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Our Common Welfare

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

CARRYING THE MESSAGE

From the Editor

Welcome to Fall! The leaves are turning. The days are shortening. The temperatures are falling. And if we listen, we can sense important reminders in all of it: that change is an important part of balance; that everything in the living world involves cycles; and most obviously that we are not in control.

This fall, Area 29 has a message worth carrying. It is the same message that was carried to each of us – in a hospital room, a living room, a treatment center, or a church basement where somebody said, "Keep coming back."

This issue of Our Common Welfare is about that message, and the people who carry it.

You'll walk back through Maryland's own A.A. history and the gratitude it asks of us (p. 5). You'll see Bridging the Gap at work inside treatment facilities (p. 14), hear what happened when our Corrections Committee gathered for its third annual Day of Sharing (p. 10), and learn how our Public Information Committee carries the message to the public (p. 13).

Then the message comes home. A DCM discovers that the Concepts can carry her through caring for her mother and her children at the same time (p. 3). A member remembers, one by one, the people who showed her how to live (p. 11). An old-timer reminds us that HALT is for all of us (p. 6). Two members take a second look at the triangle on our coins (pp. 7, 9) – Recovery, Unity, and Service – and another reflects on what the Fellowship teaches us about relationships (p. 12).

And if you've ever wondered what "the Area" actually is, you'll find a plain-language guide on p. 2.

This issue is about the hand that reached out to us, and the hand we reach out in return.

Welcome to Fall. We do it together.

Dani B., Co-Chair, Area 29 Newsletter Committee

Frank M., Chair, Area 29 Newsletter Committee

Layout and design by Eric V.

IN A NUTSHELL: AREA 29 EXPLAINED

Who Votes, and Why

By: Anonymous

You've heard people mention "the Area," the Delegate, and the Conference. But what does it all actually mean?

What is Area 29? Area 29 is all registered AA groups in Maryland with the exception of Prince George's and Montgomery Counties. There are 93 Areas in the US and Canada. Each one sends a Delegate to the annual conference to represent the groups in their Area.

What happens at the annual conference? At the conference the Delegates, along with trustees, directors and GSO and Grapevine staff, discuss and vote on agenda items submitted by Areas, Groups or individuals. The items are ideas to improve services and literature so we can continue to fulfill our primary purpose.

So the Delegate only goes to the conference? No! The Delegate works throughout the year going to regional and Area meetings as well as District meetings, CARCs, and the mini conference. They need to hear the group conscience for the area so they can represent us at the conference.

So besides the Delegate, who are the other officers? We also vote for the Alternate Delegate who will fill in for the Delegate if they can't attend the conference. In addition to helping out the Delegate they also coordinate the Conference Agenda Review Committees (CARCs) and mini conference. The Chairperson sets the calendar and agenda for the Area meetings, appoints committee chairs, signs contracts and facilitates the Area meetings. We also elect the Secretary who records the meeting minutes and sends out information so everyone stays informed and the Treasurer who takes care of recording contributions, paying expenses and taking care of tax filings.



Baltimore, MD. Photo: Germar Derron / Pexels

Who Can Vote?

GSRs, DCMs, Committee Chairs or their alternates, and Officers vote for a Delegate, Alternate Delegate, Chairperson, Treasurer and Secretary to serve a 2-year term.

What if my group isn't registered or doesn't have a GSR? Have a group conscience to determine what you want to do. To register your group, use the new Group Registration Form: marylandaa.org/new-group. If your group is registered and you'd like to register a new GSR or an address change, use the Group Change Form: marylandaa.org/group-change.

THE SANDWICH GENERATION

A Spiritual Toolkit for the Middle

By: Holly S., District 31 DCM

I'm firmly in the sandwich generation now. On one side are my children, still young enough to need me in a thousand ordinary ways. On the other is my mother, whose needs have changed so dramatically that I sometimes feel as though I have become the parent while desperately wanting to remain the daughter. Somewhere in the middle are family, doctors and nurses, medications and appointments, properties and problems, and responsibilities I never saw coming.

Some mornings I feel as though I have lived an entire day before the day has properly begun. "One day at a time" can occasionally feel ambitious. Sometimes it is one moment at a time.

I've been here before.

When I came into A.A. 23 years ago, I was a round-the-clock drinker. My world had become small. I wasn't imagining a future; I was thinking about the next drink. Even one day could feel enormous. A.A. taught me to stop trying to live the rest of my life and deal with what was immediately in front of me.

I understood very little about my impact on other people. During blackouts I sometimes ended up where I didn't belong, bewildering or frightening people enough that 911 or other services became involved.

Recently, my mother was put on medication that caused her to experience profound confusion. One day she left where she was supposed to be on her motorized scooter and ended up in rush-hour traffic. A stranger stopped to offer help, and emergency services were eventually called. People were baffled by her behavior.

I wasn't.

I recognized that terrible disconnect between the person experiencing an altered reality and everyone around them desperately trying to understand what they are doing. I had once been the person creating emergencies other people had to solve. Twenty-three years later, I'm often one of the people solving them.

Thank God for what A.A. gave me in between.

The Steps teach me to examine myself. The Traditions teach me how to live with other people. The Concepts teach me about responsibility, authority, participation, trust, and service. Those are remarkably useful tools in the messy middle of the sandwich generation.

Recently, my family entrusted me with handling a difficult situation involving one of my mother's properties. Another family member stepped into the situation without my knowledge. I was furious until I recognized Concept X: "Every service responsibility should be matched by an equal service authority." I had been given responsibility, but the corresponding authority had become muddled. The Concept helped me understand what was underneath my resentment.

Then, as spiritual principles irritatingly tend to do, Concept X turned around and looked at me.

I have sometimes felt crushing responsibility for my mother's medical care, safety, housing, transportation and choices. Yet she is an adult human being, and I do not—and should not—have authority over all of those things. So I began wondering about the other side of Concept X: if I have no authority over an outcome, have I assumed responsibility for something that was never entirely mine?

Love does not automatically make everything my responsibility.

Other Concepts help me navigate what remains. Concept III, the Right of Decision, reminds me that trusting someone with responsibility means allowing them reasonable freedom to carry it out—even when that someone isn't me. Concept IV, the Right of Participation, reminds me that everyone deserves a voice, but a voice is not a veto. Concept V, the Right of Appeal, reminds me that I can be the minority voice, speak my concern, be fully heard and still remain in unity when I don't get my way.

The Traditions become remarkably practical here too. Tradition Two reminds me that I can be a trusted servant in my mother's life without becoming her governor. I can advocate, arrange help, express concerns and establish boundaries, but I cannot become her Higher Power. Service is not control, and service is not servitude. Tradition Four helps me hold two truths at once: autonomy matters, and impact matters. My mother's choices belong to her, yet those choices sometimes ripple outward to everyone who loves and cares for her.

When everything seems equally urgent, Tradition Five gives me one of my most useful questions: What is my primary purpose right now? I cannot fulfill every role simultaneously. Sometimes I am my mother's advocate. Sometimes I am Mom. Sometimes I am a wife or sister. Sometimes I am DCM. Sometimes I am simply another alcoholic sitting in a meeting. I only have to determine what I am being asked to do at this moment.

And when all of those people and responsibilities become tangled together in my head, I return to the Steps. Recently I wrote an inventory involving several people I love. It didn't change any of them. It helped me sort the pile. What is resentment? What is fear? Where have I contributed? Where is there a legitimate boundary? What requires action? What requires acceptance? What belongs on my side of the street?

Maybe that's serenity for me right now—not everything becoming okay, but enough clarity to know what belongs to me next.

This is also why serving as DCM during one of the most overwhelming seasons of my life has become an unexpected source of strength. My plate has become overflowing, yet service has given me focus and perspective. For a little while, I'm not the daughter managing a crisis, the mother answering a school email or the sister navigating family conflict. I'm an alcoholic serving other alcoholics. My world becomes larger than my problems, and my problems become right-sized.

Perhaps that's part of what "carrying the message" means to me now. The message that was carried to me 23 years ago did more than help me stop drinking. People gave me Steps, Traditions and Concepts—principles for responsibility without control, participation without domination, autonomy with awareness of others, trusted service without governance, and principles before personalities. I carry these principles with me. Now they are carrying me through circumstances I could never have imagined when I first encountered them.



The drunk who came into A.A. 23 years ago couldn't see much farther than the next drink and understood very little about her impact on other people. I'm certainly not spiritually perfect today. I can still be frightened, impatient, abrasive and controlling. But I have 23 years of tools I didn't have then.

My mother is still here. My children still need me. There are people willing to help us. I have people I can serve. And generations of alcoholics wrestled with questions of responsibility, authority, unity, and service long before I arrived, never knowing how grateful I would someday be for what they left behind.

Maybe this isn't so different from the beginning after all. 23 years ago, A.A. didn't ask me to carry 23 years of sobriety. It asked me to deal with what was in front of me.

Today a whole day can still feel too large sometimes. So I carry this conversation, this decision, this boundary, this act of service, this moment. Then the next.

I don't have to carry everything simply because I love everyone. I only have to discern what is mine, do that as faithfully as I can, and trust that I was never meant to run the whole show.

Sometimes one day at a time still means one moment at a time.

And for that—and for everything A.A. has given me to carry into those moments—I'm profoundly grateful.

Holly S.

District 31 DCM

ROOTED IN OUR HISTORY

Carrying the Message in Maryland

By: Frank M., Newsletter Committee Chair

When I think about carrying the message in Maryland, I don't just think about my own service journey. I think about the people who came before us – the early Maryland A.A.s who built the foundation we stand on today. Their courage, their willingness, and their faith in our program shaped a service culture that continues to guide Area 29. Gratitude, for me, begins with them.

Maryland's A.A. story stretches back to the 1940s, when small groups in Baltimore and Hagerstown began meeting in living rooms and church basements. There were no committees, no service structure, no Concepts – just alcoholics trying to stay sober and help each other do the same. Those early members carried the message with nothing but the Twelve Steps and a fierce desire to share what had saved their lives. Their simplicity still speaks to me. It reminds me that carrying the message begins with one alcoholic talking to another.



As A.A. grew across Maryland, the Twelve Traditions became essential. Groups learned how to stay united despite differences in personality, background, and belief. They learned how to welcome newcomers without judgment, how to keep their doors open, and how to place principles before personalities. When I served as a GSR and later as a DCM, I saw those same Traditions alive in our groups – from Baltimore City to the Eastern Shore, from the suburbs of Montgomery County to the quiet towns of Western Maryland. The Traditions are the heartbeat of Maryland A.A., and they taught me that gratitude is expressed through unity and humility.

By the time Area 29 was formed, Maryland A.A. had matured into a vibrant, connected Fellowship. The Twelve Concepts gave us a way to organize our gratitude into action. They helped us build a service structure that could reach alcoholics in every corner of the state. When I served on committees and later as area chair, I saw the Concepts at work every day – in the careful attention paid to group conscience, in the cooperation between districts, in the dedication of trusted servants who gave their time so A.A. in Maryland could remain strong.

What struck me most was how deeply Maryland's service culture is rooted in gratitude. Our delegate's reports, our committee meetings, our assemblies – they all reflect a shared understanding that we are stewards of something precious. We inherited a legacy from those early Maryland A.A.s, and carrying the message is how we honor it.

My own service – GSR, DCM, committee chair, area chair – has never felt like a résumé. It has felt like a thank-you note. Every role has reminded me that sobriety is a gift I did not earn alone. It was handed to me by people who carried the message long before I arrived.

Today, when I sit in an area meeting or welcome a newcomer, I feel connected not just to the present but to the past – to the Maryland alcoholics who kept A.A. alive through faith, service, and love. Carrying the message is how we keep their spirit alive. It is gratitude made visible, one alcoholic helping another, one day at a time.

Frank M., newsletter@marylandaa.org

H.A.L.T.

For the Newcomers and the Old Timers

By: Bambi

I got sober in 1983 at 23 years old and did not know how to care for myself.

That was when I learned about HALT.

Don't get too:

H – Hungry

A – Angry

L – Lonely

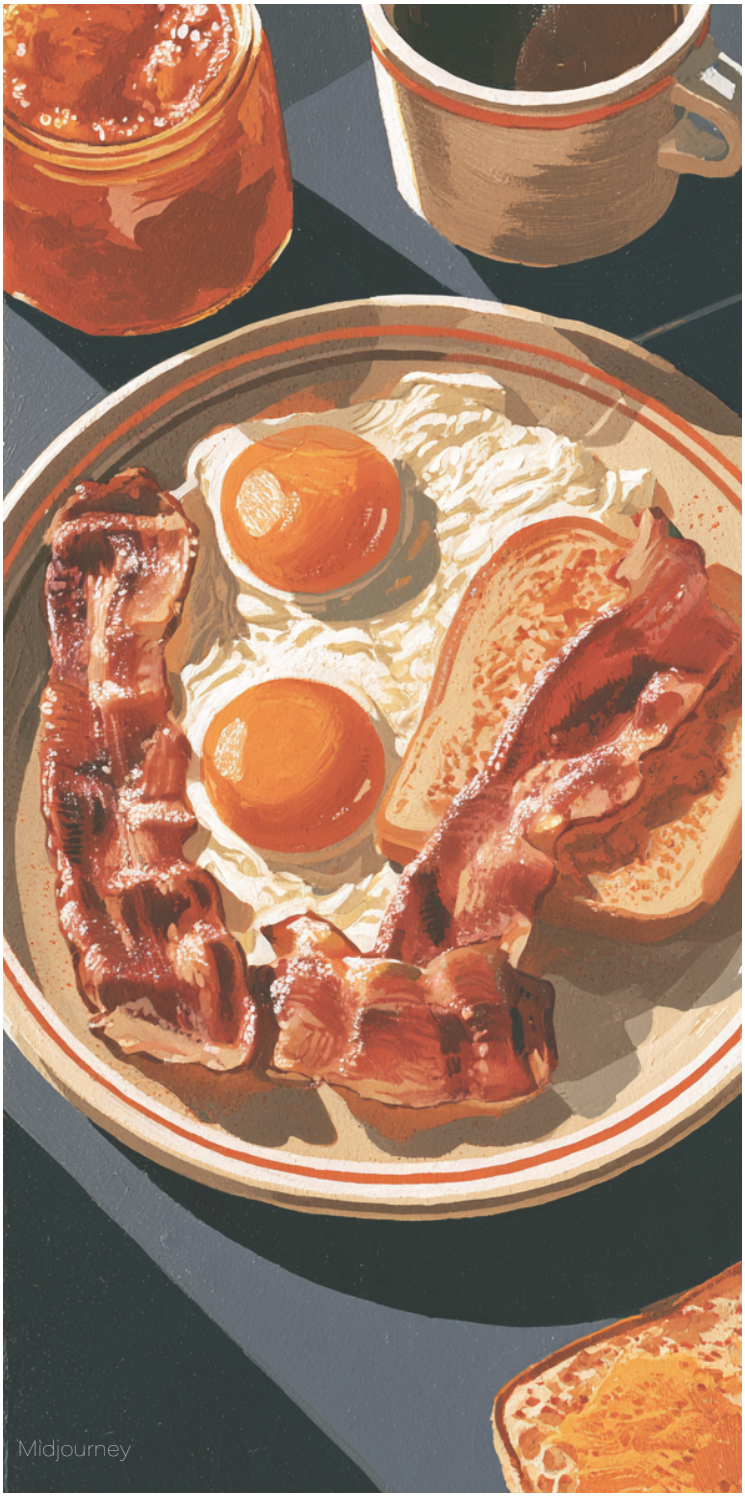
T – Tired.

My first sponsor and early sober A.A. community practiced the 12th Step by teaching me how to be responsible for my physical, mental, and emotional health. Had I eaten? How long had I slept? How was I feeling? These were daily questions my first sponsor and homegroup members asked me. They helped me learn how to live a sober healthy life.

Now at 66 years old, HALT has returned to teach me new lessons about self-care and about our 12th Step. Today I live with new health challenges, and I must check in with my sponsor and home group in the same ways I did in new sobriety. My sponsor says there is nothing new – our first solutions still work.

Just as we all check on newcomers to see how they're doing in their new sobriety, we check on old timers too. Look around you: do you notice someone in the meetings you attend who appears to not feel well or isn't their usual self? Ask them if they are in HALT, or some part of it. This is the spirit of service. Our 12th Step in action. We keep our eyes on the people in our home groups and the meetings we attend regularly.

Bambi



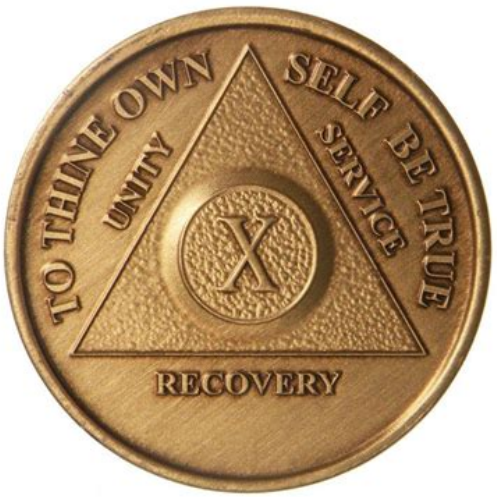
A.A.'S THREE LEGACIES

Our Powerful Solution

By: Jack C.

The Three Legacies of A.A. are Recovery, Unity, and Service. According to our co-founder Bill Wilson – the Three Legacies "represent impossibilities...that...became possible." That certainly has been true for this alcoholic.

The Three Legacies are also referred to as our "common solution." The idea of a common solution was lost on me when I first darkened A.A.'s doors. The Legacies at that time made absolutely no sense to me and sounded like archaic words from back in the 1930s. I doubted they had anything to do with helping me recover from my problems, starting with my inability to stop drinking on my own.



Over time, that strong doubt and skepticism have gradually been erased as I have seen how this common solution, made possible through working our Three Legacies, has changed my life.

Members of A.A. initially discover the Legacies on the back of our sober time coins, or chips, containing words lining each side of a triangle – Recovery – Unity – Service. These are also called A.A.'s Three Pillars. The triangle is encircled by the words, "To thine own self be true." While I marveled at the coins as they came, I spent little time thinking about their meaning. Those initial coins were received by shaky hands and a mind full of scattered, judgmental thoughts, certainly not focusing on those powerful words themselves.

My sober journey has given me time to consider the importance of the words and what they have come to mean to me. While each word has its own meaning, they are enmeshed and truly work together for me to maintain sobriety.

Initially, I rationalized the words "To thine own self be true," to mean doing my own thing. But over time, I recognized that doing my own thing as a self-absorbed alcoholic was what I had already been doing. In early sobriety I came to understand that being true to myself meant not lying to myself about my alcoholism. The idea of being true to oneself has grown into incorporating the 12 Steps into my life. This has made me more accountable for my actions. Listening to the group and my higher power have provided a framework for accountability. I can now actually be true to myself, in a healthy, spiritually grounded way.

Unity was one of the first words that made sense to me about A.A. In early sobriety, my sponsor asked me to pick up one of our aging home group members and bring him to meetings. While I begrudgingly took on this task, it made sense because I drove right by his house on the way to our home group. Every time he got in my car he said, "Jack, we do it together." Over time that simple line became ingrained in me. Importantly, I saw that he and other group members lived by those words and believed that those of us in the program, "do it together."

Through other A.A.s, I got messages important to my life and sobriety. Unity with program people provided me input on family

and work issues that could have been drink triggers. This input made these issues understandable and manageable.

Recovery seems an obvious part of getting sober. It refers specifically to the 12 Steps, which are the path to recovery. But just like a three-legged stool, recovery is most effective when combined with the other two ″pillars″ – participating in the Unity of our home groups, and doing Service within A.A., which can include sponsorship and service to A.A. beyond the home group. As Step 12 states, we will have a ″spiritual awakening as a result of these steps.″ Using the 12 Steps and maintaining that spiritual awakening has kept my one-day-at-a-time recovery going.

Service has been the glue that introduced me into the Unity of the A.A. program. Staying active within my home group has kept me around long enough so that I was willing to fully engage in the process of recovery. Helping another home group member get to our meetings was the first service work I performed, but that was soon followed by becoming the group′s coffee maker. Both service actions made it so I would interact with the group rather than avoid people. Service has been the action that makes it so that I can get out of myself and see my life more honestly. Before A.A. service interaction with the group, my problems were mine and they were more dramatic than yours. Service changed that.

Today I can live the words around the triangle and see how they work together to keep me sober. I do not need to bite the coin to see if it′s real. Unity, Service, and Recovery are things I can experience and feel daily.

Jack C.



THREE LEGACIES WORKSHOP

What This GSR Learned

By: Tim E. GSR, Avenue Group, District 19

"The 3 Legacies of AA Workshop" on September 12 in Carroll County, hosted by District 9, centered on the 12 Steps, 12 Traditions and 12 Concepts. I – despite being a General Service Representative for my home group for over a year – did not know much about the 12 Concepts, which was a sticking point for me to make it to this workshop. I've worked the 12 Steps and read through the Traditions at meetings for years, but hadn't gotten much exposure to the Concepts.

The speakers ran a format of going through Step One, Tradition One, and Concept One (and so on) as a unit. This was an interesting way to read through the three legacies, and not a link I would have intuitively made. Step One focuses on honesty and acceptance of our condition; Tradition One reflects on the singleness of purpose of the group at large; Concept One gives credence to the authority of the membership and AA as a whole Fellowship. The three legacies all begin with the core theme of what our purpose is – as a member, a home group, or an organization in totality – Recovery, Unity, and Service.

For members like myself, getting the opportunity to contextualize Alcoholics Anonymous is helpful in remaining steadfast in the three legacies that are at our core. To read the Big Book and go through the steps with our sponsors and explore meetings nationwide (worldwide if you're fortunate enough to get there) is a boon. But to get to dig deeper and see the reason that this organization has blossomed and grown to help so many is crucial. I need to remember why we do what we do. Getting to workshops that focus on the foundation of our cause is a great way to do this. It's also important to meet other members and get a chance to hear about experiences that differ from our own but tie us together in purpose.

This particular workshop was successful in several ways. There was lively discussion happening before, during, and after the material was delivered, tying people's individual experiences to the topics being taught. There were opportunities to discover links between the evolution of Alcoholics Anonymous over time between the Steps, Traditions, and Concepts. Learning the foundational tenets of the General Service Board helps empower us all as members and remind us of the importance of our involvement. Seeing the spiritual principles echoed between the three legacies highlighted the truth and importance of our values of Recovery, Unity, and Service. I would recommend to any member that is unfamiliar or curious with Alcoholics Anonymous at large to seek out these types of workshops and gain some perspective on the birds-eye view of the organization.

Tim E.



CORRECTIONS DAY OF SHARING

Area 29's Third Annual Gathering

By: Jerry C., Area 29 Corrections Chair

On October 10, 2026, the Corrections Committee of Area 29 held the third annual Corrections Day of Sharing. The day kicked off with fellowship and an enjoyable continental breakfast.

Jay K. was our keynote speaker. He effectively shared his experience, strength, and hope. Jay demonstrated the significance of overcoming the darkest trials and emerging into the light. His message was impactful; a testament to the power of the program, and to God's grace.

Roy, Max, and Jill C. led a panel discussion of the individual processes used by various intergroups, districts, and homegroups to assign groups and/or individuals to Correction facilities.

Tiana and Lee led a panel discussion regarding their personal experiences getting sober inside the walls and continuing their recovery outside.

Question and answer periods were held after each session. After a break, we held a sharing circle so that all attendees could share.

A corrections literature table was set up and was quite successful in providing needed information.

I will be attending the National Corrections Conference in Salt Lake City November 13th–15th. I look forward to gathering more information and broadening my knowledge.

We will have the fourth annual Corrections Day of Sharing in the fall of 2027.

Please contact me if:

1. You would like to join us on the Corrections Committee.

2. You have any questions or suggestions.

3. You would like me to speak at your homegroup or District meeting.

Jerry C., Area 29 Corrections Chair,
Corrections@marylandaa.org



WHO SHOWED ME HOW TO LIVE

Carrying the Message

By: Katie R., Registrar, Panel 76, Area 29 – Maryland General Service

When I came to A.A., I didn't know that I wanted a way up and a way out. I just didn't want to drink anymore, and most of all, I didn't want to feel the way I felt anymore. I was told that if I wanted what you had, I had to do what you did, and that I couldn't do it alone. These are some of the people who showed me how they not only stayed sober, but learned to live.

Rich B., who hated me in high school, but showed up two years later at the psych ward where I had landed and gave me his one copy of the Big Book. The woman who chaired that meeting in the basement of Sheppard Pratt where I was a patient. She talked about the hole in her soul, the feeling like everyone else got a rulebook for life that she didn't get, how she used to feel lonely in a crowd. Maybe I was an alcoholic too.

Gretchen B., who picked me up from Sheppard Pratt and took me to young-people's meetings. The person who invited me to IHOP after Sixth Day, when I knew no one. Nan, Judy, and Terri, who invited me to the Halloween dance with them. Maybe sobriety could be fun and maybe I could finally belong somewhere.

Stephanie D., my counselor at the 90-day rehab in York. She was tough and accepted no excuses. It didn't matter how I felt. It mattered what I did. The night-staff member who said that the odds of staying sober were exponentially higher for people who attended an A.A. meeting the day they were discharged.

Kathleen, my sponsor, who told me to suit up and show up. Dudley, who said that losers do what they want to do and winners do what they have to do. They taught me that A.A. was an action program, that my life depended on my willingness to follow directions.

Barbara, my sponsor when I was four years sober and hated everyone, directed me to do a fourth step as it's laid out in the book. During the fifth step, I learned that self-centered fear was the root of all my defects. Joselin, whose off-hand remark about having read pages 84–88 every morning when she was new completely changed my life.

I still can't do it alone. I still need to hear the message and for that reason, I still attend meetings and stick with the winners. And I continue to share what was shared with me. You never know when you will become a part of someone's story.

Katie R.

Registrar | Panel 76

Area 29 – Maryland General Service



Photo: Phát Võ Hồ Tấn / Pexels

SKILLBUILDING IN SOBRIETY

Navigating Relationships

By: Jordan K.

As most in the Fellowship know, relationships – both positive and negative – tend to exert some of the most powerful influences on our lives. ″People″ taking pride of place in the adage ″people, places, and things must change″ is no accident, and developing the skills needed to navigate relationships, both new and existing, is one of the more challenging tasks that faces those trying to get and stay sober. The ability, then, to lean on the program, its members, and its principles to develop the skills to maintain his or her sobriety remains a crucial task for anyone.

Christine B. discusses the particularly sharp impact that losing her sister to cancer during her third year of sobriety had on her program. Despite the length of time Christine had already built in the program, she was a self-professed ″terrible sponsee,″ and credits the patience of her sponsor in sticking with her as a key to her ongoing success. As the Big Book promises, the gifts of sobriety materialize ″sometimes quickly, sometimes slowly.″ For Christine, it took dealing with the grief of losing one of her closest confidants to ″really get it.″ Despite their geographical distance, Christine and her sister supported each other emotionally, and as Christine dealt with the turbulence of early sobriety, and her own internal resistance to surrendering to the program, her sister′s death forced her to a decision point – a moment of crisis: recommit herself to the program (including reconnecting with her sponsor) or return to old coping mechanisms. Christine chose to double down on her program and allowed the power of her connections and relationships within the Fellowship to guide her through her grief, and as a result recently celebrated 5 continuous years of sobriety.

“GIFTS OF THE PROGRAM” OFTEN REFERS LESS TO ANY MATERIAL BLESSING THAN IT DOES TO THE EMOTIONAL AND SPIRITUAL STRENGTH WE GAIN TO DEAL WITH THE CHALLENGES IN OUR LIVES.

Joe P. credits the program for his continuous sobriety as well, but also for helping him develop the emotional stability and maturity to handle the pressures of a serious romantic relationship. Despite a relapse, his partner remained with him – however, he learned through the experience the necessity of staying connected to the Fellowship, and of not relying on any one person alone. Joe recalls the challenge of moving out of a sober home and losing the accountability he had come to rely on for support. As he dealt with the challenges of understanding another person′s perspective, one night in 2023, a challenging conversation led to a case of ″forget this″ and he ended up in Baltimore looking for dry goods. He stayed out for several months before coming clean and eventually returning to a sober home. While he is thankful for the two years of sobriety he has built since then, he recognizes the broken trust that still exists between his partner and himself. While he mourns this wound in the relationship, he nonetheless remains thankful for its reminder to continue to take his sobriety one day at a time.

As so many of us in the Fellowship come to understand, ″gifts of the program″ often refers less to any material blessing than it does to the emotional and spiritual strength we gain to deal with the challenges in our lives; challenges that, prior, would have derailed us or sent us on a bender. Instead, we find ourselves surrounded by ″a host of friends″ and a growing fellowship that wants only the best for us, and as a result, the material gifts often follow.

Jordan K.

WHAT IS PUBLIC INFORMATION?

News from the Area 29 P.I. Committee

By: Tom R., Area 29 Public Information Committee Chair

The A.A. Guidelines on Public Information describe the purpose of Public Information: "Like all of A.A., the primary purpose of members involved with Public Information service is to carry the A.A. message to the alcoholic who still suffers. Working together, members of local Public Information committees convey A.A. information to the general public, including the media."

The Area 29 Public Information Committee makes itself available to attend public events, health fairs, workshops, recovery events, conventions, and conferences when invited. We hold monthly meetings online and invite P.I. representatives from Intergroups and Districts within Area 29 to attend, share information, and coordinate P.I. efforts. We offer our committee as a resource of experience and assistance.

We have reached out to all of the big TV stations in Area 29 (excluding Maryland Public Television, which does not air advertising or Public Service Announcements) to ask if they air P.S.A.s for Alcoholics Anonymous, and if they're interested in airing the P.S.A.s. We provided links to the latest audio and video P.S.A.s as provided by the General Service Office staff person serving on the Public Information desk.



We provided a Public Information display and manned a table at the Area 29 State Convention in June. We provided a Public Information display and manned a table at the Health Fair/ Community Day at Festival Park in Aberdeen from 11:00 am to 3:00 pm on Saturday, August 1, 2026. The event included tables representing local recovery centers, homeless alliances, pregnancy centers, ministries, and the local fire department. At least thirty people stopped by the table to chat or ask questions. Several people stopped by to tell me how long they have been sober. Some were just curious and said we (A.A.) did good work. Most of the questions were where meetings are. I handed out business cards with the www.aa.org website address for more information on A.A., and the www.marylandaa.org website address to find local meetings and events. I directed people to the page on the www.marylandaa.org website listing intergroups and referred them to the Northeast Maryland Intergroup website, which covers the Aberdeen/Harford County area. I gave out Big Books and 12 and 12s, and several pamphlets left the rack. Twelfth Step work was done.

We do this work while protecting our anonymity, not using our full names, or allowing our photos to be taken full-face at the public level. If this is the type of service work that interests you, please feel free to join our monthly meetings. Our committee meetings and times are posted on the Area 29 website calendar, with login info.

Yours in Service,

Tom R., Area 29 Public Information Committee Chair

BRIDGING THE GAP

From Treatment to the Rooms

By: Ralph O., Area Treatment Committee Chair

"Practical experience shows that nothing will so much insure immunity from drinking as intensive work with other alcoholics. It works when other activities fail." A valuable reference from Chapter 7 – Working With Others in the Big Book.

My passion to carry the message to the alcoholics who suffer blossomed ten years ago when I was asked to chair the area Treatment Committee. This position presented an opportunity to work with a dozen others on the collaborating committees of Treatment and Corrections in the area. Through research of all that was happening with Bridging the Gap across North America at that time, the task was to develop a self-sustaining BTG program that would work. Focus was on simplicity and the service structure. A three-step program was presented and agreed at the area level. The area supported the BTG program with printed literature and annual workshops to educate interested participants in A.A.

As DCM we were talking about the BTG program a great deal at district meetings. Many Home Group presentations were building a fantastic database of educated BTG Temporary Contacts. Once the database had enough volunteers to serve anyone reaching out for help, it was time to collaborate with the local intergroup office. This district was fortunate to have a local intergroup office with a Treatment Committee chair who was passionate about the role. Asking the intergroup Treatment chair for help in meeting and discussing BTG with Treatment facility administrators was a blessing. I think it best to let the collaborating Treatment Chair tell the story of their involvement with the BTG success.

While serving as the Treatment Committee chair, I visited as many home groups as possible to share about the need for more groups to commit to sharing at meetings inside Treatment facilities. I was able to increase the number of meetings from seven to 70 per month in a matter of months. So, when I heard about the BTG program being started at the district level I visited the district meeting to learn more. It was very exciting to work with the DCM and Area Treatment committee chair to establish relationships to carry the BTG message inside the facilities. We discussed several methods to be able to bring the message inside and the system we established has worked exceptionally well.

The first step was to contact the facility administrator and establish a meeting time. Most administrators were very interested and welcomed the plan to meet. In fact, they often asked who should attend the meeting. We were able to gather as many counselors and techs as could fit in the conference room. Often, we meet in conjunction with a facility staff meeting. During this meeting, we shared the brochure we would use to communicate how the BTG program works and explained how the registration process works. Most important was to assure the entire staff that we made no request for anyone at the facility to be part of registration or follow up beyond the release date. We would make a short presentation prior to scheduled A.A. meetings already coming into the facility. We would meet 15 minutes before the scheduled meeting because BTG messages can be shared inside of seven minutes and the forms can be completed in a couple of minutes. With a 28 or more-day program, we often suggested making this presentation two times each month. The first and third week or the second and fourth week of the month is what is usually done.

The area Treatment Chair and I managed these meetings with administration and staff as well as starting the presentations inside the facility. We then slowly trained other volunteers to be able to make a consistent presentation at the regularly scheduled meetings. It did not take long before we walked out of the meetings with three to seven requests for Temporary Contacts. The process used to make the match with Temporary Contact was simple. From the car in the facility parking lot, I could find a match from the database. First search for zip code matches then genre and then age. Texting the Temporary Contact to let them know that there is a new member reaching out for help and asking about availability to serve. While waiting for response I would process all the other local requests in the same way. Those

requests that would reside outside of the local area would simply be entered into the area request database. The Area Treatment Chair or BTG chair would make those placements. Once I got confirmation of the Temporary Contact's willingness to serve, I would just photograph the registration form and send it to the TC.

Training the new Treatment chair for the intergroup was rather easy. The best way is to just let them follow along at a few meetings, demonstrate the presentation and the process for making assignments to the volunteer Temporary Contact database. The process is a simple three step to success. And the literature to support it is very informative and explanatory. I can rely absolutely on every thing explained in the BTG program. "It works. It really does."

Based on the success and evidence developed in the home district, we were able to share the program steps and methods with others. Overall, when the database gets jump started, meaning, when people begin to volunteer, it's an indication that we have A.A. members willing to serve. It is imperative that the TC volunteers are ready and willing before we begin to carry the message inside to the future A.A. members. We are going to tell them that an A.A. Temporary Contact volunteer is going to call them on their release date. Then the things described in the brochure will happen in your local community. You'll be introduced to A.A. in your community and greeted with the love and help for which you reached out.

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Photo: Sümeyye Yazıcı / Pexels

Our Common Welfare



About Our Common Welfare

"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 newsletter@marylandaa.org.

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

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:

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