



FINAL REPORT
SOUTHEAST “ADDITIONAL”
REGIONAL FORUM
AUGUST 16-18, 2013
CHARLESTON, WV

Dear A.A. Friends,

Please mark your calendar for the next Southeast Regional Forum, which will take place in Isla Verde, Puerto Rico the weekend of September 26-28, 2014 at the Verdanza Hotel.

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ONLY LAST NAMES OF CLASS A (NONALCOHOLIC) TRUSTEES
AND NON-A.A. EMPLOYEES APPEAR IN THIS REPORT

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INTRODUCTION

The 2013 Southeast “Additional” Regional Forum was held in Charleston, West Virginia. Registration for this Forum topped at 257. This included 108 members attending their very first Forum—several who were welcomed at the Forum Orientation on Friday evening. Sunday morning included a session for first-time forum attendees, followed by sharing from past trustees.

WORKSHOP REPORTS

“A.A. Leadership—Carrying the Voice of the A.A. Groups” (Moderator: Kathy O./Reporter: Jen K.) The workshop members were asked “To think of A.A. leaders that they respect. What did these A.A. leaders do? Why did you respect them?” The members responded that A.A. leaders are district committee members (DCMs) who visit groups and listen to members share their concerns. They get their group members to show up and discuss issues. They are passionate and encouraging. Good leaders sponsor people into service. They show up, lead by example and pass it on. They do their job when it is not popular. They are on time, organized and responsible. It is important to give all members the opportunity to do service work. The workshop members were also asked “How do we get groups to realize their importance in A.A. as a whole”? The members responded that they bring back their experiences from Forums, assemblies, etc. to their groups and discuss “hot topics” of concern with them. They also share examples of what happens when members don’t participate in A.A. service and remind them how their service is helping the alcoholic who’s not here yet. Members also emphasize that groups need to show up, be enthusiastic and engage hearts. This can be celebrated: for example, have a “group of the month” meeting, providing food and love.

“Anonymity on the Internet: A.A. and the Social Media” (Moderator: Cathy B./Reporter: Deb A.) The workshop members were asked “What is appropriate to share on the Internet (social media) on a personal level? What is our individual responsibility when someone is inappropriate?” The members responded that there is a need to educate members on the Traditions and personal responsibility. The General Service Office (GSO) has indicated it is inappropriate to identify oneself as an A.A. member on the Internet, but more subtle statements may be a matter of personal choice. It was noted even “private” communication on the Internet may not be private. When communicating by email, etc. for A.A. business, information can be ‘scrubbed’ and a blind copy should be used for mass emails. The workshop members also asked “How can we use the Internet in a productive way to carry the A.A. message?” The workshop members commented that we need to care for ourselves, our members and newcomers when using the Internet, instant messaging, emails, texts, etc. Areas and districts are using the Internet, websites, and other electronic communication in different ways that seem to be effective and we can learn from those examples. There is an online Intergroup structure that holds business meetings and follows the Traditions. Each day it receives 15-18 requests on the “Get Help Now” button. One workshop member reported that she came into A.A. after sharing online.

“Tradition Seven” Self-Supporting Through Our Own Contributions” (Moderator: Craig M./Reporter: Jim S.) The workshop members were asked, “Is selling literature in keeping with the 7th Tradition?” The members responded that Bill W. considered the sale of literature a contribution demonstrating the ‘power of the purse’. The more contributions, the lower the cost of literature, and vice-versa. We need to get away from contributing a dollar, rather make it two. We have to use G.S.O funds wisely. The workshop members were also asked to share their “Lessons learned from a personal experience regarding Tradition 7.” The members responded that putting money in the hat allows us to participate in the whole of A.A. It contributes to A.A. unity and getting the message to other alcoholics. A.A. is not free and contributions help to pay expenses. Finally, the members were asked “How do we apply Tradition 7 toward our Primary Purpose”? The members responded that Tradition 7 provides a means of helping people who are trying to contact A.A. newcomers and/or professionals. It provides the opportunity for literature translations. We should not spend money on things unrelated to A.A. work. We need to accept money only from A.A. members.

“Practicing Inclusion While Preserving A.A. Traditions” (Moderator: Don F./Reporter: Annie C.) The workshop members were asked “How to practice inclusion in A.A. meetings, while preserving the A.A. Traditions.” They said that we need to focus on the recovery from alcoholism and serenity when people talk about problems other than alcoholism and to also welcome people back if they aren’t sure if they have an alcohol problem. Group members can talk to newcomers in private if they don’t think they have a problem with alcohol -i.e., if they identify themselves as a drug addict. If a newcomer comes into an A.A. meeting they should expect to hear about alcoholism. We can go to another meeting if we don’t like what goes on at our meeting. Groups reach out to treatment centers to explain our Traditions and our code of Love and Tolerance. The 12th Step opportunities are abundant with treatment center patients/clients that come into A.A. meetings. If we try to be all things to all people we end up with nothing. I can be me at an A.A. meeting. I decided for myself – who am I to decide for you. Lead by example. Educate and discuss open/closed meetings and sponsorship etiquette with those in treatment centers. Group members can lead discussions on alcoholism if someone shares about drugs or other issues. Identification of alcoholism comes first and then we share the solution.

A.A. Unity: Handling the Disruptive Member” (Moderator: Cyndi F./Reporter: Rebecca T.) The workshop member discussed the problems of disruptive members in the room including stalking, long-talkers, court people coming late, mentally challenged, violent, dangerous with weapons and vulgarity. The solutions discussed by members included having the chairperson responsible for meeting order and urging not to be afraid to speak up. It is our responsibility to help the chairperson, support the group conscience, read the responsibility statement, speak to someone after a meeting, practice love and tolerance and change the meeting format if needed. If we do not provide safe walls within which to recover, where will the suffering go?

“Your District Committee Member (DCM); The Vital Link Between the Group and the Area” (Moderator: Holly P./Reporter: Terry E.) The workshop members were asked the questions “What is the role of the DCM in education and group problems?” and “What is our role in mediation of group problems?” The members responded that we should not take a position on group issues. The spirit of service is passed on through sponsorship. We have great service literature that can help. DCMs are not problem-solvers. Groups are autonomous through their group conscience. DCMs are not the A.A. police; rather the group conscience is

the authority. DCMs need to make sure the district business meeting is run well so we can have a group conscience. DCMs do not govern, nor are DCMs a fireman running around the district putting out group problems. DCMs do not need to have all the answers; rather they just need to be present and willing to help. DCM workshops that pair inexperienced DCMs with experienced DCMs are important. DCMs get involved in agenda items before the conference. They explain these items to the GSRs. The more people involved the more education. DCMs chair meetings and disseminate information. DCMs need to keep accurate group contact information. DCMs are guests in groups and need to develop relationships with members of these groups.

The workshop members were also asked “How to pass on the role of DCM to the next?” The members responded that we should consult a sponsor, a service sponsor, read the literature and keep informed. DCMs should visit groups and have guidelines to leave a legacy. Try to recruit people who are interested in service. Give them all you’ve got. We are trusted servants and do not govern. Leadership comes from example. Share with each other and don’t drink.

“Grapevine: The Grapevine Rep and More—Bringing our Message of Hope to Alcoholics” (Moderator: Ami B./Reporter: Shirley P.) The workshop members were asked “Should Grapevine material targeted to the younger generation be kept separate from material for old-timers?” and “Should their delivery also be kept separate?” The members responded that more diversity in content will appeal to a wider audience. Newcomers, younger people, older people and old timers will have different content in some magazines. People’s interests change. Communication is different today. The Big Book is old reading and the Grapevine is younger. The Grapevine is what we are today. If we want it to be different, we can write something to reflect what our interests are today. Submit our ideas to the Grapevine. Encourage workshops on “How to Write to the Grapevine.” Create an old-timers panel and write for long-timers. Ask older members to help younger members understand the need to read the Grapevine –i.e., read about other’s experiences. This is important for newcomers. Get busy! Be enthusiastic. Be diligent in informing people what the Grapevine has to offer. The Grapevine is a meeting in print. The Grapevine discusses the Steps and Traditions and its stories are about serenity. We can use the Grapevine to begin discussions and open conversations in jails. We can take meetings with us, when there is not a meeting. The Grapevine can help us to rebuild our sobriety. “GVR” Area 1 applauds Amy and Grapevine/La Viña. Great job!

The members discussed other generalities about the Grapevine. Their comments included, every year the Conference will list new books. They are added if approved by the Conference. All books come from previous stories –e.g., “One-on-One.” Write to the Grapevine and request topics. The Grapevine and LaViña are profitable depending on the cost of creation, printing, etc. the cost is variable. It is very profitable to sell the magazine. Books have to get past a break-even point. Ebooks have a user-friendly format and free 7-day trial. Digital books cost less. Sunset certain selected titles are no longer sold or in print. Finally, the members discussed how to encourage subscriptions through our groups and how to get every home group to subscribe. Give old Grapevines out to others. Send Grapevines to military personnel. Take them to medical facilities, nursing homes, halfway houses, prisons, jails and institutions. Continue to write more special content. Use them in 12th Step work.

“Making A.A. Service Attractive to Newcomers and Long Timers Alike” (Moderator: Jim S./Reporter: Brent K.) The workshop members discussed the gratitude that people experience when they get involved in homegroup service. People don’t think they have to do service work because it’s not required. Members asked “Is there a limit to joyful experience old-timers can give to newcomers?” Other members suggested giving newcomers a commitment. Have sponsors tell newcomers what they’ll be doing. If you want what we have... Appeal to newcomer’s egos – don’t coddle or push. Emphasize service, etc. to newcomers and sponsees as one part of their recovery. The workshop members also discussed sponsorship issues, specifically to make homegroup membership a requirement; talk about a meeting quota –i.e., number of meetings per week, types of meetings, etc. Approach people individually instead of approaching a group; people who are desperate are looking for the next thing to do. Encourage the newcomer to attend social events. Make social events attractive for the newcomer. Make service work fun. Emphasize that A.A. is a program of action. “Action speaks louder than words.” Don’t accept “I don’t have time” as an excuse. Give newcomers the “small” jobs like room preparation, providing rides to meetings, etc. Emphasize that the three legged stool (Recovery, Unity and Service) can’t stand on two legs. Make it clear that service is integral and necessary for recovery. “Carry the Message.” Service is not optional for successful people in A.A. Notice those who are more enthusiastic and bring them into service. Accept that not everyone will serve or want to serve. Ask, if service is optional, why do we have a 12th Step? Explain to sponsees what serving did for you. Make your approach appropriate to the persons’ personality. Keep it fun, fresh, and exciting. “Old-timers” get them to attend service events and tell them we could use their experience and wisdom –e.g., “You must know a lot about this or that.” Present service work in a positive light.

“The General Service Representative (G.S.R.); the Most Important Job in A.A.” (Moderator: Barb C./Reporter: Lynn J.) The workshop members were asked the question “What am I supposed to do as a GSR?” The members responded to represent their groups in area business and to be the guardian of the Twelve Traditions. To inform their group of the business from assemblies and district meetings. To find the next GSR for their group. To bring the enthusiasm and heartbeat back to their homegroup. The workshop members were also asked “The importance of communications in both the up and down of the service structure?” Their responses were to present new information from GSO. “If you are not informed, how do you know how you’re affecting A.A.? Use the newsletter, Box 4-5-9, and other literature and start on a positive note. The members were asked “How does a GSR serve instead of govern?” The members responded that a GSR serves by getting a service sponsor and keeping the group informed without inserting personal opinion.

“Coping with the Influx of New Members from Treatment Centers” (Moderator: Pat T./Reporter: Jacque H.) The workshop members discussed problems including the confusion treatment center clients experience between treatment and A.A.; the broad scope in treatment facilities; different protocols for different treatment facility clients; the misunderstandings and disrespect observed in meetings; the cost on homegroups for hosting coffee, sugar, tokens, etc.; and being able to physically accommodate all of the attendees. Some solutions discussed by the members included outreach and education for administrative employees and clients at treatment facilities; sharing the group conscience with attendees regarding modifying meeting formats to reach more people; and working with other groups to coordinate meetings at treatment facilities. There are also some unique issues for sponsorship with the influx of newcomers from treatment facilities, including how the requirements coming out of the

treatment center do not align with A.A. principles. Other issues included helping people come to grip with whether or not they are an alcoholic and do they change their approach of getting people to multiple types of meetings? A.A. is responsible for love and tolerance and we need to be present and visible.

“Tradition Five: Our Primary Purpose” (Moderator: Ralph M./Reporter: Diana S.) The workshop members were asked “Is my group willing to approach the newcomer honestly”? They shared their experiences as newcomers and what kept them coming back. Several members remembered the passion individuals and groups had for keeping the focus on alcoholism and the program of recovery. While newcomers may get their feelings hurt, being bluntly humbled to face their alcoholism, rather than other circumstances, helped them be rebuilt with love, tolerance, patience and kindness. They were brought to face their despair, while also being offered hope. The workshop members were also asked “How do we keep the group focused on the Primary Purpose of Carrying the Message”? The members responded that groups and individuals maintain their focus in a variety of ways. They demonstrated the need to focus on alcoholism and the solution offered in A.A. through service and literature. Members use inventories and group conscience to remind us why we’re here and how we stay here to ‘Carry the Message’. We emphasize our unique qualifications to help –i.e., our experiences of being drunk and sober. We stick to experiences, not opinions or interpretations. We have a responsibility to the newcomer to focus on the issues (only) but also on how to stay sober and work the Twelve Steps through their issues. Our responsibility is not only to the newcomer, individual or group, but to A.A. as a whole.

PRESENTATIONS

“Humility in Service” Doris S., Delegate Panel 62, Area 37 Mississippi

My name is Doris S., and I am an alcoholic. My sobriety date is March 17, 1996. I currently serve as the Panel 62 Delegate, Area 37, Mississippi.

It is a privilege to be here today and to serve the Fellowship that saved my life. After I committed to do this presentation, I thought “Why on earth did I do such a thing? Am I really willing to be of service or is it my ego?” Well, I am still not sure which; it is probably a little of both. But at this moment I am humbled to be here and to be a part of this forum.

On page 254 in *Language of the Heart*, Bill Wilson wrote, “There can be no absolute humility for us humans. At best, we can only glimpse the meaning and splendor of such a perfect ideal. As the book *Alcoholics Anonymous* says, ‘We are not saints. . . . we claim spiritual progress rather than spiritual perfection.’ Only God himself can manifest in the absolute.”

I believe that the key to service is humility and that the key to humility is an open mind, without fear or ego. As I have traveled down the service structure I have seen and heard many disturbing things in business meetings and area events at every level.

Humility requires being open-minded, but that does not mean I have no opinion. No, open-mindedness merely means entertaining the idea that my opinion may be wrong and to listen to others, and then humbly apply my experience and knowledge so that together we find the answers we need. People that practice a genuine humility are the ones who appear open and

receptive to hearing all sides of an issue. They share with others, not agreeing with everything that is said, but rather participating and sharing their experience, strength, and hope.

Humility requires the sacrifice of ego and fear. The same fear and ego that says you are not smart enough, you are not articulate enough, you are not pretty enough. And for goodness sakes, never admit you are wrong.

The lessons that I have learned in recovery apply to my service work. I learned that I cannot run my life on fear, just as we cannot run our Fellowship on fear, either. I learned above all else I must be rid of selfishness and self-centeredness, both opposites of humility, and that only God makes that possible. My journey in service has tested this principle many times. I am not better or smarter than you, neither am I less than or dumber than you. I am reminded often that God has put me on this planet to serve, not to compete.

After serving in several area positions, and confident that I would be elected to serve again as an area officer, our assembly body decided otherwise. Even though I stood for more than one position, I was not elected to serve at all. I was heartbroken. What had I done wrong? Why do they not want me anymore? Am I not loved? My pride was hurt and I did not want to attend the area assembly anymore and face what I felt was humiliation. But my sponsor had a different perspective. She told me to pocket my pride, put my glad face on, show up and help wherever I could or was asked to. I continued to attend area assemblies and in doing so I practiced a little more humility. I also learned that if I have to point out to you how humble I am, I probably do not possess humility. Humility cannot be possessed—it is a gift bestowed on me by God. It is only present in my life to the degree that I am able to maintain my spiritual condition. I ask for guidance and then listen for the answer. Humility then becomes a by-product of prayer and meditation.

To practice humility I have to keep my ego in check, and that requires a constant awareness. Another pitfall I can fall into with ego is expecting some kind of special attention—because after all, I am a delegate. Many years ago, a former delegate shared with me that when he served as our area delegate, his home group saw him as just another member. He was still just the person that takes out the trash. I have tried to follow his lead, and my home group has definitely allowed me to practice humility. In my home group I am still just the person that stays after the meeting and cleans the coffee pot.

On page 258 in *Language of the Heart* Bill wrote, “This is why I see humility for today as that safe and secure stance midway between these violent emotional extremes. It is a quiet place where I can keep enough perspective, and enough balance, to take my next small step up the clearly marked road that point toward eternal values.”

Humility is a balancing act at all times. Practicing humility in service is, simply put, do not walk in front of me without showing me the way; do not walk behind me, as I am no better than you. Please walk beside me and together we can walk the path of happy destiny.

Thank you for allowing me to share.

“Twelve Concepts for World Service” Scott G., Delegate Panel 63, Area 71 Virginia

Hello there fellow SERFers; it is a delight to be here. My name is Scott G. and I'm an alcoholic. I also have the honor and pleasure of serving as the Panel 63 Delegate from Area 71, Virginia. Or, if you prefer (and considering our location), Eastern West Virginia.

Thank you Julio for offering me the opportunity to briefly discuss our Twelve Concepts for World Service. I say briefly because two thoughts came to mind when initially considering this topic.

The first was, Twelve Concepts in seven to ten minutes? “What an order, I can't go through with it.”

The second and probably more appropriate thought was, just like our Steps and Traditions; the Twelve Concepts are best viewed and understood through the prism of experience. And, as with the Steps and Traditions, the more experience we gain exercising the underlying principles, the deeper our understanding of the immense significance of all thirty-six facets of our wonderful program—the Steps, Traditions, and Concepts.

Bill Wilson alludes to this notion in the “Introduction of the Twelve Concepts” by relaying that each Concept is “really a *group of related principles*” and they are the best summation he could offer “after more than twenty years experience in the creation of our service structure.”

With that in mind, my challenge is to briefly summarize Bill's outline into a discussion that provides a starting point for consideration when attempting to apply these principles in our groups, districts, and areas.

One way to view our Twelve Concepts for World Service is to think about them as a detailed explanation of our Second Tradition and its practical application within our service structure. The Concepts, especially their underlying spiritual principles, don't only apply at the General Service Conference level and below. They also apply to our conduct throughout the entire A.A. service structure. In fact, many of the essays on the individual Concepts specifically reference our Second Tradition and our Traditions as a whole.

Concepts I and II address that we, the Fellowship of A.A., have final responsibility and ultimate authority for Alcoholics Anonymous. We do that through our collective conscience expressed by groups to their G.S.R.s, districts to their D.C.M.s, and area assemblies to our Delegates. Those Delegates then carry that conscience to the General Service Conference and whatever is decided (or not decided) there becomes the effective conscience for A.A. as a whole. In short, Alcoholics Anonymous is ours and it begins with a loving God expressing himself in our group consciences.

Concept III is about having faith in our trusted servants, whether they are G.S.R.s, D.C.M.s, or Delegates. We give our G.S.R.s the Right of Decision when we elect them to represent our groups at area assemblies. Under this Concept, our trusted servants have the charter and authority to vote for the good of A.A. as a whole, which will sometimes be contrary to our initial group conscience. However, our trusted servants also have the responsibility to provide proper reporting of actions taken and decisions made at our respective service gatherings. In the Delegate world, this is known as Conference report-backs.

Concepts IV and X address our spiritual need for inclusion and participation in our service activities. If we elect or appoint a trusted servant, we should allow them to participate in our decision-making process at all service levels. We should also provide those trusted servants the latitude, or delegated authority if you prefer, to conduct their day-to-day service activities in a manner consistent with the intent of our guidance and, at the same time, provide them a sense of belonging within our structure. Think of our Third Tradition—we are members if we say we are—that brings a sense of personal belonging to our Fellowship the moment we enter the rooms of A.A. We should do the same for our trusted servants: allow them to be “a part of” and avoid the perception of having superior or inferior trusted servants.

Concept V—our expression of minority opinion—is especially spiritual for me. It is how I caught the service bug. To witness a trusted servant gather up the courage to speak *against* the prevailing winds of the majority, have that majority consider the minority position, and watch the collective conscience change is an experience we should not miss. In fact, we should cherish and protect this Right of Appeal, as it is our protection against hasty, uniformed, or misinformed decisions.

Concept IX addresses various aspects of leadership in A.A. The majority of the essay on this Concept is actually a 1959 Grapevine article that is also contained in *The Language of the Heart*—three years before the Twelve Concepts were formulated and published. That essay and article convey that every sponsor is a leader who guides his or her prospect by personal spiritual example. That just might pique my interest to investigate which qualities I should seek and which I should try to avoid as a sponsor and trusted servant. The essay also cautions us against hit-or-miss methods of selecting our trusted servants. That got me to pondering whether I am a “hit” or a “miss.”

Finally, Concept XII is a detailed description of the Six Warranties contained in the General Service Conference Charter. Don’t let that scare you off. The discussions on the Warranties provide prudent guidance relevant to us as trusted servants and complement our Traditions well. Concept XII mentions that we lead by our examples and addresses our responsibilities as groups and as sponsors when it comes to charity towards the newcomer; that we simply do not tolerate any perception of one member or group having authority over another; that we reach our decisions by discussion, vote and unanimity; that we exercise self-restraint and do not enter into public controversy; and that our freedom to serve is the freedom by which we live.

There you have it—Twelve Concepts in ten easy minutes! (At least easy for you.) Thank you for your patience and attention for these few moments. I am blessed to be among you and hope the God of your understanding continues to bless and keep you.

“Treatment/Special Needs/Accessibilities” Jay D., Delegate Panel 62, Area 64 Tennessee

My name is Jay D., and I’m an alcoholic. My sobriety date is January 30, 1978, and I am the current Panel 62 Delegate from Area 64, Tennessee.

I have chosen to speak on the subject of “Treatment/Special Needs/Accessibilities.” This is the committee I served on for the last two years at the General Service Conference.

As you know, Alcoholics Anonymous is dedicated to making its message of recovery from alcoholism available to as many people as possible.

The purpose of a Treatment/Special Needs/Accessibilities Committee is to cooperate with individual A.A. members and groups in carrying our message of recovery. One of our primary goals is to have the ability to carry A.A. meetings into the treatment facilities.

We understand that when we do so, we are in their house. We are not there to argue the rules. We are not there to advise them on how the facility should be run. All of those would be outside issues. We are there to carry the message of A.A. to the residents. We endeavor to explain to the residents what they may encounter as they attend meetings outside of the facility. We speak about our “singleness of purpose” and how it pertains to Alcoholics Anonymous. It is important for me to describe to them how I felt when I first entered an A.A. meeting on the outside. I was desperate to be part of rather than separated from. When I identify myself as an alcoholic (and nothing else) there is most assuredly an automatic acceptance of my presence. If I add that I am an “and a” I separate myself from the group. If I start discussing problems other than alcohol I may hurt someone else. There are still many “pure” alcoholics. Suppose someone that is new to meetings is listening to me expound on my use of heroin. That new person cannot relate. They leave the meeting thinking this won’t help them. An alcoholic that cannot relate in an A.A. meeting has nowhere else to go.

We try to help bridge the gap between the meetings in the treatment facility and meetings outside of the facility. We can provide valuable information as to the location and time of meetings back in their area. Sometimes we can provide the name of a connected individual to help them get established. Because of anonymity issues we first get permission from the contact person to give this information.

When we think of Special Needs/Accessibilities we frequently only think of a person in a wheelchair. Of course, this is a very big obstacle for this person to attend most meetings. However, there are many other kinds of situations to be considered. Some of these issues might be found in your own home group.

Please imagine the following: The location is a clubhouse where two new young men are sitting as far away from the rest of the crowd as possible. One of the young men is moving anxiously in his chair. He is clutching a copy of the Big Book to his chest. He appears to be on the brink of tears. The other young man observes his anxiety and says “John, what is wrong?” Initially John has no response and so his friend repeats the question, “What is wrong, John?”

Finally John pulls himself together and says he doesn’t know what to do. These people keep talking about the solution being in this book. They answer his questions by telling him to read

the book. They tell him page numbers. They even gave him a free copy. But he can't read and he is afraid to tell them that.

Another situation to be considered is a person who is hard of hearing. With or without hearing aids it is difficult for them to tune out multiple sounds. Cross talking, or private conversations, is extremely distracting to this individual. For the individual who is unable to read or is hard of hearing it may be that person's only opportunity to hear the message that day and we have just taken it away. I attend many meetings when I don't have a care in the world. I try to remind myself that this is not true for many and I need to be respectful of their needs.

Currently, the message of A.A. is available in various formats, including on compact disc and on cassette tapes. The main texts of A.A. literature—the books *Alcoholics Anonymous* and the *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*—are available on compact disc, as well as in Braille and ASL. There also are large-print editions of these and other A.A. publications. This year, at the conference, we were able to watch the latest American Sign Language publication on “A.A. for the Alcoholic with Special Needs.” It is noted that ASL publications also provide English subtitles. The reason is that English is often the second language for those who subscribe to the ASL message.

Here are some Treatment/Special Needs/Accessibility items to be considered but not limited to: wheelchair accessibility; steps or ramps to negotiate for those that have difficulty walking; making sure the height of the literature and the coffee area are reachable for those who are in wheelchairs; helping ensure that those hard of hearing get locations closer to the speaker; curbing cross talking and respecting those hard of hearing; assisting those who have trouble seeing; having audio capabilities that can be loaned; obtaining ASL information for the deaf and Braille information for the blind; and locating smoking areas far enough away from the entrance that we don't cause others to have breathing problems.

In closing, we hope that discussing this subject brings a broadened viewpoint back to our areas.

“Sponsorship Through All Three Legacies” Lynda R., Delegate Panel 62, Area 26 Kentucky

My name is Lynda and I am an alcoholic. I have the privilege and pleasure of serving as the Panel 62 Delegate for Area 26, Kentucky. My sobriety date is June 29, 1986, and my home group is the St. Matthews Group in Louisville, Kentucky. I'd like to thank Chet for his loving invitation to participate this weekend.

When I saw “Sponsorship Through All Three Legacies” on the list of suggested topics, I knew this was what I wanted to talk about. I was blessed with a sponsor that passed all three legacies on to me, without my even knowing it.

Webster's defines legacy as something transmitted by or received from an ancestor or predecessor or from the past; that is, something that's been passed on to us and that we will pass on to others. The three legacies of Alcoholics Anonymous are Recovery, Unity, and Service. Recovery gives us the opportunity to clear away the wreckage of our past and learn to live happy, productive, sober lives. Unity provides us with a fellowship, made up of people who

share a common problem and solution, who are there to support us in our recovery. And Service affords us with an avenue to fulfill our primary purpose, that of carrying our message to the still-suffering alcoholic so that he or she may find recovery. None of these legacies stands alone, they all support one another. I needed the love and support of the Fellowship to recover and for the Fellowship to continue and grow I need to serve it.

Our pamphlet “Questions and Answers on Sponsorship” describes the process of sponsorship in A.A. as “An alcoholic who has made some progress in the recovery program shares that experience on a continuous, individual basis with another alcoholic who is attempting to attain or maintain sobriety through A.A.” At my very first meeting, I heard the suggestion that I should get a sponsor. I didn’t take that suggestion. The idea of sharing my life with someone and being willing to accept their guidance didn’t sit well with me. I didn’t see the value in it. I figured that I was a pretty bright girl, there’s a book to read, and I can do this on my own. That was my best thinking. It took several years of becoming more and more miserable and watching the program work for you before I was willing to take the suggestion and I asked a woman to sponsor me. She had what I wanted—she’d been sober less time than I, but she sparkled with life. Though reluctant to do so (and at her sponsor’s urging), she agreed to sponsor me. She’d watched me and she knew I was arrogant and not likely to take direction. So right off the bat she told me, “If you want what I have, you’ll do what I do and if you don’t, we’re done.”

Notice she said *do what I do*, not *do what I say*, a subtle but important difference. Everything about my recovery was about to change. She asked me to meet her at a meeting forty-five minutes before it started. Once there she stood beside me and greeted people at the door, encouraging me to introduce myself to them and to offer them a cup of coffee. Then she asked me to help her clean up after the meeting, by washing coffee cups and ashtrays. This became my normal routine at the six to eight meetings a week that we attended together. She was gently encouraging me to participate in the Fellowship and to be of service to the group. What this did for me was make me feel like I belonged there. For someone who’d always felt like she was on the outside looking in, this sense of belonging filled me with hope.

I was told “get in the car” a lot, and we’d be off on some sort of A.A. adventure—a Twelfth Step call, a picnic, a roundup, a campout, or just out for coffee. These were not optional excursions and if it had been up to me, I probably would have said no, because I was afraid—afraid of you and what you’d think of me. This woman, who at the time really didn’t like me, dragged me everywhere so I could experience the unity, love, and support of the Fellowship.

But there was more to this than fellowship. She invited me to her home every week, where we would spend an hour or two together. We studied the Big Book, line by line and word for word. She guided me through the Steps as they’re laid out in the book, sharing her own experience with each. But she didn’t stop with the Steps; she believed the Traditions were just as important. So using the *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions* and the Grapevine’s “Traditions Checklist,” we studied them, too. The principles found in the Steps enabled me to rediscover and get right with God, figure out who I was, clean up my past, and become useful to others. The principles found in our Traditions taught me how to work and play well with others, both inside and outside of A.A. I learned how important Unity is to the survival of a group and how my actions had the power to affect any group that I’m in, whether that’s my marriage, my family, my job, my friends, or my A.A. group. For me, putting the common welfare of anything

first was foreign and it's no easy task, but in learning how to be unifying instead of divisive by practicing the principles found in our Traditions, my relationships with people vastly improved.

That loving sponsor also introduced me to general service. She was a General Service Representative (G.S.R.) and she took me to district and area Meetings. She explained that every member of Alcoholics Anonymous has the responsibility of ensuring that Alcoholics Anonymous would be there for those who need it in years to come. She encouraged me to read *A.A. Comes of Age*, *Pass It On*, *Language of the Heart* and *Dr. Bob and the Good Old Timers*. Having read our history, I began to understand that responsibility. We studied the *The A.A. Service Manual Combined with Twelve Concepts for World Service*, where I was introduced to twelve more principles that taught me about trust, responsibility, and accountability; again, not only as they apply in Alcoholics Anonymous, but as they apply in my everyday life. She encouraged me to "never say no to an A.A. request," and thus far that has served me well. Every time I say yes, I'm opening myself up to opportunities to continue to learn and grow. Saying yes puts me where I need to be—of service to God and to the Fellowship that saved my life. It's gratitude in action. Sometimes that's been inconvenient, but it's never been a disappointment.

I am grateful to have been raised in A.A. by someone whose recovery was based upon all three legacies. She gave me a priceless gift in helping to make my foundation strong. Today I understand and appreciate that I need help in this journey. I have both a sponsor and a service sponsor, who share their many years of experience in sobriety and service. Today I'm blessed to serve as a recovery sponsor for five incredible women and as a service sponsor for a handful of others. All of these sponsor-sponsee relationships help me to stay in the middle of A.A. I am rarely bored and always grateful.

Thank you for being here and thanks for listening.

“A.A. as a Resource for Professionals: Facilitating Effective Referrals to A.A.” Homer M., Delegate Panel 63, Area 51 North Carolina

In today's busy, time-compressed world, A.A.'s access to the professional community is often limited and is of short duration at best. The ability to effectively provide simple, straightforward suggestions to help the professional refer clients, patients, work associates, students, etc. to the rooms of Alcoholics Anonymous is vital Twelfth Step work.

Based on experience of the C.P.C. coordinators for Area 51, North Carolina, and having hosted "A.A. Informational Booths" at a number of professional conventions and conferences, six suggestions to help make effective referrals have been identified and are easily communicated via an A.A. business card. This is simple and effective!

Most visitors to booths at professional conferences and conventions are available for just a matter of minutes, and most do not want a bunch of pamphlets to carry around the events. The good news is that most professionals are in the habit of retaining business cards.

An example of the card we have used in Area 51 for the last five years is available for each of you. The key information on the front side of the business card has a link to all of the basic information and a single point of contact for our Fellowship: aa.org and a permanent e-mail address. Yes, the e-mail

address will get you a personal response and aa.org connects to all of the key information, like meeting locations, literature, and local contact info. The copy reads:

Information about Alcoholics Anonymous aa.org

Meetings: US/Canada/Worldwide/Online Literature Pamphlets/Publications/Videos Local Contacts: Phone number and Web site Area Contact: cpcpl@aanorthcarolina.org

On the reverse side of the card are the six suggestions to facilitate an effective referral by the professional. The suggestions are based on experience, A.A. pamphlets for professionals, the Big Book and our A.A. guidelines. They are general in nature so they either apply or can be adapted as needed. Most professionals will not be able to do all six, so we typically recommend that they do the ones they can. This is meant to be attractive—not promotional or instructional!

Suggestions for Making an Effective Referral to A.A.:

- 1. Attend two Open A.A. Meetings: experience-based referral**
- 2. Provide Literature: meeting schedule, “A.A. at a Glance,” “Is A.A. for You?”**
- 3. Provide personal A.A. phone number (gender specific)**
- 4. Explain types of A.A. meetings: Open, Closed, format**
- 5. Consequences: as appropriate**
- 6. Follow-up: ask for report back**

The first three suggestions are preparation for making the referral.

1. Attend two Open A.A. Meetings: experience-based referral.

The best way to refer an alcoholic to A.A. is from personal experience by attending an Open A.A. meeting. Anyone may attend an Open meeting; only persons with an alcohol problem may attend a Closed meeting.

The professional will learn what really happens in a meeting and will then be referring based on personal experience. This gives them immediate credibility. The alcoholic will know the professional understands what they want the alcoholic to do.

2. Provide Literature: meeting schedule, “A.A. at a Glance,” “Is A.A. for You?”

Suggest that the professional pick up some A.A. literature at the meeting for the alcoholic. A minimum of three specific pamphlets includes a local meeting schedule, as well as the pamphlets “A.A. at a Glance” and “Is A.A. for You?”

Keep a supply of this information available for the alcoholic! Most local groups make the pamphlets available to professionals at no cost. A supply of pamphlets is also available at the local intergroup office at a nominal cost.

3. Provide personal A.A. phone number (gender specific)

While at the meeting or by calling the local A.A. answering service, get the name and a phone number for both a male and a female A.A. member to give to the alcoholic. By giving them personal contact information, it is more likely they will make a contact and attend a meeting. Just suggesting that an alcoholic go to a meeting almost never works. The denial is too great. Also,

A.A. urges gender-specific referral of local contacts: men helping men, and women helping women, for obvious reasons!

When talking to the alcoholic, give them the literature and local contact phone number, then encourage them to go to an A.A. meeting. Tell them about your experience, explain what to expect and urge them to call the A.A. member to meet them at the meeting or to take them to meeting.

4. Explain types of A.A. meetings: Open, Closed, format

There are many types of meetings: Open or Closed, with formats like speaker, literature, discussion, etc. Give them a choice. Help them decide which meeting to attend.

5. Consequences: as appropriate

As the alcoholic's 'trusted' professional, discuss the consequences of continuing drinking and not getting help. The consequences will be different for each professional occupation. Stress the progressive nature of the illness, as well as the health, financial, employment, relationship and legal consequences.

The Big Book has some material on consequences in Chapter 10, "To Employers." On page 141 it states "If you are sure your man does not want to stop, he may as well be discharged. You are not doing him a favor by keeping him on. Firing such an individual may prove to a blessing to him. It may be just the jolt he needs." Page 147 includes the advice "If you are sure he doesn't mean business, there is no doubt you should discharge him. . . . But you should feel no obligation to keep him on, for your obligation has been well discharged already." (Reprinted with permission, A.A.W.S.)

Most organizations today have well-defined policies regarding both the process and options for employees with an alcohol problem.

6. Follow-up: ask for report back

The professional's personal relationship will often make a difference in encouraging the alcoholic to seek help; thus, it is important to follow-up. Be sure to ask about the alcoholics experience in A.A. and encourage them to continue get help. Just knowing that you are interested and will be following up just may be the motivation needed to find a way out of the living hell of alcoholism.

Also, the Corrections service literature clearly defines the process that works best in a corrections environment and the consequences are a major motivator for the alcoholic.

In closing, I would like to again emphasize that these are suggestions, and most professionals will not have time to do all of them. Encourage them to use as many as practical in their specific situations. Remind them that they may just save the alcoholic's life. These suggestions may be adapted to almost every situation, when anyone anywhere reaches out for help.

“Carrying the A.A. Message Using New Technologies” Tom H., Delegate Panel 62, Area 16 Atlanta

Imagine if you will, Bill Wilson at six months sober, alone and out of town on a failed business venture as he paces through a hotel lobby struggling not to join that happy crowd in the hotel bar. It's the year 1935. Bill cannot call a Central Office and find a meeting. He can't hop online on his iPad or smartphone and join an online meeting. He can't Foursquare his location inviting A.A.s to an online Mayflower Hotel meeting. He can't write on his Facebook wall that he is lonely and thirsty. He can't open an app on his phone and read some A.A. literature. No, Bill has to look through a phone directory which doesn't have a search engine. Bill has to go through the alphabet and place nickel after nickel into a pay phone, hoping and praying that someone will understand and help him in his plight to stay sober.

If it was 1935 and I was the person answering Bill's call and plea for a drunk to talk to, I might either hang up or lead him to the insane asylum. Imagine receiving this call before A.A. was born, when alcoholism was a great stigma. Imagine Bill making the call. I don't know about you, but I think I would have succumbed to that happy crowd in the hotel bar. In today's world if you are as desperate to stay sober as Bill was your options for finding help are many.

Today if you are backpacking your way across Southeast Asia, or you are in a very remote place in Kenya and you become lonely and thirsty, the first thing most of us would do is look to see if we have a Wi-Fi connection. We might send out a text message or leave a voicemail with our sponsor. We might share our situation with our Facebook friends and within seconds they would provide us several ways to catch an online meeting or offer to do a virtual face-to-face meeting on Skype. Before we know it there are several of our friends in a chat room, and through the advancement in technology we feel connected to our life-saving program all while backpacking across a foreign country. And even if your internet connection is poor or absent you might notice a Big Book icon on your phone or change from music to speaker tapes on your iPod. The multitude of ways to carry and receive our message of hope is vast and growing.

The ways in which technology advancement have helped us reach and save lives since Bill's time is truly amazing. If Bill were alive today I'm certain he would want to be Skyped into meetings like this all over the world. I am also certain Bill would remind us of the importance of the face-to-face meeting at his coffee table with Ebby that began his, and our, journey to sobriety.

I am sure there a few in this room who have never worked with a wet drunk, and for others it has been many years since we have. My last wet drunk call was a little over a year ago. I had the privilege of answering a plea from the Twelve Step hotline in my area. Ken was drunk when I picked him up and took him to a meeting. He kissed my neck as I dropped him off and told me he loved me. At first I was uncomfortable with a neck kiss, and then I realized I'll take a neck kiss over vomit in my lap any day. Ken is not sober today, but I think it's interesting how Ken came to A.A. Ken first contacted a Facebook friend who was in Arizona at the time. While she was on Facebook with Ken she contacted the Intergroup hotline closest to Ken. The hotline called me and then I called Ken. My face-to-face meeting with Ken started through a social networking site that is barely nine years old but lead to an old-fashioned face-to-face and "get in the car."

It seems to me that new technologies can enhance and, dare I say, in some ways replace the ways in which the new alcoholic is reached and the current member is helped. Similarly, in some ways without new technologies some people might not be sober. There are people in remote communities throughout the world that depend upon an internet connection to speak with another alcoholic. There are people today who have never sat down at a coffee table with their sponsor, and yet the bond they feel with the person who saved their life using technology parallels the bond I feel with my sponsor with whom I've spent many face-to-face hours. If Bill were alive I think he would embrace this technology and not be the least bit afraid of it. I think Bill would try to find ways to use it to its fullest advantage. The importance should be placed on helping the conversation between two drunks happen instead of trying to make it happen a certain way.

Ken found A.A. through technology, and in the old-fashioned way I picked him up almost every night and took him to a meeting. We spent hours talking. The new technology created an old-fashioned one-on-one. I have a sponsee who did his Fifth Step with me via Skype while he was traveling the world. He might as well have been in my living room. I could see his face and hear his voice; nothing was lost.

Is there more we can do as a fellowship to embrace and use new technologies to carry the message? Yes, I believe there is; it begins with having more faith and less fear. I believe the growth of our fellowship depends upon finding ways to embrace and use new technologies to carry our life-saving message to those still-suffering inside and outside of our rooms.

“CLOSING REMARKS”

“Closing Remarks” Michele Grinberg, Class A (nonalcoholic) Trustee

This has been a forum with a theme that I can state in one word: Love. Of course, being a woman of many words, I have a few more I would like to share.

First, I think the love and enthusiasm for this Fellowship as expressed thru service has been amply on display this weekend. The thoughtful presentations by staff - Phyllis, Ami and Julio, as well as by your trustees Billie and Chet were followed by good questions. The delegates' sharing on their service topics were excellent. I look forward to getting their presentations so I can reflect on their ideas. What a great and loving group of people. Also, the workshops, both full forum and smaller break-out sessions, raised many serious questions and various solutions.

Second, Chet, who has been your regional trustee for only a few months, demonstrated his aptitude for his new service position. He was calm and seemed very comfortable.

Third, I had the privilege of knowing what the volunteers, working in conjunction with Julio and Ivy, did to make this a successful forum. What a good example of service to the Fellowship. Thank you.

Fourth, let me share a few things I heard that I know I will be thinking about this fall as I continue my service journey with you.

I heard lots of questions and comments about electronic communications and we had a workshop on anonymity and social media. We heard questions or had reporting on - e-books, online sales, group locators, websites, daily quotes, online meetings, etc. I also observed lots of personal phone and iPad use. The change in how we communicate the A.A. message of hope is no longer some future event - it is here. I am personally glad to see that the rising generation in A.A. is wrestling with how to use the technology while maintaining anonymity. It is up to us who understand the importance of anonymity as part of recovery to teach it to those who don't yet get it.

I saw many people at the A.A. Unity: Handling the Disruptive Member workshop and heard a willingness to talk about the hard issues of what a group may do about troubled people who may threaten the unity and common welfare of the group. I hope to hear much more sharing on what groups are doing in this area.

Finally, I heard love and concern and ideas for how to light dark areas, how to make service attractive and how to properly welcome new people with alcoholism "and a" or new people coming from treatment centers. Basically what I heard was get a group in the car and go to isolated meetings. Lead by example; share the love, share the enthusiasm, teach our principles - support sponsorship. In other words, the fundamentals of the program remain the same whatever the variations in how people get to A.A. these days.

Thanks for a wonderful forum and for sharing your love and enthusiasm with me.
Have a safe journey.

Let's close with responsibility statement.
