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OUR COMMON WELFARE

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

“This is where God shows up...”

Kristin B., Chair, Area 29 Newsletter Committee

A.A.’s unique Third Legacy voting procedure was on full display Oct. 18 when the Area 29 Assembly elected a new panel of officers to serve the Fellowship for the next two years.

After four close rounds of voting for Alternate Delegate, neither of the two candidates had received the required 2/3 majority, or 66 percent.

In the fourth ballot, Brigitte F., Panel 74 Treasurer, received 47 votes, or 60 percent.

Joe R., Panel 74 Secretary, received 31 votes, or 40 percent.

After a mandatory motion for a fifth round of voting failed, the Assembly “went to the hat” to draw the prevailing ballot. The A.A. Service Manual describes the Third Legacy Procedure:

“It is considered to be unique

to A.A., and at first glance, appears to introduce a strong element of chance into a matter that should depend solely on the judgment of the majority. In practice, however, it has proved highly successful in eliminating the factions or parties that seem to thrive on most political scenes” (p. 114).



For more election coverage and to meet your Panel 76 Officers, see pages 8-9.

Panel 72 Past Delegate Kurt W. took the hat off his own head to do the honors, placing inside two ballots – one marked Brigitte F., one marked Joe R. Panel 46 Past Delegate Arnold R. shook the hat before drawing one of the names.

“This is where God shows up,” said Panel 66 Past Delegate Linda J., who gave a brief presentation on the Third Legacy procedure before the elections began. “This is not a popularity contest today. This is a spiritual process.”

See **Election** on page 9

// If after the fifth ballot no election occurs, the chairperson announces that the choice will be made by lot (from the hat). At this point the top two candidates remain...Lots are then drawn by the teller, and the first one “out of the hat” is the (officer).”

—A.A. Service Manual, p. 114



Reflections on service

Terry P., Panel 74 Delegate

As I near the end of my current service position, I look back on these years of service and all that I've learned. I realize that I've probably gained even more from this experience than I've given. As I've grown in recovery and service, I've learned that my role—in all areas of life—is to be of service. As Bill wrote in the Big Book, “Our real purpose is fit ourselves to be of maximum service to God and the people about us.” That truth has been shown to me through the members of Alcoholics Anonymous and the trusted servants who came before us.

When I have an attitude of service, I think more about you and less about me. Do I do this perfectly? Of course not. But when I fall short, it quickly becomes clear to me—often through the loving feedback of the fellowship that surrounds me.

The fellowship I've experienced through these years of service has been remarkable. I've met people from all walks of life in church basements and meeting places across the U.S. and Canada. What a blessing it is to share this journey with others who are devoted to A.A. and our primary purpose. I love seeing that spark in someone's eyes when they discover how they can help others, or when someone passionately shares their opinion at the microphone—whether I agree or not. That's the beauty of this work. But the greatest joy has come from the loving friendships I've made in and around service. We don't just share our passion for A.A.; we share our lives.

I think back to the election in October 2023 and remember calling my first sponsor—the one who taught me to get a home group and take a job in it—to tell him I'd been elected as Area Delegate. It was a special moment for both of us. I recall the guidance passed down by previous delegates and how much I learned from my fellow officers, GSRs, DCMs, and committee chairs. Area 29 is truly blessed with devoted trusted servants, and you've all been with me every step of the way these past two years.

When I arrived at the General Service Conference and sat in the Literature Committee meeting to discuss our agenda items, I felt right at home—just like at one of our Conference Agenda Review Committee meetings. I could almost feel you all beside me as I shared input and voted on matters vital to Alcoholics Anonymous. I never felt out of place, because this work is what we do—it's who we are. I intuitively knew how to serve because I've walked this path with the members of our Area Assembly.

I'll close with this: I am deeply grateful to have served Area 29 as your Delegate. I look forward to continuing in service to our Assembly and our Area. If you are a member of our Assembly—whether newly elected as a GSR, Alternate GSR, DCM, or committee member—you have immense value to share with our fellowship. You've tapped into one of the best parts of the A.A. program: **service is the secret**. Let's continue to trudge the road of happy destiny together.

I love seeing that spark in someone's eyes when they discover how they can help others, or when someone passionately shares their opinion at the microphone—whether I agree or not. That's the beauty of this work.

Trudging the road



Anna M., GSR, Seeking Serenity Group, District 38

I didn't get sober quickly or easily, but here I am sober. I love the phrase "trudge the road of happy destiny." Trudge means to walk with purpose. We are told in the Preamble that our purpose is to stay sober and help another alcoholic achieve sobriety. It's so interesting to think about what that looks like in my life today.

I live in a small town on the Eastern Shore of Maryland. We don't have that many meetings in my town, so at the beginning, I drove (not that far) to other small towns to get the message I needed. I thought that there could be more meetings in my town. But as I have gotten more sober and life has opened up, I am starting to realize that meetings are not the only place where we have the opportunity to help another alcoholic. I run into people in Walmart and the grocery store, and that makes me feel like I'm truly a part of a community. I also have the opportunity to speak at two different treatment centers on a regular basis. I can give rides to people and provide information at my home group on events that are coming up.

I recently started saying yes when someone asks me to sponsor them. There are not a lot of women in the rooms around where I live and we don't all go to all the meetings. Has it worked in terms of all of them wanting to work through the Steps or even call or text me on a regular basis? No. But, they know where to find A.A. if and when they do.

A little less than a year ago, I was the Website Committee Chair for our local Intergroup and was feeling a bit overwhelmed. We have been able to reach a lot of people through the website and the meeting guide app. However, with me being still pretty early in my sobriety, I didn't understand that I needed to ask other people for help. I got overwhelmed and ended up passing the chair position to someone that was more excited about it than me. I still am on the website committee and am available to help when needed.

I then felt a little lost, as I had been spending a lot of time doing website work and responding to emails. I realized my home group is fairly stable and found someone to replace me as our Intergroup representative (as I had been wearing two hats). I called a group conscious and nominated myself to be our group's General Service Representative (GSR), as we did not have one. I had tried being GSR in a previous stint of sobriety, so I kind of knew what to expect. I love coming to Area Assemblies and just soaking it all in and seeing how A.A. works at the Area level. I am my group's link to Area Service. I go to the assemblies in person as much as possible and bring the information back to my group.

My trudging the road to happy destiny has had a lot involved. I finally had a true moment of surrender, worked the Steps with a sponsor and am passing it on when the opportunity presents itself in working with others. Do I love it every time my phone rings or pings? Not necessarily, but I have a purpose today and that is to say yes to A.A. when asked and I am available. I have jumped into service and although not everyone is as excited as me about things going on at Intergroup or Area, I am, and I am staying sober!

It took me over eight years to get three years of continuous sobriety. I still can't believe my life is my life today. I was honored when asked to write something for *Our Common Welfare*. I see this as an opportunity to carry the message in a different way that I never expected. I look forward to seeing what my Higher Power has in store for me as I continue to trudge the road of happy destiny!

Do I love it every time my phone rings or pings? Not necessarily, but I have a purpose today and that is to say yes to A.A. when asked and I am available.

LIVING THE SOLUTION: A Day of Recovery, Unity, and Hope

Mykhal K., Firing Line Group, District 19

“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.

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

On Saturday, July 12th, the Firing Line, in collaboration with District 19, hosted “The Summer Solution” workshop at the Cathedral of the Incarnation in Baltimore. The all-day event, held from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., welcomed over 125

attendees and featured four powerful speakers from across the country. Their message was simple but profound: the spiritual solution to alcoholism is found in the 12 Steps of Alcoholics Anonymous.

The day began in warm fellowship with fresh pastries, fruit, and coffee setting the tone and an opening welcome from Firing Line member Cleo



D. From there, the morning session kicked off with Will H. from New Orleans, La., who offered a moving message centered on Steps 1 through 3.

His experience spoke to the power of surrender, honesty, and sponsorship. He was followed by Adriane K. from Wilmington, Del., whose insight into Steps 4 through 6 encouraged deep self-reflection, the courage to face our past, and the willingness to grow spiritually.

After the first half of the program, participants broke for lunch. While the food—pizza accompanied by home-cooked smoked meats, hearty sides, and a buffet of desserts prepared by Firing Line members—was memorable, it was the spirit of the fellowship that stood out most. Conversations were filled with laughter, vulnerability, and the kind of connection only those walking a similar path can understand. It was a reminder that recovery is not meant to be done alone.

Before the afternoon session began, Anna S, the DCM-District Committee Member for District 19, delivered a heartfelt and inspiring message about the vital role General Service plays in sustaining and expanding the reach of A.A. She spoke with conviction about how service work at the District and Area levels not only supports the still-suffering alcoholic but also deepens personal recovery and connection to the fellowship.

With spirits uplifted and purpose renewed, the event transitioned seamlessly into the next speaker, Sarah I. from Philadelphia, Pa., who brought her unique perspective to Steps 7 through 9, emphasizing humility, amends, and healing relationships. Finally, the day was beautifully concluded by Jack D., a founding member of the Firing Line Group, who shared on Steps 10 through 12. Jack’s message was a powerful testament to daily spiritual practice, continued growth, and the responsibility we have to carry this message to others.

Throughout the day, the energy in the room was undeniable. Whether during the talks or in the moments between sessions, a deep sense of unity and purpose filled the space. To all who spoke, attended, served, and supported: thank you. The Firing Line is deeply grateful for your presence and participation.

125
attendees

OLDEST PAMPHLET CONTEST: Winner was published in 1952

Jean B., Chair, Area 29 Literature Committee

When attending meetings I noticed a lot of outdated pamphlets in pamphlet racks. So the Literature Committee discussed different ways to bring awareness of new items and updated literature. During our

brainstorming we came up with several ideas, including turning in old pamphlets and offering an incentive to buy new ones at a reduced price. We also tossed around ideas for what to do with all of your old pamphlets. Maybe the best one? Create Origami.



At the end of this very fun exchange we decided that an ‘Oldest Pamphlet Contest’ was the most feasible. Unfortunately, we received very few entries. I did, however, learn a little bit more about our literature.

I did a few google searches and found one pamphlet called, *The First A.A. Pamphlet as Derived from the Series of Articles from the Houston Press, by Larry J. (April 1940)*. I’m not clear as to who published it. Bill W. helped write a pamphlet for the New Jersey Intergroup named *Facts about Intergroup* in the late 1940’s. The earliest published pamphlet I could find by Works Publishing, Inc. (now known as AAWS) is named *44 Questions*. This pamphlet is still published by AAWS but was renamed in 2009 to *Frequently Asked Questions about A.A.* (P-2).



This was the winning entry. It was submitted by Debbie A. The pamphlet was published in 1952. Congratulations Debbie! I hope you and your group enjoy the new literature.

Being literature chair has been an important part of my growth over the past several months both educationally and spiritually. I hope the next Chair enjoys the same benefits.



BEFORE

Pamphlet rack with older A.A. brochures



AFTER

Pamphlet rack with recently published A.A. brochures

Refresh your home group’s literature rack

Go to <https://onlineliterature.aa.org/> for 10 percent off a selection of new and revised Conference-approved literature.

The discount is good through January 2026.

Connecting Maryland professionals to A.A.

Committee's new email newsletter receiving positive response

Area 29 CPC/PI Committee

In Spring 2025, Area 29 CPC launched a brand-new email newsletter – a simple yet powerful tool to keep our network of professionals informed, engaged, and connected.

Why Now?

The idea came in response to a recurring challenge: how do we keep professionals across Maryland's regions, programs, and disciplines informed—without overwhelming them?

We realized email remains one of the most effective ways to reach busy professionals, especially those who may not have time to scroll internal platforms or attend every meeting. A monthly newsletter felt like the right balance—regular, digestible, and easy to manage.

Making It Happen

Creating the newsletter required coordination, but the process was straightforward. Over the past two years, the PI/CPC Committee attended around 20 exhibit tables, where we personally met professionals who signed up to receive updates.

We selected an email platform that allows us to manage our growing subscriber list, design polished messages, and track performance. We noticed this same platform in use by the University of Maryland and were impressed by its professionalism and ease of use.

What's Inside?

The first editions in April and May 2025 were sent via Gmail as a temporary solution, given the limitations of attachments and formatting. Each issue consistently includes:

- Quick links to resources like the A.A. Meeting Guide App and A.A. newsletters and pamphlets from AA.org
- Local links to MarylandAA.org
- Guides on how to access services such as:
 - All 11 Maryland Intergroups
 - A.A. Hispano of Maryland
 - Maryland Deaf Access and DeafAA.org

Once we migrated to a professional platform, our July edition highlighted the International Convention and the *Grapevine* ASL Playlist.

Growing and Evolving Content

As the newsletter has evolved, we've worked to stay brief—but there's so much to share! Here's a look at recent editions:



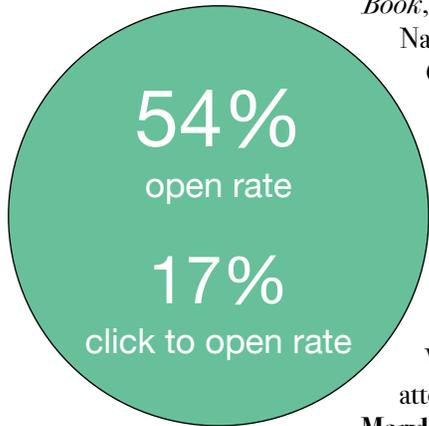
- **August:**
 - Featured A.A.'s LinkedIn presence and why professionals may want to follow AAWS
 - Introduced a short acronym guide for newcomers
 - Shared updates on new literature formats and outreach efforts
- **September:**
 - Focused on A.A.'s YouTube channel, which includes videos for Young People, Corrections, Military, ASL, and Spanish-speaking communities
 - Highlighted the *Deaf A.A. Special Forum*, a unique event by and for Deaf A.A. members, translated into ASL, Spanish, French, and English
- **October:**
 - Dedicated to Corrections Professionals
 - Included links to A.A. literature available on

Continued on next page

tablets, the *Plain Language Big Book*, and events like the National Corrections Conference and Area 29 Corrections Day of Sharing

- Emphasized accessibility within the corrections system

We also previewed our attendance at the **Maryland Nurses Convention** on Oct. 17, 2025.



Looking ahead, our **November edition** will feature the *2020 Cochrane Collaborative Study of Alcoholics Anonymous*—a significant study for the professional community.

Cooperation, Not Affiliation

As always, our efforts follow A.A.’s principle of cooperation without affiliation. We provide resources, not endorsements—serving professionals who want to understand or refer individuals to A.A.

Are Other Areas Doing This?

While some Areas use internal communication tools like Slack or Google Groups, we haven’t seen a cross-Area newsletter like this. It has sparked interest and discussions about whether other Areas might adopt a similar approach.

How’s It Going?

The response has been very encouraging:

- **54% open rate**
- **17% click-to-open rate**
- **Higher engagement on desktop than mobile**

We’ve received positive feedback for the clean design, brief content, and helpful links. Several recipients have even reached out to request presentations.

Analytics help us learn what works and refine our approach. We’re still discovering what content resonates most, but so far, the newsletter is fulfilling its mission: creating meaningful touch points within our CPC professional network.

Maryland is home to 11 Intergroups each with an AA Hotline. Intergrups sell AA literature, organize meetings in jails and institutions, and are often the first point of contact by someone calling AA. Call your Local Intergroup to order AA literature.



Maryland AA Intergrups



The Maryland Deaf Access Committee (MDAC) was created to organize the schedule and payments for in-person AA meetings interpreted in American Sign Language (ASL) in Area 29. Funding is made possible only by AA members.

AA has several resources for our Deaf AA members. Check out these links!

[Maryland Deaf Access Committee \(MDAC\)](#)

[Deaf AA website](#)

[Grapevine ASL Playlist](#)

[Special Forum for Deaf AA Members](#)

AA in Spanish Language

There are over 12 Hispanic AA Groups throughout Maryland with solid recovery and the willingness to help others. Contact them directly or reach out to us for a personal connection.



aahispanomaryland.org

AA Hispano Maryland

The Spirit of Rotation

As we look ahead, we hope the next CPC Chair will continue to grow this initiative. The monthly cost of the platform has increased from \$24 to \$58 as our subscriber list nears 500 (currently limited to professionals and Area 29 officers). If we exceed that threshold, we may move into the next pricing tier.

The subscription runs through **December 2025** and will be up to the incoming Chair to continue.

If you’d like something featured in the **November or December** editions, let us know!

Thank you for the opportunity to serve.

Box 459

General Service Office Newsletter

aa.org/box-459

Meeting Guide App



aa.org/meeting-guide-app

Our Primary Purpose



Group Network of the General Service Office
Alcoholics Anonymous

Panel 76 Officers

Maryland General Service

2026-2028

Before voting began in the Area 29 Elections on Saturday, Oct. 18, candidates for each office were allowed two minutes to speak.

Below are excerpts from the remarks of those elected to serve.

Delegate: Lori M.

“The delegate’s job is to be a servant of Alcoholics Anonymous as a whole, but also to be the voice of Area 29 in the General Service structure. To be an effective delegate you have to be able to truly listen and engage with A.A. members across Maryland, whether or not you personally agree with them. I’ve had years of personal experience in just that as Chair through the COVID years and through the CARC process as Alternate Delegate. I commit to you that I will be open-minded to your thoughts, your ideas, and your opinions.”

Alternate Delegate: Joe R.

“As your Area Secretary, I have been a reliable conduit for information down the service triangle. I think you now know me as someone who communicates effectively and with consistent good will. There’s unity in participation. As DCM I’ve learned to herd the cats and collaborate....I relish being able to funnel all the disparate points of light into a single beam of activity. I love bringing people together and seeing that action become manifest in their recovery...More importantly, I love the CARC process, and the Alternate Delegate manages the CARC process in Area 29.”

Chair: Kathleen W.

“At the first General Service Conference in 1951, Bill W. said that to serve A.A. is to live. I am grateful for the life that A.A. has given me, for my home group, service at the district and Area level. I try to do what’s right for Alcoholics Anonymous...Being of service has allowed me to grow as a person and to be a more informed member of Alcoholics Anonymous. I know that I don’t know everything. I have learned over the years that making myself available for service has allowed me to learn from those that came before me, those that I have served alongside of, and those that I’ve met along my service journey...I believe clear communication is imperative to a fully informed group conscience, and I want to help in that effort. I hope to continue to show my dedication and ability to serve on Panel 76.”

Election continued from Page 1

More than 60 A.A. members who are eligible to vote gathered at Severna Park Methodist Church on Saturday; another 18 or so voted online.

Any A.A. member may attend Area Assemblies, but only Area Officers (Delegate, Alternate Delegate, Chair, Secretary, and Treasurer), GSRs, DCMs, and Chairs of Area Committees may vote.

Although Area 29 has begun using electronic voting at recent Committee meetings and Assemblies, the Maryland General Service Board decided to conduct elections the old-fashioned way – using paper ballots and a chalk board to count votes one-by-one.

“We had many, many, many people come to us and say, ‘we don’t really want to do all this electronically,’” Linda J. said. “We really like the spiritual piece of watching the tally. So that’s why we’re doing the election this way today.”

More than half a dozen past delegates assisted with the election, including Kurt W. (Panel 72), Nancy B. (Panel 60), Linda J. (Panel 66), Don B. (Panel 68), Bob C. (Panel 62), Arnold R. (Panel 46), and Peggy R. (Panel 48).

“We are truly blessed in our Area,” Kurt W. said. “It’s not like some Areas in the U.S. and Canada. We have a lot of past delegates that stay involved, keep track of what’s happening, and are willing to help out...We’re able to draw on people with experience and wisdom.”

Panel 76 Officers begin their two-year rotation on Jan. 1.



Secretary: Marie B.

“I reviewed the duties and meet all the qualifications for secretary listed in the Service Manual. I’m organized, attentive to details, a great listener, and willing to learn new skills. Service has taught me how to listen to different perspectives with an open mind, something required in a secretary to objectively keep a factual record. I’ve worked independently keeping detailed records for the last two years as Area Registrar, and I love working with others as a team....Given the the opportunity, I would be honored to serve the Area on the next panel wherever my skills are needed the most.”

Treasurer: Linda J.

“I was just told by my service sponsor that this is the right thing to do. I’m organized, thorough, and passionate to a fault, and I’m committed. I didn’t come here today to stand. I knew it was a possibility because I haven’t served as Treasurer...usually when you’re a past delegate you don’t get called to serve back on a panel. But nature abhors a vacuum, and, you know, ‘Let it begin with me.’”

Sessions by the Sea draws more than 2,000 to Ocean City

Jeanine W., Chair, Area 29 Workshop Committee

More than 2,000 members and friends of Alcoholics Anonymous and Alanon Family Groups attended the 68th Annual Sessions-By-The-Sea held at the Roland E. Powell Convention Center in Ocean City on Sept. 2-7. This annual convention hosts an A.A. speaker every night at 8:30 p.m. (the “Big” Saturday night meeting begins at 8:00 p.m.). An Alanon speakers’ meeting is held at 10 on Friday and Saturday morning. The convention concludes with an A.A. speakers’ meeting at 10 a.m. on Sunday.

Not only are speakers’ meetings available to attend, but there is also a deep-sea fishing trip and an Annual Serenity Cup Golf Tournament on Friday. A.A. and Alanon literature is available for purchase at the literature booth in the registration room.

The “Big” Saturday night A.A. meeting includes a Sobriety Countdown in which the person with the longest amount of sobriety presents the person (or persons) with the shortest amount of sobriety a Big Book signed by them. The longest sobriety this year was 55 years and the shortest was 24 hours.

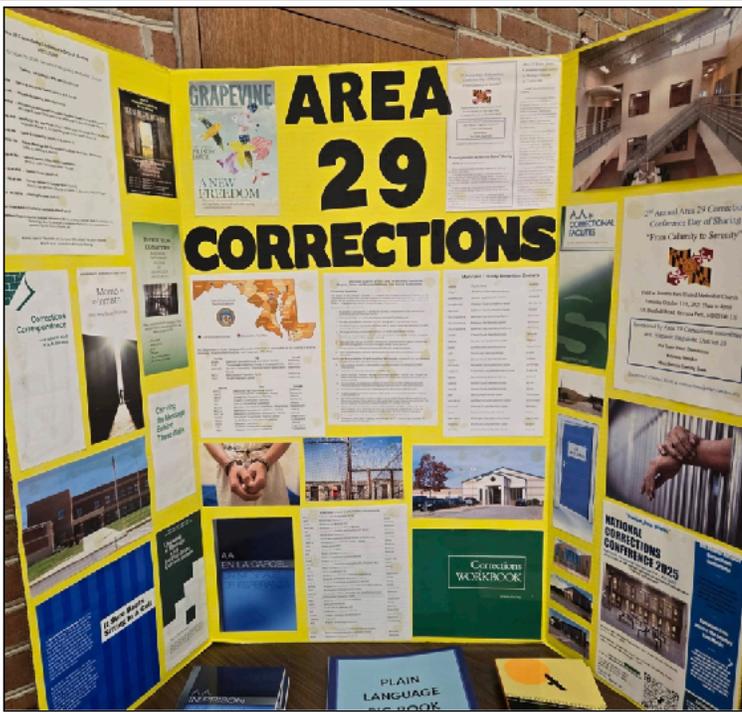
The Wednesday night speaker at this year’s convention was one of our very own – Nancy K., Panel 54, past Delegate, who now lives in North Myrtle, S.C. Other A.A. speakers were Eric D., Little River S.C.; Michael M., Greensboro, N.C.; Amanda B., Montgomery, Ala.; and Stan L., Philadelphia, Pa. The Alanon speakers were Robyn V., Winston-Salem, N.C. and Aaron J., Charlotte, N.C.

The Annual Sessions-By-The-Sea is organized by the Sessions Committee of the Denton Group, located in Denton, Md., about 55 miles from Ocean City. As membership of the Denton Group decreased and attendees increased, A.A. members from other home groups began to serve on the Sessions Committee.

There are no official archives for the history of the event, but some information was gathered by speaking with two Sessions Committees members – Dave T. and Anne M.

In 1957, members from the Denton Group decided to take a family vacation to Ocean City and wanted to hold A.A. meetings while vacationing. I received some conflicting information about where the A.A. meetings were initially held. One Committee member stated the back porch of the Plim Plaza Hotel located on the Boardwalk between First and

See **Sessions** on page 14



Corrections ‘Day of Sharing’

The Area 29 Corrections Committee hosted its second Day of Sharing on Oct. 11 with panels, presentations, and discussion.

Around 50 people attended throughout the day, with 30 signing in, according to Scott B., Chair. Corrections Committee member David B. introduced speakers and panels.



With the theme, “From Calamity to Serenity,” the event’s program included a Women in Corrections Panel, an Intergroup Panel, a Deaf in Corrections powerpoint presentation, and discussion of literature in Corrections, and DUI/Recovery Court.

Feedback from 10 attendees indicated that the event had met its objectives. Favorite parts of the program included the Professionals Panel and a discussion of the *Plain Language Big Book* and audio resources.

For the 2026 event, participants said they’d like to see more participation from formerly incarcerated people and discussions of sponsorship of people in custody and Corrections Correspondence.

Updates almost complete....

Maryland General Service handbook undergoing biennial edit

Tim H., Co-Chair, Policies and Procedures Committee

Does this look familiar to you?

It is the current edition of the Maryland General Service, Inc. Area 29 Assembly Handbook (the Handbook) and can be accessed on our Area 29 website - www.marylandaa.org.

Questions like: What is Area 29? Where is it located? Who does it serve? What is its organization structure? How often does it meet? are answered in the Handbook.

Some of the important information provided includes an introduction to A.A. Services and Structure; a detailed description of the Purpose, Duties and Responsibilities of Area 29 Officers and Committee Chairpersons; and a description of, and procedures for, conduct of Area Assembly and Area Committee meetings. In addition, there is a section on Matters of Finance and Appendices containing important A.A. information plus a copy of the most current Amended Bylaws of Maryland General Service, Inc.

Every two years the Policies & Procedures Committee undertakes an update of our Area 29 Assembly Handbook. It is a process that begins in the year prior to the printing of the update with a reminder to the Finance Committee that our budget for the following year (2026) will be quite high. This is because the actual cost of the updating requires very little money. Yet it does require a lot of effort. It is the following year when the fruit of our efforts results in the printing of the new edition and the cost of updating the Handbook is actually incurred.

So, this year (2025) is a year of updating the Assembly Handbook. It began with reminding members at Area

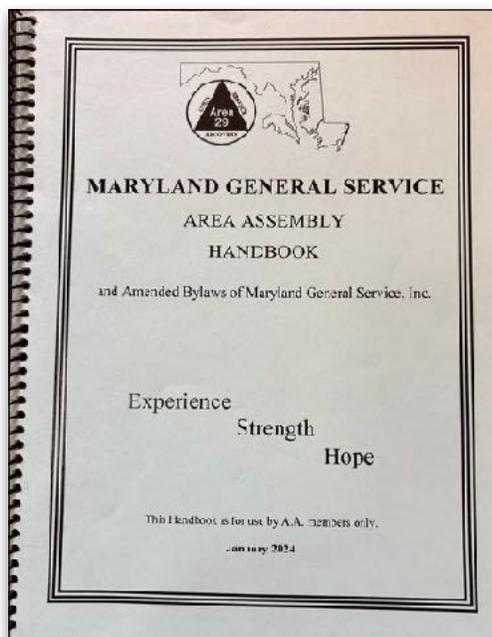
Committee and Assembly meetings during the first half of the year that updating is beginning and everyone's input is important. Then, in a much more formal approach, a specific request is sent out to our Delegate and Alternate Delegate, our Officers and the Chairpersons of each of our Service Committees to update portions of the Handbook that detail their service activity. In addition, we continue to solicit input from all of our members through reminders delivered at Area 29 Assemblies.

Simply stated, the Policies & Procedures Committee updates the Area 29 Assembly Handbook every two years and does so through working with the other trusted servants and members of Area 29.

This year we are expecting many changes. In addition to observations and suggestions that normally come with the rotation of leadership, the creation and recognition of District 29, our Linguistics District, will add changes not previously experienced. One example is that in addition to printing a version of the Handbook in English, we anticipate printing it in Spanish as well. Thank goodness for language conversation software that will allow us to create drafts in Spanish. The final Spanish version will be reviewed by members of District 29 before printing.

As of October, the January 2026 edition of the Area 29 Assembly Handbook is in its final draft, with the approval process to come. And, with the help of our Higher Power these deadlines will again be met.

The Policies & Procedures Committee is grateful for the opportunity to be of service to Area 29. It has certainly been a "spiritual awakening of the educational kind." We could not have done this alone without the help of all members of Area 29 who provided us with input and guidance.



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From paper ballots to QR code

Registrar introduces electronic voting to Area 29

Marie B., Area 29 Registrar

Our Area 29 Registrar Committee is responsible for maintaining lists of current groups and service positions, overseeing sign-in of Area Committee and Assembly meetings, and providing counts for attendance and voting majority. For years, Area 29 Registrars have used a paper process for signing in, and a (slightly interruptive) method of counting off voting members to determine the voting majority. This year, our Area implemented an electronic sign-in and voting process using QR codes. And they say alcoholics don't like change!

The process for creating paper sign in sheets for Area Assembly and Area Committee meetings has been a cumbersome one, prone to errors that always arise from maintaining multiple lists in different places, and of course requiring a ton of paper! For the first year of my term as Area 29 Registrar, I would spend hours each month updating sign in lists, printing them out, punching holes in them, and filing them into the correct binder or clipboard. After each Area meeting, I would come home with lists of errors that I needed to correct in the sign in lists. By the end of my first year as Registrar, I was regularly feeling humbled.

During the Area inventory in 2024, I heard feedback from members requesting information about trends in Area meeting attendance, attendance online versus in person, and information about individuals who showed up at one Area meeting and never came back. I could agree that all of this information would be useful to have, but would not be feasible to determine using the paper process we had at the time. So an electronic sign-in process, the same process whether attending in-person or online, seemed like a potential solution to the challenge of how to report this information. It also seemed to address the issues I had been experiencing of maintaining separate sign in lists and the costs of printing them out each month.

This is where the experience shared with me in Registrar workgroups, as well as my professional background in software engineering and database management, helped me to apply what I had heard of some other Areas implementing. Connecting with other Area Registrars at the NERAASA Registrar roundtables and the monthly Registrar working group. I have greatly benefited from the shared experience of Registrars that came before me. This was where I'd heard of other Areas using technology in innovative ways to meet the needs of their members.

Continued on next page

The concept of signing in to an Area meeting with a QR code sounded to me like a huge jump from the paper process our Area had been using for years. I had fears about change and about how a new process might be received, but at the start of 2025 our Area 29 Panel 74 Chair, Frank M., reached out about the Committee chairs creating Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-bound (SMART) goals for their Committees for the year. So I challenged myself to address the issues that came with the paper sign-in process by implementing an electronic sign-in process for Area 29 meetings in 2025.

Transitioning to a paperless sign-in process had its obvious advantages, and in implementing the process some hidden ones appeared as well. By sharing the sign in link via a link “tree,” I could also bring together several links and references from the Maryland General Service website, forms for registering new groups or service positions, and the documents outlining motions presented for voting to make that information more readily accessible to members at Area meetings. After creating the database in Airtable, which serves as the source of information for the sign-in link, it was very simple to create a series of voting links in the same database that could be used for voting on motions raised during Area meetings.

In January, I piloted this process for the Committee planning meeting, which allowed me to test the sign in link on a much smaller group of officers

and Committee chairs. The initial response in Area Committee and Area Assembly meetings was mixed: I received feedback from members who found the process simple to use, and I also received a ton of feedback about what I could do to improve the process. Some of the major lessons learned were to create a LOT of FAQ pages; at least one per table, and also asking for help from members who were more comfortable with the process to be available to assist others with signing in.

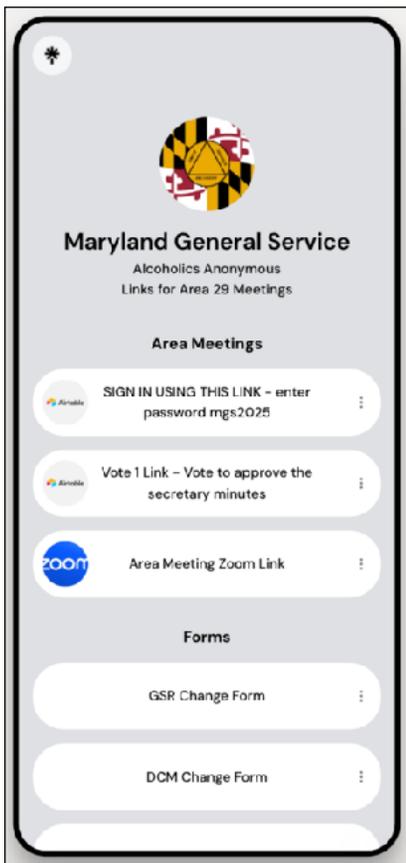
After a couple months of practice, a show of hands around the room of people who had been able to successfully sign in or cast their vote demonstrated to the room that anyone struggling with the process could turn to their neighbor for help. Members who did not have a device compatible with the process could ask a friend to sign them in on their smartphone or visit me at the Registrar table to sign in using my laptop. A.A. members who joined Area meetings online were able to sign in using the same link as the in-person crowd, which finally started giving us some reliable information about who was joining through Zoom. Our Alternate Registrar, Ashtin P, was extremely helpful each month by sending the link and assisting members who sent her messages for help.

A year later, we have come a long way! In addition to having a more streamlined process which requires less maintenance, we also have much more accurate records and the ability to instantly determine the number of voting members signed in and the number of votes for/against a motion.

Looking back over my time serving as the Panel 74 Registrar, I’m filled with so much gratitude at the connection with others and spiritual growth this position has offered me. When I was struggling, other Registrars were there to share their experience with me. When I felt like I had everything figured out, an Area Assembly would leave me feeling humbled and right-sized again. When the older processes seemed to come with more issues than benefits, keeping an open mind

about technology ended up transforming the process for signing in and voting in Area 29. Everywhere I look in A.A., there are always members who are more than happy to help, share their experience, and pass on what they were shown. So technology and spirituality definitely seem to mix! Somehow I am still surprised when God keeps showing me I’m exactly where I’m meant to be, and that’s why I continue to say “yes” to service.

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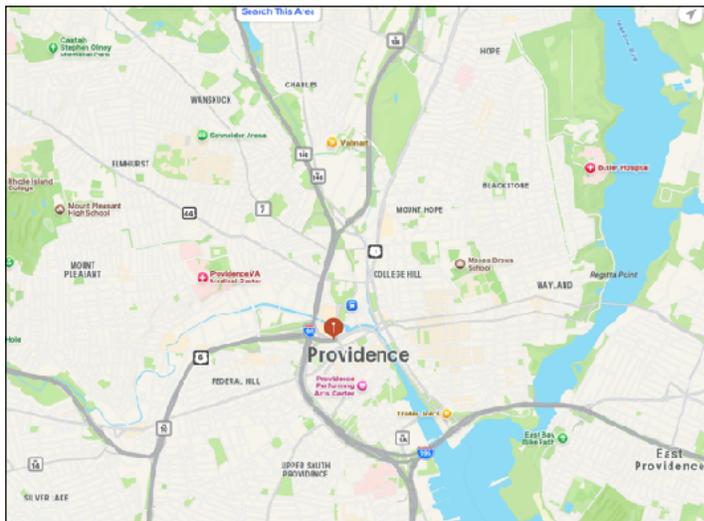


Northeast Regional Forum

Dec. 5-7, 2025

Omni Providence Hotel, Providence, R.I.

- Open to all A.A. members
- Registration is free.
- Regional Forums are hosted by the General Service Board and are designed to enhance trust and communication between A.A. members, the General Service Board, Staff, and Directors from the General Service Office and A.A. Grapevine.
- Presentations, workshops, panels, and sharing sessions for comments and questions.



“Live audio only” option for those who can’t attend in person.

[Register here](#)

Sessions continued from page 10

Second Street; another stated the Ocean City Chamber of Commerce.

Over the years, the annual event grew from fewer than 20 participants to over 2,000. As more people began to come for this annual “family vacation,” the event moved to the Roland E. Powell Convention Center in 1979. Prior to the Saturday night meeting, a banquet of fried chicken catered by English’s would be served. The banquet was discontinued in 1989. The Friday fishing trip and the Serenity Golf tournament has been held since at least 1990. There has been Alanon participation since the event’s inception.

Sessions-By-The-Sea is a great destination for a family vacation where you can spend the day at the beach or boardwalk – then fellowship in the evening with at least 2,000 friends!

Note an important change in 2026: The 69th Annual Sessions-By-The-Sea will be held August 18-23, 2026. Registration will open on <https://www.sessionsbythesea.com/> on April 10.





Registration is open!

Area 28 invites you to Meet ME at the Holiday Inn by the Bay in Portland, ME for 35th NERAASA.

The Northeast Regional Alcoholics Anonymous Service Assembly (NERAASA) is for any/all members including GSRs, DCMs, 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 well as pertinent aspects of recovery, unity and service common to the Areas of the Northeast Region.

[Register here](#)

DEAFAA.ORG

A.A. meetings and resources for Deaf alcoholics.



SAVE THE DATE

JAN. 17, 2026

Special Forum for Deaf A.A. members

Hosted by General Service Office (GSO)
New York



DIGITAL FLYER
ASL, LSM, LSQ



Area 29 Maryland General Service

- 11** Intergroups
- 35** Districts
- 886** Active groups
- 19** Committees
- 4** Committee meetings /year
- 5** Assemblies /year

Members of A.A. and A.A. groups can send contributions to:

Maryland General Service
PO Box 1834
Frederick, MD 21702

Or online at:

www.marylandaa.org

Panel 74 Officers

Delegate – Terry P.,
delegate@marylandaa.org

Alt. Delegate – Lori M.,
altdelegate@marylandaa.org

Chair – Frank M., chair@marylandaa.org

Secretary – Joe R.,
secretary@marylandaa.org

Treasurer – Brigitte F.,
treasurer@marylandaa.org



What happened at the August Assembly?



Voted 50-1 that the Area endorse entering a bid proposal to host the 2027 National Corrections Conference with an additional cost not to exceed \$1,500 for bid-related expenses.



Voted 48-2 that the Area supplement the Corrections Committee budget by an additional \$1,000 to cover current unbudgeted activities and increased service costs.



Voted 56-9 to increase the Accessibilities Committee budget by \$1,800 to cover interpretation services for a possible three Area business meetings and the 2025 Corrections Day of Sharing.



Voted 27-20 on a motion that Area 29 set aside a minimum of \$1,000 per year beginning in January 2026 and ending in July 2030 for a total amount of at least \$5,000 to fund a Maryland Area 29 hospitality room at the 2030 International Convention in St. Louis. The motion failed for lack of substantial unanimity.

What's happening next in Area 29?

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](#)