

# The Lifeline



September 2017

24-Hour Phone: 651-227-5502

Volume 53, Issue 9

## **Step Nine: Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.**

A few years back, a sponsee came rushing into my apartment for our weekly get-together all excited. He had just finished his first set of Ninth Step amends and wanted to share his experience with me. As we reviewed his good efforts, a question arose that really struck a chord with me. Lee asked me, "How do you know when you are forgiven?"

What a great question! Upon reflection, I chose to share with my friend the experience I had in making amends to my dog "Maddie." It was her rejection of me in the midst of my last debauch that brought me to that golden moment of clarity – my alcoholism had made a right mess of everything in my life and I badly needed help. I could not do this alone anymore.

While getting medically detoxed and stabilized at a Hospital-based treatment program, Maddie went to stay with a friend. When it became apparent that I might not be allowed back to my old digs, I found myself in a terrible dilemma: either find someone to care for Maddie for the next three months or give her up for adoption. "Willing to go to any lengths," I steeled myself for the sad task of asking a local rescue to find a new forever home for Maddie. When all seemed darkest, Providence intervened and a lovely gal named Sadie, whom I did not even know, agreed to take Maddie for as long as I needed.

Leaving treatment, with a check for a sober house in my pocket, I stopped to thank my Landlords for their care and concern. Providence again intervened and they offered to let me stay, provided I continue to remain sober. When I called Sadie with the good news, she wisely said, "Why don't you take the next three months and get busy with your recovery. Maddie will be ready when you are." So, I did.

After three months, Maddie returned home and we began the process of rebuilding our relationship. Shy at first, Maddie opened her heart to me and we soon returned to our old routine, with one exception: Maddie no longer wished to sit in my lap. Every time I tried to place her in my lap, she'd jump away. So I just let it be, reminding myself how grateful I was to have her back in my life again.

What I learned from my amends to Maddie, and wanted to share with Lee, is that forgiveness comes when I accept the results of the amends – that I am responsible for the input, not the outcome. Each amends establishes a new relationship, based on new terms, and it is my responsibility to gracefully accept those terms, whatever they may be.

As I was finishing my sharing with Lee, Maddie, who was lying next to me on the couch, got-up, stretched, grabbed one of her toys, dropped it on my legs and proceeded to sit in my lap. If I ever need a reminder that there is a Power for Good in this life, I always turn back to that moment. Thank you A.A. for helping me to connect with, and most importantly experience, a Higher Power that is Unconditional Love & Forgiveness.

- Bill S., St. Paul, MN

**St. Paul & Suburban Area Intergroup, Inc.**  
**608 Seventh Street West - St. Paul, MN 55102**

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**Tradition Nine: A.A., as such, ought never be organized; but we may create service boards and committees directly responsible to those they serve.**

As my life got increasingly unmanageable during the last years of drinking, I withdrew more and more and became isolated from meaningful interactions with others. That this was happening in midtown Manhattan made life all the more lonely. So it was with amazement that in early sobriety I discovered AA's meeting book for our greater metropolitan area.

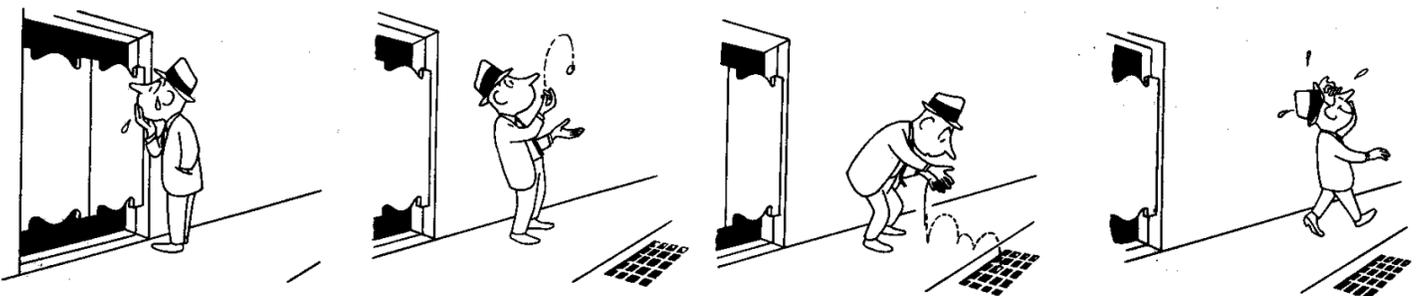
While it was as confusing as a train schedule at first, I was like a kid with a new-found toy, running around town to meetings in a great many unlikely places at all hours of the day and night. Here was a listing that said a particular sort of AA meeting would be held at a certain time and place, and behold, there it was—and run by drunks that I would guess hadn't always been reliable for keeping commitments. This world was a radically different place from where I'd so recently lived and drunk. A whole different set of principles were guiding these mostly sober folks who, while they seemed pretty laid back and casual, were well enough organized to be there when the meeting book said they would be.

A couple years later when doing a weekly stint as a telephone answering volunteer at our intergroup office, I was able to see how the information was gathered, updated and regularly published. The meeting lists hadn't just happened miraculously. They were the result of well-organized effort and just plain hard work. At last I came to understand that while AA itself must never be organized, there were some jobs in AA that need to be well-planned.

As a member of our general service area, I found myself working on the planning committee for our annual area convention, and saw how AA members find strength in getting together to enjoy the broadest community aspects of our Fellowship. So our convention has become an annual custom that provides much joy in living and sharing. It needs a lot of careful planning and organizing to make it happen and to provide for the needs of an unbelievably diverse range of tastes, spirits and temperaments. The going was not always as smooth as we planned as we did the necessary tasks, but the results were beyond our wildest dreams. And we all stayed sober right through the Sunday morning meeting that closed the event. We had created a committee directly responsible to those who need our services.

- Boyce B.,

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(Victor E. Cartoon reprinted with permission, Copyright © The AA Grapevine, Inc.)

## Thoughts From Your Board

"God grant me the serenity to accept things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can and the wisdom to know the difference." Things have changed in AA over the years. Not the Steps, not the Traditions, nor the fact that we are alcoholics looking for the help we so desperately need to stop drinking. One thing that has changed is the mix of people we attract, the younger age that people are getting sober and the lifestyles of the population we enjoy. These are very exciting changes and very rewarding to see. As members of Intergroup we need to be open to change and occasionally lead the change.

Too often organized leadership lends itself to the whim of the people serving. In order to stay true to Alcoholics Anonymous we must serve with complete regard to the Steps and Traditions while maintaining an open and welcoming organization. Principles above personalities must always be first and foremost. As trusted servants for Intergroup, it is our responsibility to lead with the principles, be the hand of AA and foster the tradition of 'change' that is inherent to our lives as recovering people.

With this in mind, please bring forth your ideas and recommendations (solutions) to hold us accountable to change. We are here to serve and to represent AA as a whole. We are *your* St. Paul Intergroup.

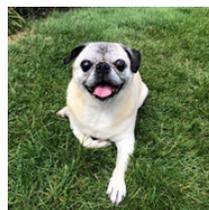
- Tom S., 2018 Member-at-Large

## Notes From Your Office

We are sad to share with you the news that "Rosie" the pug crossed over the Rainbow Bridge on Tuesday, August 7th after nearly six years of service to your Office our "greeter-in-residence." Those who met Rosie know that she was a gentle soul who always provided a calming influence. Many a time, a freshly sober office volunteer would ask for Rosie to sit on their lap to help them focus on answering the phones so they could assist callers to our hotline with their particular needs. For others, Rosie was a reason to bring their kids along to the office for some "Rosie time," while mom or dad, grandma or grandpa, aunt or uncle, did their shopping for our literature and medals. Still others would only come to visit, if "that little dog is there."

What you may not know is that Rosie was also qualified therapy dog who spent three years visiting seniors at a St. Paul Assisted-Living facility. Rosie was uniquely qualified for her service work, as she came to Minnesota seven years ago as rescue from a breeding farm in Missouri. She was the embodiment of grace, gratitude, love, and tolerance. She made each person who met her feel special and welcomed. We will miss her dearly.

- Your Intergroup Staff



## The Lifeline: Purpose Statement

*The Lifeline* is the monthly newsletter of the St. Paul and Suburban Area Intergroup, Incorporated. It is about, by, and for groups and members of the A.A. Fellowship. Opinions expressed herein are not to be attributed to A.A. as a whole, nor does publication of any article imply endorsement by either A.A. or Intergroup. We welcome articles on a Step, Tradition, or Concept, in addition to descriptions of personal experience. We also welcome cartoons and drawings expressing the wry side of our A.A. experience.

Please email your article to [lifeline@aastpaul.org](mailto:lifeline@aastpaul.org), or send it by regular mail to Lifeline Editor, St. Paul Intergroup, 608 Seventh Street West, St. Paul MN 55102. Materials or articles mailed to us cannot be returned unless accompanied by a self-addressed stamped envelope. Intergroup reserves the right to edit submissions for clarity, language, length, and content that might violate A.A.'s Traditions, etc.



# Save the Date!

One Year Speaker - TBA

Main A.A. Speaker - TBA

## St Paul Intergroup's Annual Gratitude Night

Saturday

November 18, 2017

7:00 pm

New Location!!!

Lutheran Church of the Redeemer

285 North Dale St.

St. Paul, MN 55103



ASL Interpreted.

# Announcements & Updates

## HOOTS!

Thanks to all the faithful Night Owl volunteers who helped to answer the phones during August. Great Job! We currently have no open regular shifts which is awesome!!! For those of you who are interested in getting your own shift, I keep a waiting list and I am happy to add new names.

Reminders to all groups! When you get a new Night Owl Coordinator for your group, please send an e-mail to let me know who it is and update their phone number so the committee person making reminder calls is taking to the correct individual. Send e-mails to me at [nightowl@aastpaul.org](mailto:nightowl@aastpaul.org)

Thank you!

Cheryl B.

### Night Owl Committee Coordinator Night Owl Tidbit:

It was 10:17 and a call came in to the St Paul Intergroup back up phone number at 651-336-8502. The volunteer for the 5:30 to 10:00 shift said, "No one has called yet to take the shift."

I said, "Give me a few minutes and I'll see what is going on. Did you double check to make sure the phones are still rolled over to you?"

"Yup - did that already and I still have the phone," was the response.

It was my week to carry the "Bat Bag", so I checked to see who was supposed to have the phones and when I called, Susan (not the real name) laughed and said, I have an excuse for being late that you have never heard before!

At this time of year," she continued," I am usually travelling and my phone is set an hour behind time. I have had this same shift for a long time and just carry my phone with me when I am out of town. When I looked at the phone a few minutes ago, I thought I still had an hour before my shift starts."

## Group and Area News

**MIA Meeting:** The Friday 8:00PM *Flying Blind* group, which was meeting at the Grace Lutheran Church, 1730 Old Hudson Road, Saint Paul, 55106 is reported as "Missing in Action." Please contact the Intergroup office and ask to speak with staff if you have further information about this group.

**Meeting No More:** The *Eastside Alano Club* Monday 4:00PM Women's Big Book group has ceased meeting.

## AA.org: A treasure-trove of Experience, Strength & Hope!

Looking for A.A. audio & video resources? Look no further than AA.org! Check out: [AA.org/#audio-player](http://AA.org/#audio-player). Here you find many of A.A.'s audio & video productions to hear and view for free, including a selection of archival materials such as, "Dr. Bob's last message;" "Bill W. on the origin of Rule 62;" as well as "Sister Ignatia tells the story of Dr. Bob admitting one of the first alcoholics to St. Thomas Hospital."

## Your News?

We invite you to share your AA news here!  
Please send your items to [lifeline@aastpaul.org](mailto:lifeline@aastpaul.org).  
We look forward to hearing from you.



**Looking for a Service Opportunity?  
Become a St. Paul Intergroup Night Owl!**

Upcoming Night Owl Orientations:  
**Saturday, Sept. 16th, Oct. 21st, Nov. 18th**

**Every Third Saturday from 10:00 - 11:00 AM**

St. Paul Intergroup Office

608 Seventh Street West - St. Paul, MN 55102

**To RSVP please call: 651-227-5502**



## St. Paul Area Intergroup Representatives' Meeting Minutes July 18th, 2017

Opened with the Serenity Prayer, introductions, and Jenni read the Primary Purpose of Intergroup.

Minutes from last month were reviewed, Nick motioned and Mike seconded, motion approved.

Treasurer's Report, – Jenni went over the report. Bank account is \$20,462 and prudent reserve is \$45,019. Liabilities increased and receivables increased. Total contributions are up, group contributions are down and office sales are way up. Expenses decreased \$160. See Treasurer's Report for full details. Contact Matt at treasurer@aastpaul.org.

Office Report, Bill S – There is a limited supply of new special Coffee Pot Lapel Pins at the office. The office has just received the new Safety Card for AA Groups. These cards received Conference approval this year and are now available for distribution. The cards provide a suggested statement of principle regarding safety. The Office has new color copier. Members and Groups may bring flyers and other AA-related materials to the office for copying. Prices are: B&W \$.05 Single-sided and \$.08 for double sided. Color printing is \$.12 single and \$.15 double sided. Limit of 100 copies without prior approval. The Lifeline was larger than allowed under current agreement with Post Office so will be no more than 12 pages in the future. We still want to share supplemental material so please send your writings to the Lifeline at Lifeline@aastpaul.org.

Night Owl Report, Cheryl B – There is one regular shift available. See additional info in the hoots. Contact Cheryl at NightOwl@aastpaul.org or leave a message at the intergroup office.

Website Report, Jonathan gave the report. There are 694 meetings and 277 groups total. Up 3 meetings and down 1 group. There are 14 service opportunities and one open Night Owl shift per the website. The mobile site is still up for parallel testing, the link is in the corner of the regular site and still accepting feedback. Contact Jonathan at webservant@aastpaul.org.

Outreach Program, Jenni – Volunteers are still needed for visiting meetings. Refer to the Outreach Info Sheet for full instructions. For more information contact Carolyn M at outreach@aastpaul.org.

Update from the Board, Lesli D, Our Alt Treasurer, Karen C, is stepping down from the Board. We are seeking a new Alt Treasurer asap. The office has been seeking cheaper phone service alternatives to CenturyLink, however options seem limited and unable to facilitate current Night Owl technical needs for rolling the phones.

Liaison Reports: District 8 Mike C, District has been doing outreach to meetings to try and stir more participation; District 15 Bob Z, August 2nd-6th representing at Washington County Fair w booth. Will send reps to both Bridging the Gap and West Regional Forum. Also struggling to obtain more participation. Kurt is moving away. ; District 19, Brian M – Sending reps to both Bridging the Gap and West Regional Forum. Had report from Donnie from MPLS Intergroup office who is having open house Aug 12th. Offering to host guests regarding to respond to professionals.

Upcoming Intergroup Events

Ice Cream Social – August 12th (JD) – 4pm-630pm at Lutheran Church of the Redeemer. Six speakers all with 25+ years of sobriety. See flyer for more details or contact JD.

Old Business:

District 8 ASL Committee Update (Christine) – Currently only one meeting in all of District 8 with ASL interpretation available (OMD). The Committee is funding two test meetings for month of October. ASL interpreter will be at Rule 62 and the Firing Line meetings. There will still be an interpreter at OMD funded by District (not by the committee as usual) for October.

New Business:

Feedback on Loading Zone Parking –Some groups were clearly supportive of Loading Zone spot and some strongly against using Loading Zone instead of Handicapped spot. A common concern was whether someone needing Handicapped spot would know it was appropriate to park in the Loading Zone. Others supported idea of Loading Zone so that could not be taken more than 30 mins at a time compared to 48 hours with Handicapped spot. Chris made a motion for the Intergroup office to proceed with the Loading Zone spot, seconded by Dan. The motion passed with 19 votes for, 5 against.

Group AA Announcements:

OMD Potluck & Sobriety Recognition Friday August 4th at 7pm. Speaker is Layton W.

Midway Monthly Speaker Meeting and Fellowship July 29th at 7pm at Midway Club.

New Brighton Big Book Breakfast Potluck 10th anniversary edition: August 6th at 9am

Suggestions for next months's agenda: None

Grapevine Report, Mark M; Volunteer for August, Lesli

Concept VI review, Lesli; Volunteer for Concept VII for August, Brian M

Mock Rep Report, Travis; Volunteer for August, Michael

**Meetings Represented:** District 8; District 15; East Side 12&12, St. Paul; The Firing Line, Roseville; Hole In The Doughnut, Roseville; Main Idea, St. Paul; Maplewood Alano Groups, Maplewood; Meeting of the Waters Mendota Heights; Midway, St. Paul; New Brighton Big Book, New Brighton; No Time Like the Present, Roseville; Outright Mental Defectives, St. Paul; Pocketing Our Pride, St. Paul; Problems & Solutions, St. Paul; Rule 62 Step & Tradition, St. Paul; St. Paul Speaker Meeting, St. Paul; Summit Hill, St. Paul; Uptown Groups, St. Paul.

### 2017 Steering Board:

Chair:	Jenni S.
Alternate Chair:	Lesli D.
Secretary:	Rob C.
Treasurer:	Matt R.
Alternate Treasurer:	TBD
Members-at-Large 2017:	J.D. & Carolyn M.
Members-at-Large 2018	Tom S. & Erik M.
Advisor to the Board:	Sandy K.
Manager	Dennis B.

### Office Calls/Visitors—July 2017

Meeting information	93
Inventory/hours	17
12th Step calls	6
Temporary sponsor	15
Speaker request	31
Special events	1
Outside issues	5
Info for professionals	3
Administrative	77
Other	79
Total Calls	327
<b>Average Calls/Day</b>	<b>15.6</b>
Total Visitors	231

**September 2017 REPS' MEETING: Tuesday, September 19th @ 7:30 PM**

SAINT STANISLAUS CHURCH  
398 West Superior Street; St. Paul, MN 55102

**7th Tradition  
Suggestions for Groups**

“Every A.A. group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions.”

The Conference-approved pamphlet: “Self-Support: Where Money and Spirituality Mix” offers the following suggestions for the distribution of group funds after group expenses have been paid:

**50% St. Paul Intergroup**  
608 Seventh Street West  
St. Paul, MN 55102

**30% General Service Office**  
P.O. Box 459  
Grand Central Station  
New York, NY 10163

**10% Southern MN Area 36**  
Area Assembly  
P.O. Box 2812  
Mpls., MN 55402

**10% District Committee**  
  
Ramsey County:  
District 8, P.O. Box 131523  
St. Paul, MN 55113  
  
Dakota County:  
District 19, P.O. Box 1466  
Burnsville, MN 55337  
  
Washington County:  
District 15, P.O. Box 181  
Lake Elmo, MN 55042  
  
SE Ramsey County:  
District 26, P.O. Box 75980  
St. Paul, MN 55175

**JULY CONTRIBUTIONS**

Number of Group Contributors: 31  
Total Group Contributions: \$3582  
Number of Faithful Fivers: 14  
Total from Faithful Fivers: \$280



**District Meetings**

**District 8 (Ramsey Co.)**  
Fairview Community Center  
1910 Co. Rd B, Rm 108  
Roseville  
3rd Wed., 7:30 PM

**District 15 (Wash. Co.)**  
Christ Lutheran Church  
11194 N. 36th St.  
Lake Elmo  
4th Mon., 7:00 PM

**District 19 (Dakota Co.)**  
Rosemount Community Center  
13885 South Robert Trail  
Rosemount  
2nd Wed., 7:00 PM

**District 26 (SE Ramsey Co.)**  
Grace Lutheran Church  
1730 Old Hudson Rd.  
St. Paul  
2nd Sun., 7:00PM  
[www.district26-area36.org](http://www.district26-area36.org)



**Thanks to all the Groups  
that contributed in July**

- 11th Step FINE Group
- A Baffled Lot
- Anoka Day By Day
- Apple Valley Daily Reflections
- Apple Valley Keep It Simple Sun PM
- Basic Text
- Dakota Alano
- Dakota Alano SAT 6PM There is a Solution
- Fellowship Club AA
- Fourth Dimension
- Friday Nite 12x12 By The Book
- Halfway There
- Highland Park Groups
- Hugo Group
- Main Idea
- Maplewood Groups
- New Brighton BB
- Pages of Wisdom BB
- Ridge Runners III Sun 830AM
- Rivertown BB Group-Hastings
- Rosemount Groups
- Roseville Centennial Group
- Students of Life
- Summit Hill
- There's a Better Way
- Third Tradition Northfield
- Unity Service & Recovery
- Uptown Club
- Valley Creek Monday
- Valley Creek Thurs Night
- Widening Circle

**Thanks to all of the FANTASTIC Office Volunteers who helped in July:**

Becky L., Bob P., Chrissie S., Chuck L., CJ M., Cole W.,  
Deb E., Debby C., DeeDee S., Don C., Frank D.,  
Henry O., Jean K., Jeff K., Jesse V., Jim B.,  
Jimmy D., John G., Marc S., Melanie D.,  
Rachel W., Suzanne B., Ty K., Woody W.

**Thanks to our AWESOME Night Owls too!**



## **A Perspective on AA Worldwide**

As a trustee assigned to the Trustees International Committee for a second year, I never cease to be overwhelmed with gratitude for the support that the members of AA in the U.S. and Canada provide through Seventh Tradition contributions, which allows the message to be carried globally. I must admit I was a bit agnostic to the need for our service structure to be the primary facilitator for AA in distant lands, but I've changed my position after a year of membership on this committee.

While I've likely read a myriad of articles on AA spreading to places I barely have heard of and I've also been aware of the World Service meeting, I surely didn't look too deep into what was taking place for the past 30 years. In fact, as a "numbers" person, I showed up last July for my first Committee meeting, predisposed to thinking that our AA 7th Tradition contributions should be providing services in the U.S. and Canada. This was a bit at odds with what was about to take place, which was the World Service Meeting in Rye in October of 2016. When I heard that the U.S. supported upwards of 70% of that bi-annual event, I felt a sizable shift needed to take place.

Let me share a bit of my experience. For example, there are a number of countries globally that indeed pay much more than their share. Great Britain, for example paid for a number of delegates to attend the World Service Meeting beside their two delegates. And many countries to pay what they can. What caught my ear was that countries that may only pay a few hundred dollars of their way use as much of their own 7th Tradition monies as they can. But when the average monthly salary of a university president is \$40 or \$50 for lawyer, having to pay a few thousand dollars would mean they would never attend. When having lunch with the world service meeting delegate from the Ukraine, he shared that the average meeting contribution per person is three cents, and the entire annual budget of their general service office is \$3,500, I realized that many of these people provide a far greater spirit of sacrifice than many of us in the U.S.

It also occurred to me that half of the AA population is indeed in the U.S. and Canada, and coupled with that, the most mature of all general service structures. Maybe, indeed, we do have a fiduciary responsibility.....

Let me share another example: I was having lunch with a World Service Meeting delegate from Belarus. This year they published their first 1,000 paperback copies of the Big Book and Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions. The radiant joy he showed me in sharing that information had me recalling Bill getting the first few books from the printer in 1939.

Why did this happen? Because only last year Belarus got a license from AAWS for the publication of literature. I had thought licensing was old news, but I was totally wrong. Each AAWS Board meeting that I attend includes a report of a number of new licenses for books and pamphlets of our literature that others want to print. In fact, the General Service Office hired a person that spends much of his time and an assistant's time managing a deliberative process to insure our message maintains its integrity and accuracy as it spreads to many countries in many languages. The Big Book alone is now printed in 70 languages including English, and our service dollars as well as money from the international literature fund (to which many countries give regular contributions) help to support this life-giving work.

I don't have space here to share the details of the World Service Meeting, but an anonymity-protected English and Spanish version will be on [www.aa.org](http://www.aa.org) very soon. The information in it will enrapture you and give you a feeling of gratitude for the priceless value of our existing service structure.

*(Continued Pg. 2 )*

## **A Perspective on AA Worldwide - Continued**

But there's more. The world of AA has divided itself into a number of zones. These zones serve a specific geography and group of countries that join that zonal structure. We do sometimes help those zones or delegates in those zones. Additionally, we are frequently asked to be part of these zonal meetings as participants, presenters and observers. This is primarily why we have Trustee at Large trustees, plus it is common for one or more people from the GSO to be attendees to speak on licensing, publishing, service structure organization and many other topics. If you are interested in some of the guiding documents that help guide who/what/when/where we attend these meetings, let me know and I can make it available to you.

Let me close with a few examples of what has happened in the last few months.

A. In June, GSO received an email from Kabul, Afghanistan from the first meeting there in the local languages of Dari and Pashto. The group was founded just over 2 years ago by a member who got sober in Mashhad, Iran and returned to Afghanistan when he had 5 years of sobriety. The group is now 5 meetings a week, one hundred members, holds a meeting in a treatment center and an open meeting once a month where the invite professionals and family members. They are now looking to get literature in their native language.

B. With regard to Iran, AA is now an official entity, recognized as a legal entity. Before that, they could not use the name and were not recognized, going only by "nameless sobers". They now have a full board of trusted servants.

C. Just 90 miles away from the U.S., in Cuba, AA was also not recognized officially. AA groups relied on the Catholic Church to provide them with a space to rent, to take calls (AA could not have a telephone number because they were not a recognized entity). With the recent recognition, AA will now be able to have those things plus have permission to carry out PI and CPC work, officially have meeting in prisons, and many other critical resources to have a presence in Cuba.

D. The next World Service Meeting is in Durban, South Africa. When our staff member and General Manager visited in June to help plan next year's WSM, they started with a tour of their GSO, which has only 1 paid staff member that serves 4,000 groups. They do print their own literature, and with 11 official languages in South Africa, you can imagine the hefty workload they have to serve their groups. This trip was to also attend the 8th Sub-Saharan Africa Service Meeting. Here's some interesting points from that meeting:

1. Kenya's intergroup used the Third Legacy election procedure for the first time.
2. Botswana established a GSB to be a registered entity in their country, but the name "alcoholics anonymous" was rejected as being too negative.
3. Ghana now has 25 active groups. (think about how many meetings are within 10 miles of your home!)
4. The app "WhatsApp" is one of the most common ways that people attend online meetings as there are no local meetings to go to.
5. We had two attendees go as invited guests to the 12th Asia-Oceania Service Meeting in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia in July. AA started in Mongolia in 1998, internally (no ex-pat AA members). There are 101 active groups. Mongolia is about 1/6 the size of the U.S., with 3 million members (maybe about 8 times the size of MN); a population about 2/3 of MN.; lots of land; and an average household income of \$1,900.

*(Continued pg.3)*

## **A Perspective on AA Worldwide - Continued**

Our trustee committee endeavors to serve AA needs when possible all over the world. We also, though, try to help them to adopt all our AA principles such as self-support, an active service structure, adherence to our Steps, Traditions and Concepts. We have an agenda item to help the World Service Meeting become more self-supporting. But in the final analysis, we AA's are all part of a singular fellowship, and the AA members here in Minnesota and in our whole general service structure have been a priceless asset on a global basis to still suffering alcoholics, and their gratitude to us runs deep. On behalf of the General Service Board of Alcoholics Anonymous, I thank you for your contributions of time and support in all ways to carrying the message of AA.

Tom A.,

## **Participating in All of AA**

My life in service in A.A. began the way it does for most of us. I said yes when asked by my sponsor to take on a service position in my group. My first positions were the obvious group level jobs that introduced me to pulling my own weight – like washing coffee cups and setting up chairs. But it wasn't long before my group guided me to "general service," the kind of service that is in support of A.A. as a whole. This type of service opened my eyes to a world of A.A. outside my group and required me to interact with other A.A. members who did not attend my group.

The home group that I grew up in took its participation in the whole of A.A. seriously. It wasn't a huge group, with maybe 30 or so home group members. We had monthly group business meetings at which our General Service Representative (GSR) gave full reports on what had happened at the most recent District Meeting and/or Area Assembly. The group took an interest in what was happening in A.A. By the questions and discussion that followed each monthly GSR report at my home group, I learned that groups had a stake in decisions that were being made by and with other A.A. groups in our District and our Area. Not only did we have a stake, but we had a responsibility to be involved and to do our part to shape the work being done at each level of our general service structure, from the group to the District to the Area, all the way to the General Service Conference.

For me, the first A.A. position I was given that pushed me into the general service structure was "Alternate Literature Chair" for my group. As a relative newcomer to A.A. and to sobriety, it was an awesome responsibility. And having a title was enough of an ego boost to keep a newcomer like me coming back. Because our group rented a meeting space where we could not store any of our group materials, I had to carry two wire literature racks with me to the meeting each week. Along with the racks, I carried all of the pamphlets to fill the racks. It was part of my job to keep track of the stock of pamphlets and work with the group Literature Chair to order more pamphlets when needed. I learned that there was a District out there made up of other A.A. groups just like mine. And these groups at the District level had organized themselves to purchase literature together to take advantage of bulk discounts and lower shipping costs. Our District had gone so far as to rent a small office space that was opened just 4 hours a week on Saturday morning and was known as the District Literature Store. A trip to the literature store meant interacting with A.A. members from all kinds of groups from all over our District. And it meant seeing an example of general service in action.

My position as Alternate Literature Chair was only one small example of how my group was connected to the general service structure. My group elected or appointed members to positions

(Continued pg. 4)

## Participating in All of AA

within the group that paralleled each of the committees that existed at the District and Area level. We had a group Literature Chair and Alternate. We had a group Corrections Chair and Alternate. We had a group Public Information Chair and Alternate. The list went on and in a small group this meant that almost everyone had a general service position. The group member who was appointed to each of these positions was expected to attend the District Committee associated with their position. Not only did the GSR give a report each month at the group business meeting, but each of the group committee chairs gave a report, too. We heard about all kinds of service being done at the District level. We were all engaged and participating.

Having a group committee chair who attended each District committee meeting proved to be good for our group and good for our District. Our group's example encouraged other groups to send representatives to District committee meetings. Each of our group members who was attending District committee meetings was learning about the general service structure and how to do service at a level that went beyond our group. Serving at the group level and at the District level prepared each home group member to become an even more valuable trusted servant at whatever next level of service they were asked to do. Not surprisingly, my fellow home group members were often elected to serve in positions at the District and Area because they came to general service prepared by years of experience. The general service structure was strengthened by our participation. Each of my fellow home group members had her or his sobriety enriched by participation in general service.

Too often we hear of groups who are unaware of the general service structure of A.A. that surrounds and supports them and does A.A. service on behalf of them. Or we run across members of groups who carry an attitude that general service is irrelevant or of little importance to their group. As with most principles in A.A., the benefit of general service can only be experienced by participating in it. And given the vast number of ways our group members could be involved in general service, I hope each of us will encourage our groups and our fellow home group members to participate more fully. As a group member, we each have the ability and responsibility to suggest ways for our groups to be involved in the world of A.A. outside our regular meeting time and place. I hope to cross paths with many of you in general service soon.

Thanks for all your service,

Curt K.  
Delegate – Panel 67  
Area 36 – Southern Minnesota  
delegate@area36.org

### **For 42 years Victor E. has wanted to drink in almost every issue of the Grapevine--and every time has changed his mind. One AA offers this perspective on Victor's continuing dilemma.**

Why would I drink again--even think about drinking--when I've gained so much from sobriety? Yet I've been there--that moment when my thirst for escape has blotted out my sober perspective. Usually these times are only brief flares, but they remind me that my reprieve is daily; I am not cured.

That's why I'm fond of Victor E.--he keeps getting reprieved. Some people wonder about Victor E. When is this guy going to get the program? What's his problem? Why is he always hanging around a tavern? I think the key to Victor E. lies in the fact that he is an AA Everyman or Everywoman who represents all of us sober alcoholics at a critical moment of decision: to drink or not to drink. His yearning represents that part of me that remembers only the good times when I pass a cozy ginmill in the winter twilight, that longs for a shimmering green martini on a billboard, that can feel nostalgic for bourbon. So I too sometimes stand, at least symbolically, in front of those tavern doors.

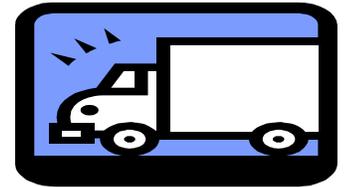
- Anonymous, New York, New York

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