellowship. Co-founders Bill Wilson and Dr. Bob Smith recognized the importance of shared leadership in creating a supportive environment for recovery. They understood that no single individual should dominate the organization, as this could lead to power struggles and diminish the collective spirit of the group.

In the original A.A. meetings, leadership roles were often filled by those with the most sobriety or experience. However, it became clear that this approach could lead to a hierarchy that contradicted the fundamental A.A. principle of equality among members. To prevent any one person from wielding excessive influence, the practice of rotation was introduced. This meant that service positions, such as group, district, area, intergroup and desks at GSO, would be rotated regularly, ensuring that all members had the opportunity to contribute and lead.

Rotating leadership roles regularly in Alcoholics Anonymous has many practical applications. Here are five.



First, it encourages participation from a diverse range of members. This inclusivity fosters a sense of belonging and empowerment, as every member has the opportunity to contribute to the group's mission. Newer members are given a chance to take on responsibilities, which can boost their confidence and commitment to recovery.

Second, it helps distribute the workload and responsibilities, ensuring that no one person feels overwhelmed. This sustainability is crucial for the long-term health of the group and its members. Continuous leadership by the same individuals can lead to burnout, both for the leaders and the group. I have seen folks who have served many years in the same position get angry, frustrated and walk away from service entirely.

Third, it introduces new ideas and perspectives and a sense of responsibility. Different individuals bring unique experiences and insights,

which can lead to innovative approaches to problem-solving and group dynamics. This diversity of thought enriches discussions and can inspire creative solutions to challenges faced by the group.

By rotating leadership roles, members are reminded of the importance of humility. No one person is more important than another, and rotation for me fosters a spirit of service rather than self-importance.

(continued next page)

# How would you like to serve?

## Panel 76: 2026-2028

ELECTION  
OCT. 18, 2025

### Trusted servants will stand for the following Officer positions

Delegate

Alternate Delegate

Chair

Secretary

Treasurer

### Committees

(Committee Chairs are appointed by the incoming Chair.)

Accessibilities

Archives

Area Meeting

Host

Area Registrar

Audio

Cooperation with the Professional Community (CPC)

Corrections

Finance

Grapevine

Intergroup

Liaison

Literature

Newsletter

Maryland State Convention

Mini-Conference

Policies & Procedures

Public

Information

Technology

Treatment

Workshops

**When:** 9 a.m., Oct. 18, 2025

**Where:** Severna Park United Methodist Church, 731 Benfield Road, Severna Park, Md. (also on Zoom)

**Who:** All A.A. members in Area 29 are welcome to attend the Assembly.

**Who can vote:** Area Officers (Delegate, Alternate Delegate, Chair, Secretary, Treasurer, GSRs (or their alternates), DCMs (or their alternates), and Chairpersons of Area Service Committees (or their Co-Chairs).

**Third Legacy Procedure:** See pp. 114-115 of the A.A. Service Manual for a description and diagram of the voting procedure.

 Fourth, it allows members to develop and hone their leadership skills. Every service position I have undertaken, my first reaction is “I can’t do that.” It has taught me the importance of asking for help and realizing the help is there.

 Fifth, it instills a sense of responsibility. This shared responsibility cultivates a stronger commitment to the principles of A.A. and to one another.

Most importantly to me, is that rotation offers “opportunities for spiritual growth” – my service-sponsor’s favorite mantra.

By rotating leadership roles, members are reminded of the importance of humility. No one person is more important than another, and rotation for me fosters a spirit of service rather than self-importance. I have learned in a very concrete way to value the contributions of others and that has deepened my sense of connection and spirituality.

Servant leadership is also what reinforces the idea that recovery is not just about individual sobriety but also about

supporting fellow members. It is using my talents to give back to the community. For me, this mindset enhances my spiritual journey. I simply could not use these talents if it were not for the gift of sobriety.

The rotation of leadership is a reminder to me of the importance of surrendering control to a Higher Power. My home group, district, area, in fact every part of the service triangle, will thrive through collective effort and divine guidance. I am not, nor is any servant leader, indispensable or irreplaceable.

Rotation fosters a sense of unity. As we take turns leading, we develop deeper relationships and a sense of camaraderie. As Area Chair, I have come to know remarkable people I otherwise would never have known. I now have a support network where we can share our struggles and triumphs.

The practice of rotation in Alcoholics Anonymous is more than just a logistical necessity; it is a fundamental principle that enhances A.A.’s effectiveness and the spiritual growth of us all.

# She took baby steps to service... and made a massive move forward



**Michele M.**, GSR, Emotional Sobriety Group,  
Upper Falls, Md.

**M**y journey with service has been one of baby steps. As someone who is well versed in fear and anxiety, the “baby steps to the elevator” mantra is a tool that works for me. I just have to keep putting one foot in front of the other and not look too far ahead. Fear gripped me before each service position I ever took on, but just by following in the footsteps of others, I walked through the fear, and on the other side the view was great. It always is.

My first service position was setting up and cleaning up the room for the meeting. I had to meet and learn the names of other home group members and try this thing called “fellowshipping.” It turned out that these people were kind to me and actually seemed to appreciate my help. I started to smile and look them in the eyes. It felt so good to be useful.

Next, came the coffee maker position. I was terrified. This was the real deal. If these people didn’t get coffee – and a lot of it – it wouldn’t be pretty. Each week I arrived 45 minutes early to make sure three pots were brewed and ready for the large group. It felt so good to be reliable and dependable.

My sponsor then suggested I introduce myself to someone I didn’t know while they were getting coffee each week and to

remember them by name if I saw them again. Even better, to make it the person who was standing alone or looked like a deer in the headlights. It began to feel easy to do, and the network of A.A. folks I recognized at other meetings grew. I wasn’t as fearful trying out a new meeting when I figured I may know somebody once I get there. For me these were massive steps forward. Service forced me to be a part of A.A. when it was more comfortable to stand off to the side and watch.

Next came becoming a secretary (with a microphone mind you). My quivering voice became stable. Then bringing A.A. meetings into a local jail, first as a guest speaker and then as a steady commitment. That’s when the gravity of carrying the message really hit me. How important it was to show up on snow days and holidays and to bring literature. I had my pick of probably 800 meetings a week; they had the one.

Becoming a sponsor? Also terrifying. Good thing I had a great one by my side to help me through it. What a gift it is when someone asks you to sponsor them. I get to go through the Big Book and steps over and over, which is exactly what I need. And I get to witness the miracle happening in someone else’s life.

Since then, I have baby-stepped my way into starting a meeting, becoming a treasurer, sponsoring institution commitments, and becoming a recording secretary for an intergroup committee. All by following in the footsteps of others and walking through fear of the unknown.

In May I attended the Area Assembly as a new GSR. While I don’t think my voice quavered into the microphone, I was still fear-filled. There is so much I don’t know. Fortunately, I have someone walking me through this new position as others have walked with me through every new position before that.

Since then, I have baby-stepped my way into starting a meeting, becoming a treasurer, sponsoring institution commitments, and becoming a recording secretary for an intergroup committee. All by following in the footsteps of others and walking through fear of the unknown.



# He learned that ‘Service is the Secret’ for reinvigorating spiritual health

Steve S-W., Chair, Area 29 Audio Committee

When I first became a GSR, Linda J., who was the Area 29 Delegate at the time, passed out pins that read “Service is the Secret” that she had made as swag to give away at the General Service Conference. Little did I know at the time how true that is. Today I fully understand how important service has been to my sobriety.

For most of my adult life I was involved in some kind of service, be it helping to raise funds for my kids’ daycare center or coaching little league baseball. However, as drinking became a more central part of my life, the service became less central. I can’t say whether I was drinking because I wasn’t involved in service or wasn’t involved in service because I was drinking, but either way, the result was the same.

That all changed when I found A.A. My first service positions with my home group involved cleaning up after the meeting and eventually becoming a meeting secretary. Those responsibilities helped me get to know the members of my home group better but also ensured that I would need to show up for meetings and not let my fellow home group members down.

I also found it very rewarding to give other alcoholics rides to meetings and engage in one-on-one discussions with other members about their sobriety and issues they were dealing with in working the Steps. Eventually I had the privilege of sponsoring others in the program, sometimes successfully and sometimes not. But in any case, working with others was helping to keep me sober.

I knew little or nothing about the service structure of A.A. until I was made the General Service Representative for my home group. Despite a brief orientation session for new GSRs, I still knew hardly anything about the service structure of A.A. (although I pretended to understand the part about the upside-down triangle). At one of my first Area 29 Assemblies, the aforementioned Linda J. gave her report back from the General Service Conference with such enthusiasm and emotion that it confirmed for me that I was totally clueless.

As my GSR service continued, I eventually learned more about my responsibility to report back to my home group about what was going on in the District, the Area, and in New York and to try my best to represent the conscience of my home group in matters being considered at the Area 29 Assemblies.



...Having learned early in sobriety that if you’re asked to perform service and are able to do it you should say yes, I agreed and was back in Area service and back on the road to spiritual fitness.

Once again, the sense of duty to my home group and to the still-suffering alcoholic was helping to keep me from taking that first drink.

I next became the District Committee Member for District 19, so in addition to attending Area Assemblies and Committee meetings, I also worked with the GSRs from the District to plan workshops, picnics and the District’s yearly New Year’s Eve Alcathon. The job also involved reaching out to home groups

in the District who did not have GSRs to encourage them to get involved. Being a DCM involved a lot of responsibility but also a lot of reward.

During the pandemic, I no longer had a service position at the District or Area level, and while it was great that Zoom meetings were available, it wasn’t the same. I was beginning to feel detached from A.A. as many meetings began to return in-person, which I wasn’t quite ready to do. While I wasn’t drinking, I wasn’t feeling spiritually fit either.

Then, out of the blue, Don B. called and asked if I could help him with the Area 29 Audio Committee, which provides the microphones and speakers for the Area 29 meetings. I explained to Don that I knew virtually nothing about audio equipment, except that I could operate my CD player and radio.

See **Audio** on page 15

# She stays in “the middle of the pack” – and stays busy with service

**Nancy B.**, Area 29 Panel 60 Past Delegate

I currently serve as Co-Chair of the Hagerstown Intergroup Outreach Committee and Alt. GSR for my home group. During the 30-plus years of my sobriety, I have availed myself of many service positions. From greeter at my home group, down the triangle to DCM of the district, Area Delegate, and locally at Intergroup; service keeps me in the middle of the pack so I don't get picked off by my alcoholism and think it's ok to drink again.

When I came into A.A. I often heard “the same person will drink again.” That scared me, so I knew I needed to change, and service was the key for me. It changed me from a self-absorbed, self-serving person to someone with the ability to listen, care, and volunteer. So far, I have not had a desire to pick up a drink in all those years. I haven't had time.

Sponsoring women in recovery has kept my head in the Steps and Traditions, allowing me to continue working the program through reading the literature and sharing with others. Sponsoring women and men in service helps me to study and employ the Traditions in my life.

Service allows a fellowship to grow up around me. That was a promise. Being accountable to the many friends I have met at all levels of service around the district, area, and region helps keep me sober.



Service keeps me busy... from greeting newcomers and volunteering at my home group, to serving at other levels down the triangle, there's always something to do, so no opportunity to get bored.

Service offers me many opportunities for spiritual growth. I get to practice patience, tolerance, empathy, resilience, restraint, resourcefulness, and understanding, to name only a few.

When I was younger in A.A., I didn't want to miss anything.

Although there are just as many opportunities, it is a bit more difficult to attend as many these days. But there are many events and things to do. From the International Convention of A.A. to Founders Day in Akron, conventions and workshops all around the state and country; I try to take advantage of as many as I can. Today there are even opportunities to attend many events virtually.

I have always had a need-to-know things in A.A. By doing service at all levels, I acquire much of the information I seek. More importantly, I now understand that the more I learn, the less I know. That's humbling.

I stay in service to A.A., not because I want to be in charge, but because I love having the opportunity to pass on the experience that was so freely given to me. I love it when someone asks questions or wants to sit with me to talk about the service triangle. I love it even more when I don't know the answers because my experiences have also taught me where to find them.

Most importantly, I stay in service because I love it, and it keeps me too busy to think about a drink today.

**Audio** continued from page 13

Don seemed unconcerned and, having learned early in sobriety that, if you're asked to perform service and are able to do it you should say yes, I agreed, and was back in Area service and back on the road to spiritual fitness.

Around the same time, I became the Baltimore Area Intergroup representative for my home group. Most of what I knew about Intergroup was that they published the meeting directories, and the Intergroup website allowed me to connect to Zoom meetings. But I soon learned about the many services that Intergroup provides to home groups to help them in their primary mission to help the still-suffering alcoholic.

Towards the end of my term as Intergroup representative, still having the Area 29 service position, I had no intention of continuing with Intergroup service. But my higher power had

other ideas and I was nominated for a service position within Intergroup. Today I continue to have service positions in both Area 29 and Intergroup.

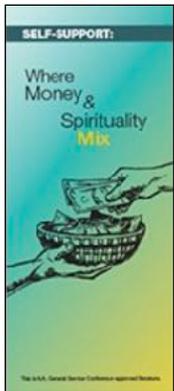
I don't know whether I'm sober today because of attending meetings, working the 12 Steps, or being engaged in service, but I'm not willing to find out what happens if any of them are not part of my recovery. As Dr. Bob so eloquently stated, I engage in A.A. service for four reasons:

1. Sense of duty.
2. It is a pleasure.
- 3 Because in doing so I am paying my debt to the man who took the time to pass it on to me.
4. Because every time I do it I take out a little more insurance for myself against a possible slip.

# Treasurer finds out first-hand that money and spirituality really do mix

Brigitte F., Area 29 Treasurer

Are you thinking about serving as your group or district Treasurer? Or standing for Area Treasurer at our upcoming October elections? A recent virtual workshop touched on the roles and responsibilities of serving as a treasurer within the A.A. service structure, or for your local Intergroup. Area Treasurers both past and present were online with presentations and available to answer questions from attendees.



As the current serving treasurer for Area 29-Panel 74, I provided an overview of the spiritual principles related to

serving as Treasurer. It's a topic I shared about last year during an Area Committee meeting and one that continues to come to mind, because the spiritual gifts of this service position were totally unexpected and quite fulfilling.

For me, spiritual gifts have presented themselves through the principles of self-support, the 7<sup>th</sup> tradition basket, and corporate poverty in A.A.

When I was drinking, my finances were in disarray. I was constantly opening new charge accounts to cover my wants, not my needs. In sobriety, I've slowly learned how to be more fiscally responsible, developing and using a budget. That's a critical way that Tradition 7 has impacted my own recovery journey. And it's essential for how A.A. addresses its financial issues.

The A.A. Treasurer has the responsibility of acting as a good steward of group contributions, helping ensure the monies are used to best serve alcoholics in need. At the Area, the Treasurer works closely with the Finance Committee; some districts have a Finance Committee, most groups don't; but the responsibilities are much the same regardless.

At the Area level, every envelope sent to our local post office box contains a check (or money order) representing a group's

contribution to the work done in Area 29 to help alcoholics ... it represents their faith in our decision making. No matter the denomination, every dollar counts! It is our responsibility to use these monies wisely.

In A.A., self-support, as defined by Tradition Seven, means that A.A. groups rely solely on the financial contributions of their members to cover expenses and support their activities. This principle ensures that A.A. remains free from outside influences and maintains its autonomy. It fosters a sense of collective responsibility and unity among members, who contribute what they can afford to support their local group and the wider AA community.



The 7<sup>th</sup> Tradition basket offers us an invaluable opportunity to change our own attitudes toward money, supporting our personal spiritual growth while we focus on using the monies to provide needed services for alcoholics.

Member contributions are made in the 7<sup>th</sup> Tradition Basket that is passed around during meetings ... the basket where "money and spirituality mix." Contributions pay the rent to keep the doors open and the lights on, and coffee brewing in the coffee pot. Groups also may use their basket money to purchase A.A. literature ... Big Books, Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions, etc. – to use in their meetings and have available for newcomers.

Whatever is left over after meeting group expenses can be sent to other service entities along the A.A. conference triangle, as well as the local intergroup. There are many other ways a group's basket money can be used to support alcoholics in recovery. For example, many groups have added Zoom costs to their monthly expenses, so that those unable to attend in person can attend virtually.

How a group decides to use and distribute its monies is determined within its informed group conscience. **Informed** is a key word because it implies discussion, questions and answers, and engagement by all members attending the group conscience or business meeting, to arrive at a decision shared by the majority after thoughtful consideration.

The 7<sup>th</sup> Tradition basket offers us an invaluable opportunity to change our own attitudes toward money, supporting our personal spiritual growth while we focus on using the monies to provide needed services for alcoholics.

See **Treasurer** on page 16

# What's happening next in Area 29?

● **Sept. 13:** Area Assembly: Held Virtually if there is urgent Area business.

● **Oct. 11:** Area 29 Corrections Day of Sharing. Severna Park United Methodist Church, 731 Benfield Road, Severna Park, Md.

● **Oct. 18:** Area Assembly: **Area Elections.** Host District 6. Severna Park United Methodist Church, 731 Benfield Road, Severna Park, Md.

● **Nov. 15:** Area Committee. Host District 28. Location TBD.

● **Dec. 13:** Area Assembly. Host District 7. Severna Park United Methodist Church, Severna Park, Md.

All Committee and Assembly meetings will continue to be offered via Hybrid format through 2025.



[Area 29 Events](#)

**Treasurer** continued from page 146

Finally, the principle of corporate poverty ensures that A.A. groups, districts, Areas, etc. avoid building up excess reserves of money. This principle was born from the recognition among our founders of “the temptation of a fat treasury.” (See the discussion in Tradition Seven of our 12 Steps and 12 Traditions.) Our fiduciary responsibility in A.A. is to cover our operating expenses, while maintaining an ample prudent reserve to cover expenses in the event of an emergency. Each group, district, and Area decides for itself how much money should be included in its prudent reserve.

By the very nature of the job, the A.A. Treasurer maintains oversight of its group’s finances and ensures that the prudent reserve is maintained at the agreed-upon level, while basic operating expenses are also being covered. It’s a balancing act that can be challenged by expenses sharply rising or the coffers bulging with money. When action is needed, our financial spiritual principles in A.A. are here to guide us on how best to proceed.