

focus



The Newsletter of Alcoholics Anonymous Area 86

Panel 56 Delegate's Report to Area 86

Greetings to all members of Western Ontario General Service Area 86. I hope you all have had a sober, fun and service-filled summer and early fall season. I have been quite busy around the Area since the Spring Assembly having attended more than a dozen Conventions, Roundups and service events. I wish to extend my heartfelt thanks to all of the Districts and special committees for their hospitality, generosity and kind invitations to attend the many events I have enjoyed this year. AA is alive and well and very active and sociable in Western Ontario. I have learned and shared many things about service and people, and I have grown. I am glad to have been allowed to attend the Eastern Canada Forum, Area events and to represent all of you and AA as a whole.

There are a few things that I would like to share with you in this brief article. Please ask your General Service Representative for a copy of the Box 459 newsletter from New York, or you can subscribe to it yourself. This is your newsletter from the GSO. A detailed list of all actions and activities of this year's General Service Conference is in the Final Report which will be available from your District Committee Member after this Area Assembly. This is also your report on the business of AA. Please have a look at it as well.

Overall contributions to the GSO are 13% ahead of last year at this time. This may reflect an increased awareness of AA groups in supporting the services they receive. Area 86 group contributions to New York are 4% greater than in 2005. Thank you. I suppose I shall continue to talk about where money and spirituality *do mix* in AA...and that is in the basket at our home groups. Have you considered making a "Birthday Plan Contribution" to AA?

The Trustees Literature Committee has sent out a request for First Nations members to submit their stories for the revised pamphlet "AA for the Native North American." Please contact me if you would like more information.

The Big Book of Alcoholics Anonymous is now available in 52 languages and at the end of June of this year 528,796 had been

distributed. Do you read the Grapevine magazine, and do you have a subscription? Does your group subscribe?

All of our subcommittees are working diligently to help us carry the message of recovery in AA to the alcoholic who still suffers, and also to the members of our fellowship in Western Ontario. They need your encouragement and help in this vital 12th Step work. Here in Western Ontario and at the GSO, we are looking at ways to increase communication and sharing within the Fellowship.

A Delegate can never say, "I have nothing to do!" The telephone and emails and real mailings keep me constantly occupied. I have read, answered, written and presented numerous reports; and answered literally hundreds of questions and requests for sharing or help. My cup is full and overflowing. I have drunk gallons of coffee, and spent many, many hours with friends and members of this wonderful fellowship. I have changed the oil in my car three times this summer, and it seems that my bags are always half-packed. My Grapevine calendar and pocket planner are filled with things to do and deadlines for doing them. But, most of all, my heart is filled and re-filled with gratitude and love for Alcoholics Anonymous. I thank you so much for the awesome privilege and honour of being your trusted servant and delegate. I pray that I have served you well. Thank you for keeping me active and sober. Yours in humble and grateful service.

Delegate, Panel 56, Tom V.

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A FATHER AND HIS SON

I have a grown son, one of our four children. It seemed to me he was harmed the most by my drinking. Lately I have been thinking about making amends, but the moment never came that seemed right. Last Wednesday for some reason I decided to go to a speaker meeting I seldom attend anymore. A downpour almost stopped me, but it cleared and I drove to town. When the chips were being offered from the back of the room my son was there to get his desire chip, neither knew the other was there until then. You cannot imagine the wave of gratitude that swept over me. I had prayed for the knowledge of God's will for me and the power to carry it out. Had I missed that meeting I would have missed a moment I'll not forget. This is God doing for me what I cannot do for myself.

GSR, Erin Winners Group, Doug M.

editor's focus:

this your Area 86 Newsletter. When I tell you that, I hope you all realize that it is indeed your Newsletter. Some of you were asked to compose articles for this edition and here they are for you all to read. The articles are all well written with excellent research and I appreciate the effort.

I need feedback, comments, etc. good and bad from you so please send by email only please to: www594482@hotmail.com

Newsletter Chair, Mike W.

"Items of current interest or under consideration within Area 86". Opinions expressed are those of the authors and may not necessarily reflect those of AA as a whole, the Editor or the members of the Area Committee.



focus: The 12 Concepts

A continuation of articles from the Spring focus

Serenity isn't freedom from the storm; it is peace within the storm.

CONCEPT IV The Fourth Concept of World Service provides that at all responsible levels, we should maintain a traditional right of participation, thus allowing a voting representation in reasonable proportion to the responsibility that each must discharge.

In this Concept, AA provides that all groups within AA should be given a right to participate in the affairs of AA. All groups of alcoholics and all staff (which include non-alcoholics) should be permitted the right to vote in proportion to the responsibility they discharge. This is our insurance that every skilled element needed to make an informed decision has a right to participate and provides a voice for people with knowledge of how things operate day-to-day.

The "Right of Participation" gives each world servant a voting status, commensurate with his (or her) responsibility, and "Participation" further guarantees that each service board or committee will always possess the several elements and talents that will ensure effective functioning.

In 1957 Bill W. wrote to us that at the level of this Conference, we are all equal. Mind you, note that the appointees have been set in a great minority to the candidates to ensure that Area Delegates will always have adequate powers of persuasion. Although the appointees do have the power to override the wishes of the candidates, the chance of this ever happening is slim. The appointees realize that a truly unpopular decision by them will mean the end of their power in the long run.

The Second Tradition is the source of all of the authority, which, as you know, lies in the group conscience of which this Conference is the articulate voice worldwide.

Although not able to vote directly at the General Service Board or the General Service Conference, any member of an AA group can ask their group to vote on an issue. If it is passed at a group meeting then their GSR will bring it to the District Business meeting. If it is voted on and passed here then the DCM is responsible to bring the issue to the attention of the Area Delegate by way of the Area Committee Meeting. Issues that arise and are voted on and passed at the Area level also come to the attention of the Area Delegate. He or she in turn is responsible therefore to carry the concerns that originate at the group level and are passed on at the Area level to the next meeting of the General Service Conference. Thus a ratio of power and responsibility is maintained while ensuring that the concerns of every alcoholic can be brought to the attention of The General Service Conference or the General Service Board.

We will soon be electing a trustee at large for Canada. A candidate from our area was chosen at the August Area meeting. The election will be held by Trustees and members of the General Service Conference.

A perfect example of how voting representation remains proportionate to the responsibility each must discharge.

Alternate DCM, District 13, Jim S.

focus: Women in Service

straight away. I took a couple of leaps at it. I guess I just wasn't convinced I was alcoholic. I was also unable to commit to anything, did not have a sponsor. In fact, I did pretty much all the wrong things. The result of the predictable slips was I began to realize I had better start committing myself to something and staying with it if I truly did want to stop drinking. In other words, I began to do what was "suggested." It was really tough for me to admit I couldn't "go it alone" but I was beginning to listen.

My service background ranged from the usual group level tasks at the start of making coffee, setting up, cleaning ashtrays, and greeter. Pretty soon I found my way into general service. Very early on while I was volunteering at Women's Detox, someone was heard to complain at an Inter-group meeting that no women ever seemed to pick up women from the Detox to take them to meetings, I answered that challenge myself and did just that for several years. As the years rolled by, I found myself working also in CPC and PI. Taking all the usual steps along the way, I followed the route from group officer, GSR and so on. I stuck with it until becoming first Alternate and then DCM. I still volunteer with meetings at Women's Detox where possible. In the meantime I continue with my sub-committee functions which are a great source of satisfaction and fulfillment. Seems that every task I undertook has lasted over a few years in each slot. It's important to note here that my family has been and is supportive of all my efforts.

I sometimes feel when it comes to speaking in front of meetings, that I am not very exciting, rather I'm a shy and quiet person. I have no desperate horror stories to relate and luckily for me, I still managed to retain my original job. I fit my AA work in around that and my family. I have, of course, since learned from my family the depth of their concern, even when I thought (like all the rest of us) that I was fooling everyone. Of course I was only fooling myself.

I have always been a helpful individual so the idea of being of service to others was not a foreign one. However, my years of service and involvement with AA have taught me many, many things. I found that I was able to commit to things, and live up to that commitment. I discovered I truly loved the work I was doing in AA.

I discovered that helping others with no thought of reward is just the ticket for helping me reclaim my life. I'm not sure when the obsession to drink left me but I do know it does not matter when, just that it has.

Working with others in any way has also helped me to identify my character defects and work at shedding them. **See page 3**

Although sober for over 10 years, I didn't get started,

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Continued from Page 2 - Women in Service

Or at least, tempering them to the point where I could find a sense of balance. An ongoing task.

Being in service, I find I am continuously learning from a wide variety of sources. I can truthfully say that becoming accountable and useful has led to my enjoying a happy and purposeful life - in every facet of my life, I might add.

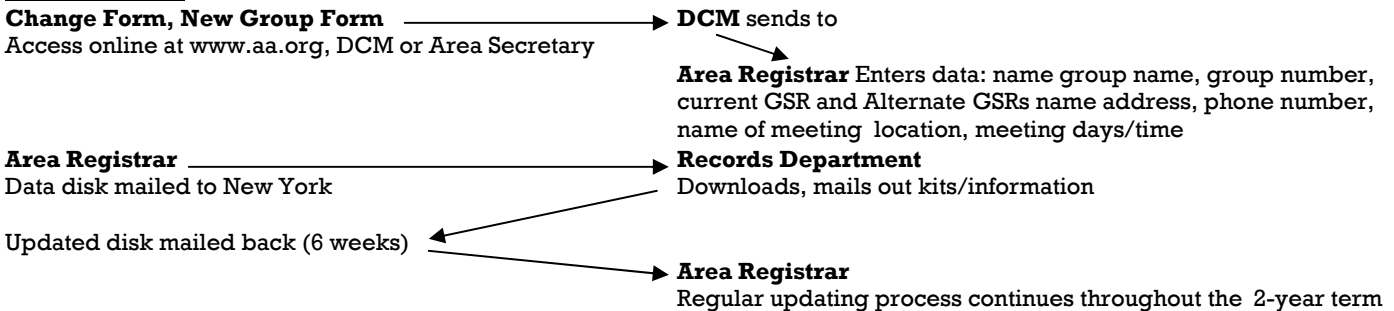
I enjoy my job, not only love but also enjoy my family and have developed friendships in this Fellowship that are without equal. I do have a particular affinity to young women, as I realize the difficulty so many of us have with juggling jobs, raising children and attending meetings. But I do wish to encourage each and every one of you to do as much as you possibly can. It is true that you will be "amazed before you're halfway through."

Author's name withheld by request

focus: Secretary and Registrar**Looking at Things from Another Side**

When asked to share about the duties of the job as Registrar / Secretary I immediately thought of the

2006 'take off' with this position. It started with...what have I gotten myself into!! Registration change forms completed by the DCMs at the end of 2005 came flying in. There was an inundation of emails, phone calls and tracking down some of the change forms which had taken a different route. Our Area keeps track of our growing numbers via a computer program. As with many programs this presented some difficult moments. The program didn't arrive until March and installing it was a new adventure! To top it off my typing speed had to increase so we'd have the information to New York by March 30 for the AA Directory. Keeping records on alcoholics can be a bit challenging at times. Member information changes, new groups form, some groups close and forms can be missing information. Yet since takeoff things have settled down and what a fascinating experience this has become. I see the value, progress and efficiency in all this.

THE PROCESS:**Why is it important to register?**

1. To participate in services provided by GSO to AA groups.
2. Our co-founders wrote about "present members of Alcoholics Anonymous being links in an ancient chain of alcoholics stretching back through time".
3. Records passed on provide insight in our efforts to reach the alcoholic who still suffers.
4. This is a vital part of keeping "unity among the groups".
5. It keeps us in mind of our Traditions.
6. It provides a link and facilitates communication between Area and our General Service Office.

At Area Meetings and Assemblies the Secretary takes the roll, records the minutes, a report is given which outlines what is occurring with the position, and current mailing addresses are updated. Following these meetings the minutes are typed, photocopied and mailed out. Keeping everyone informed requires the pertinent paperwork be mailed out within a time frame to the DCMs, Officers, Past Delegates, and Trustees which is then disseminated to our members. Time consuming?...it is. Scheduling life around some meetings? ...it is. Worth it? ...it is!

While daydreaming in Grade 9 of where I wanted to be other than where I was a thought came to me...when 'I grow up' I think I'll become a Secretary. There have been those days I wish I could have stopped dreaming ...my Higher Power continues to impress me with his sense of humour!

This AA service responsibility has me sitting right at the front of the room. I can't hide among you. I'm able to see the many faces that are in this vast wonderful program of ours. And over and over words said to me from the beginning of sobriety come to mind... work the steps, find a sponsor, read the Big Book, go to meetings and get into service and your life will change and change it has.

This position continues to be a great learning opportunity and a way to serve the Fellowship which saved my life.

Area 86 Secretary / Registrar, Marg C.

focus: AA in China

We arrived separately in Beijing, but were both greeted by one of the ex-patriot AA members living in Beijing. These "expats", AA members from other countries, have had their own AA meetings in China for many years. It is only a recent development that Chinese nationals have formed their own AA groups. The relationship between the ex-pat groups and the new Chinese nationals groups is very cordial (like a big brother). Several of the ex-pats act as advisors to the Chinese

trusted servants of their new General Service Office.

We were driven from our hotel in a very western city-centre section across the Tienamen Square to a much older section of the city where the GSO is located in a suite of ground-floor rooms in a small local hotel. The GSO manager, Mr. Ma, met us there and showed us around the facilities.

He introduced us to some of the other GSO officers and AA group members.

The first room we entered was the Office area with a large

See Page 5

focus: Corrections

WHAT ABOUT CORRECTIONS IN AREA 86?

SOME STATISTICS

Of the 13 federal facilities in Ontario, Area 86 has 3 (one of which is the women's facility of Grand Valley); of the 33 Provincial facilities, there are 13 in Western Ontario (one of which is Vanier for women). As for young offenders, there are 5 secure facilities, 4 detention facilities and 24 of the 50 residences for open custody are all located in our Area. Up until its closure, Area 86 had Project Turn-around being the only boot camp for young offenders in the province which had weekly AA meetings.

ORGANIZATION

Of the 24 AA districts in Area 86, 19 of those districts have correctional chairs, all of whom are doing a fabulous job in keeping the inside AA meetings running. Along with the chairs of the District there are hundreds of dedicated AA volunteers. Some of the adult facilities have meetings every night of the week while others have fewer per week. Meetings in the facilities for young offenders depend on the authorities who operate the home as to whether there are AA meetings. Some authorities in such facilities believe that there is no need for AA, as young offenders are under the allowable drinking age. In many of the adult facilities there is provision for meetings on a one-on-one basis.

BRIDGING THE GAP

This AA program is not as well organized in Area 86 as it is in other areas. Bridging the Gap involves the set up and organization of contacts in and throughout AA Districts/Areas. When a district chair is advised that an inside member is being released from a correctional facility in his district and is being sent to a town in another district, the district chair where the facility is located gets pertinent information from the inside member as to his address and phone number after release. (This should include a postal code). This District chair then makes contact with the District chair where that town is located and relays the pertinent release information of the inside member. The chair of the District where the town is located then makes contact with outside members who are recorded as GAP members. The GAP member to be chosen as the contact should be close to the address where the inside member is being released. Postal codes can be used to ascertain this closeness. Arrangements are made so that the inside member is picked up on the day of his release at the address and taken to a meeting by the GAP member. The inside member is advised only of the name of the GAP member and no personal information is released. The GAP member should be willing to take the released member to meetings for about a week or so. In this way, the gap between being released from a correctional facility and being at an outside meeting is bridged. Also the fear of the unknown for the inside member is minimized. There should be a GAP program in each District even if there are no correctional facilities. As we all know, it is not only areas where there are correctional facilities that inside members are returned to.

The Area Correctional Chair becomes involved when the facility is located in one Area and the town where the inside member is to move is in another Area. The important point to remember is that whether the Area chair is involved or not, there has to be communication between district chairs to confirm that the GAP member is set up as well as needing to keep the release date confirmed or changed as the situation unfolds.

CORRESPONDING BETWEEN INSIDE AND OUTSIDE MEMBERS

Outside AA members can record their names with GSO through the use of a "Correspondence Form". There are people who would like to write to inside members and many inside members want outside contacts. It is through contacting GSO that the inside and outside members are advised of the pertinent information to make the correspondence contact. All efforts are taken to make certain that the outside correspondent and the inside member are not from the same Area. Great care is also taken in protecting the personal information of each correspondent.

SUMMARY

This article only touches on a very small part of what is happening in Corrections. If you would really like to know what is happening in Corrections, get involved. Contact your District chair or the GSR from your home group. He or she should be able to put you in touch with doing correctional work. Your rewards are limitless when you become involved in corrections. And do you know what else may happen? This 12th step work may take you out of yourself and the poor me's and help to keep you sober one day at a time. You will get back ten fold what you put in but remember 10 times nothing is still nothing.

Corrections Chair, Percy G.

Thanks for Carrying the Message

For those of us who are looking to update our knowledge of AA's events and activities I have found the ***FOCUS*** a much more **modern** and informative source for the whole of AA, especially since carrying the message is what it's all about.

Keeping the members in touch with our recovery and as the "12 & 12" states "how the society works" with a collection of interests from a dab of humor, upcoming events and to our Area Delegates updates is so refreshing. It certainly helps those of us who want to expand our knowledge in recovery and service and provides more insight as to how AA works.

Maybe this will inspire more members to become more active in service.

Whether it involves volunteering for committees through the interests provided in the newsletter or just sharing the message with others reinforces that AA needs to work as a whole.

Anyone, anywhere can find a contact through this medium to connect with almost anything they need. I like that an email address is provided in case there are any questions to keep the communication flowing.

"The tremendous fact for every one of us is that we have discovered a common solution. We have a way out on which we can absolutely agree, and upon which we can join in brotherly and harmonious action. This is the great news this book carries to those who suffer from alcoholism."

I am looking forward to reading the next issue. Way to go everyone and thanks for helping me in recovery.

focus: Editor

To keep the articles in the ***FOCUS*** as authentic as possible minimal editing has been done.

Corrections to grammar and spelling were applied.

Newsletter Chair
Mike W.

Concept V Since we have already learned in Concept IV that each of our trusted world servants is given the freedom of “The Right of Participation” in voting matters or when in debate, it follows that this same freedom of “Right of Appeal” ought to prevail.

When one of our AA world servants - whether in our staffs, committees, corporate boards or among trustees - feels that a majority has made a mistaken decision that could effect AA as a whole, they should feel it their duty to register a minority report to the conference. These “Right of Appeals” can frequently be right, but if not, ensure a thorough debate on decisions that have been made by an uninformed, misinformed, hasty or angry majority. This “Right of Appeal” allows the freedom of expression of minority feelings and opinions in our fellowship in which a lot of majority democratic societies don't have. My individual freedoms within AA are what helped me to keep coming back. Nobody ever told me that I couldn't belong or what I had to believe. As noted AA is a fellowship of minority privileges and liberties.

We are all aware that group conscience usually rules on most issues, we also realize that they cannot be fully informed of all AA World Service activities. This is where, as stated in Tradition 2, that trusted servants must be relied upon for their own information and judgment. As a result disagreements may occur between misinformed groups. Within the framework of the General Service Conference a small minority of trusted servants are relegated to act as the group conscience in AA affairs.

Once this trust was established, it was decided by the conference that a charter document be added that “would insure protection and respect for minorities”. This is of course reflected in our Third Legacy voting procedures. If a candidate cannot achieve a two thirds majority vote, his name with other minority candidates goes into a hat for a final deciding draw. Service Conference a small minority of trusted servants are relegated to act as the group conscience in AA affairs. Once this trust was established, it was decided by the conference that a charter document be added that “would insure protection and respect for minorities”. This is of course reflected in our Third Legacy voting procedures. If a candidate cannot achieve a two thirds majority vote, his name with other minority candidates goes into a hat for a final deciding draw. In this way the minority candidates have an equal chance with the majority's choice. It has been found that this method has strengthened the unity in choosing an elected official and has left no discontented minority. Another scenario of “Right of Appeal” is when a vote is being held at the conference level, a veto position can be taken by the trustees if there is not a two thirds conference quorum. This again can lead to further debate and minimize hasty or emotional voting. This, although, does not seem to occur often and a two thirds Delegate majority is usually accepted.

By recognizing minority privileges through this concept of “Right of Appeal”, Bill W. believed that he granted freedom to all minorities, whether being groups or individuals to perform their service duties in a confident and harmonious manner. Hence, all in AA service, majority or minority, may not be subjected to any tyrannical control.

DCM, District 25, Michael McC.

Continued from Page 3 - AA in China

table in the centre and various pieces of office equipment against the walls, and boxes of materials piled rather haphazardly around the room also. To the left of the entrance, a small narrow room had been created with a room divider to form a separate coffee/tea making area. We proceeded through this area to a doorway at the rear where we entered into a meeting room almost the size of the office area in front. The meeting room had two doors on the right and left walls leading to a utility room and a storage closet respectively. As in many AA rooms in Canada and the US, the Twelve Steps and the Twelve Traditions window-shades hung on the wall - only here they were in Chinese.

This was the room in which one ex-pat group held its meeting in English on Sunday mornings and where one of the Chinese nationals groups held its meetings on other days.

Doug and I presented a workshop here on the Saturday evening. It was attended by AAs who were ex-pats and Chinese nationals. It was an open meeting, so spouses attended also. In all, there were twenty-five people which nearly filled the room - a very large meeting by their usual standards for an AA meeting.

Doug did a presentation on the Asia/Oceania Service Meeting held that year. This is a zonal meeting for countries with a general service structure at which they share their experience in carrying the message inside their own nations and how they help one another to do the same. I gave a talk on the building of strong home groups, and the importance of such groups in building a strong service structure. Throughout our presentations, one of the ex-pats was interpreting our comments into Chinese. It was quite informal as questions occurred during and after the talks. It became obvious that there was a very strong desire among the Chinese members present to help AA grow. There was also obvious respect and cooperation between the ex-pats and the Chinese nationals. Questions centred on developing group conscience and on translations of AA literature.

The following morning, Doug was asked to do an AA talk at the ex-pats' group in the same room. This was an English-only meeting, but some Chinese nationals were in attendance also.

Overall, we found that there were some there who wanted to forge ahead as quickly as possible and others who were in favour of a more cautious approach. The reality is that AA is not yet an officially recognized entity in China. In fact, there are laws still in effect that prohibit the communication of Chinese nationals with foreigners. I did not learn of this until after all of our meetings were over, and one of the officers of the GSO shared about an AA member who was in this Beijing meeting being questioned about AA by a new person to the meeting. He went on to reveal that the AA member soon realized that he was being questioned not by an interested potential AA member, but by a government official of some sort who had been sent to investigate the group. Given the laws prohibiting such contact, this situation presented a very grave and imminent threat to those in the group.

However, no action has ever been forthcoming and the AA groups have taken heart that this means at least a tacit approval of what they are doing, and an agreement on the part of the government to allow AA to proceed with its work.

It is in this context that I view the continuing efforts of those ex-pat and Chinese national AA members as courageous in the extreme. In spite of the apparent danger of expulsion for the ex-pats and imprisonment for the Chinese nationals, they continue to communicate and work together in order to carry the message to the suffering alcoholic in that country. The interest in the success achieved through their efforts in the AA program is increasing among the doctors who deal with us alcoholics, and that need, we know, is ever-present.

I thank you for this opportunity to see AA on the front lines in China. It left me with a vision of energy and dedication that will live in my mind for as long as I live. I thank you also for the opportunity to share it with you in this article.

Trustee-At-Large/Canada, Murray McI.

***editor's focus:* Regional Forums**

How could communication with the Fellowship be improved?

Chairman of the Board "Dr. Jack" Class A (non-Alcoholic) Trustee 1961-1978 asked the question in the early 70s.

By 1974 Dr. Jack had become very interested in the idea of holding "Mini-Conferences" periodically in different locations of Canada and the U.S. Different members of the board and staff at the General Service Office would be in attendance. These are now known as Regional Forums.

The term "as often as possible" was determined to be a maximum of four Forums per year and as there are eight regions in Canada and the U.S. each region could schedule a Forum every two years *if it so desired*. However it was pointed out by a Delegate from Alaska that it was virtually impossible for large amounts of people in that Area to attend any Regional Forums. The same Delegate requested that a "Mini-Forum" in connection with the Alaska State Conference be put on by the General Service Board. This took place in 1979 with a reduced number of participants and a shortened agenda and in 1981 a similar event took place in Montana.

Today these events are now called "Special Forums" and are incorporated into the annual schedule where circumstances warrant. So far 146 Regional and Special Forums have been held.

Newsletter Chair, Mike W.

Regional Forum—Sudbury Sept. 15th to 17th 2006

404 very enthusiastic AA members and servants attended the Eastern Canada Regional Forum on September 15, 16 & 17, 2006, at the Radisson Hotel in Sudbury. Regional Forums are a place for the Trustees, Staff of the General Service Office in New York, and Area Delegates to gather with members for information exchange, education and mutual sharing on topics of interest and importance to the Fellowship today. Forums are informal sharing sessions and no business is conducted.

The cost of holding a Regional Forum is in the budget of the General Service Office. Meeting rooms, coffee and staff expenses are covered by GSO, and Delegates' expenses are usually paid by the Areas. Others attending pay their own costs themselves, and some of our Districts help defray the expenses for our District Committee Members to attend.

Area 86 had in attendance the Alternate Delegate, Area Secretary/Registrar, five Area Sub-Committee Chairs, and four Past Delegates. There were also eleven DCMs, several Alternate DCMs, many GSRs and other active group members from Western Ontario attending, and me. I am very pleased with the participation from our Area. Thank you.

This forum was chaired by Murray M., Class "B" (alcoholic) Trustee-at-Large/Canada, in the absence of Denis V., our newly elected Eastern Canada Regional Trustee who was very ill. Many of us were looking forward to meeting Denis for the first time and he was in our thoughts and prayers throughout the weekend. (*Sadly Denis V., Eastern Canada Regional Trustee passed away on September 20th, 2006.*)

Murray did a fine job and served us well, with humility and humour. The host Delegate was Francyne G., Panel 55

Delegate from Area 84, Northeastern Ontario, and a dedicated local committee chaired by Terry M. They deserve our thanks and applause for a job well done.

Our General Service Board Chairman, Leonard Blumenthal, Class "A" Trustee, from the Edmonton Alberta area, opened and closed the forum with his personal sharing and remarks. We also had a presentation, sharing and fellowship from Herb Goodman, another Class "A" Trustee. We are truly blessed by the dedication and love for us from these friends of AA. They log many miles away from home and family, and give untold hours, to serve our Fellowship and to represent AA to the world. There are seven Class "A" (non-alcoholic) Trustees in total on our General Service Board. Because these Class "A" Trustees are non-alcoholic and are not AA members, I can break their anonymity in this newsletter. Our past Regional Trustee, Robert P., also chaired some sessions and helped provide French/English translation when required. There was simultaneous translation from English into French provided for our French speaking brothers and sisters by GSO.

Several forum sessions were chaired by Greg M., the General Manager of our General Service Office, and Greg was called upon many times to field and answer questions from the membership. Also giving excellent staff presentations on behalf of the GSO were Valerie O., Coordinator for Regional Forums; Irene K., Cooperation with the Professional Community and Eastern Canada contact; and Robin B., Executive Editor of the AA Grapevine. These staff members provided a wealth of information, and were always available for questions, sharing and one-on-one talks in the hallways and during meals and coffee breaks. We should be very grateful for their service and dedication.

Each Delegate from the ten Areas in

Eastern Canada gave a service presentation or chaired a workshop session in English or in French. I was privileged to give a brief talk on Public Information which seemed to be well received. Your Alternate Delegate, Martin A., moderated a workshop on "Our Ultimate Authority-A Loving God" which was well attended, with interesting sharing of experience, strength and hope.

All of the ten Eastern Canada Areas were represented at the Forum. Many had to travel many miles and many hours by land and air. I was very glad to renew my friendships with Conference Delegates, Trustees and Staff. A few people who were unable to attend due to personal reasons were sorely missed by me and all attendees. I wish them good luck and Godspeed. Alternates stepped in to give their presentations or to ably cover the workshops for them.

We often ask why more people are not involved in General Service, but those who are involved are hard working and love this Fellowship. Part of the purpose for Regional Forums is to foster interest in AA service and this forum has surely done that. All who participated in the forum are better informed, more aware of the needs of the fellowship and the still-suffering alcoholic, and, I am sure, more enthusiastic in their membership and service in Alcoholics Anonymous.

There is a special forum, in Rimouski, Quebec next year. The next Regional Forum will be in Truro, Nova Scotia in 2008, and we hope to host the 2010 Eastern Canada Regional Forum somewhere in Western Ontario? I thank you for allowing me to attend and be a part of this wonderful forum experience.

Panel 56 Delegate, Tom V.

RESPONSIBILITY PLEDGE When anyone, anywhere reaches out for help I want the hand of AA always to be there and for that I am responsible.

focus: Being a GSR & Active in General Service



When a fellow member asked me if they could put forth my name to represent the group at district meetings I was humbled! Being actually chosen as their GSR was even further humbling! Yes, I have a number of years of Sobriety BUT I hadn't been attending regular AA meetings for quite some time!! Divine Intervention brought me

back! Another story! Another time! Fear set in! Can I do this job? Do I have the knowledge to be a trusted servant for this position? I am grateful to the group in recognizing what I needed to get me "active" like I had been in my early years of Sobriety. I kicked aside the "ya buts" and stepped up to the plate! It was time for me to Remember When, the Newcomers, and the people I'd forgotten by not coming out to meetings—the most important of all, the STILL SUFFERING ALCOHOLIC! Thank you, Brant Group! This is, has so far been, and will for-

ever be, a learning curve for me!

At monthly District Meetings

I have learned to appreciate the patience and tolerance given the GSRs as we learn together how the whole of AA works. At District we work through simple steps to resolve issues. We bear in mind at all times your group's conscience on matters. We also resolve issues always conscious of our conduct in relationship with the Twelve Traditions! I am learning where to look for good suggestions if my group faces a problem involving one of the Traditions. Each month at my Group Business Meeting I am able to impart an exchange of information on issues discussed at the District Level. Again, we sit as a group conscience to resolve any issues. We do not GOVERN! Each group hopefully experiences a sense of connectedness at all times!

In May I attended the Spring Assembly where I met many wonderful people serving as trusted servants for the whole of AA. I am looking forward to returning to learn more as GSR about how to maintain the unity and strength of our fellowship!

GSR, Brant Group, Barb S.

focus: Service Work.....the Ego Deflator

I was first introduced to service work as an Alternate General Service Representative for the Saturday Night Group in St. Thomas. Immediately, upon being elected, my head was in the clouds and ego took over. I knew right away that I was selected from above to make the changes that I had deemed necessary throughout my tenure in the program. After all, I was just short of being two years sober and had plenty of experience under my belt. I was also not fully restored to sanity at the time either.

Upon visiting the District General Service Representative meeting, and being told I had no voice, my ego was quickly deflated. Also, and much to my distain, I had to play a secondary role to the Group General Service Representative. Weeks later, whilst reading for the first time the Twelve Concepts and the AA Service Manual, I learned that we are but trusted servants and personal agendas would not be tolerated.

When I became the Group General Service Representative, and had listened repeatedly to statements that the Twelve Traditions, Twelve Concepts and the AA Service Manual were in place to keep a fellow like me in check, I began to see the wisdom of such.

I really do not remember when it happened, but my non-conformity for the Twelve Traditions, Twelve Concepts and the

AA Service Manual changed to conformity. I became an advocate for abiding by the Twelve Tradi-

tions and saw the deep-rooted protection in them for the good of AA as a whole and in maintaining the purity of our fellowship. I became active at District level in Public Information, and served as Public Information Officer for a term. After an absence of approximately two years, I became District Secretary, and then acting District Committee Member/Secretary.

Currently, I have the privilege of being the District Committee Member for District 6 Elgin. We have survived many colourful issues and structured debates, and much has been changed for the good of our District. When changes are made after informed group decisions, critics emerge and one finds that a District body cannot please everyone. When putting principals before personalities it seems fashionable for one to take a buf-feting, and if one wants to be popular, one should not get involved in service work. Putting principals before personalities may not be popular at times, but if we do not abide by them, we do for ourselves and those around us a great disservice.

Service work I believe is a facility for learning. It is a facility that taught me to put principals before personalities, and when abiding by these few words, we do for ourselves and those around us, an honourable service.

DCM, District 6, Jimmy H.

focus: Opinions

Got an opinion? I'd like to hear it.....email to mww594482@hotmail.com

I wonder how many of you in service can identify with a comment like this. I was two, maybe three years sober and my sponsor came up to me and asked me "what I was doing this weekend"? I was desperately trying to think of some kind of a lie that might get me out of what he had in mind. You see my sponsor knew what I was like and how I operated. He just said in a quiet direct manner "we're going to an AA Assembly in London". That was my initial introduction to General Service many years ago. I ask you this "how often is this happening today"? It's a shame we don't see that kind of sponsorship anymore.

How about money?.....this is always a hot topic. I see it over and over again, the questions and arguments spent on round-ups, conventions, assemblies, group anniversaries and individual birthdays. My guess is that it would be thousands of hours and countless dollars of cost. How many of us contribute to the birthday plan at GSO? Or more importantly even know what the birthday plan is? (See note on page 8). Our Delegate and Treasurer always talk about it. How many of us realize the importance of sending contributions to help the many services GSO provides to

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The Back Page

Concept VI “Where Knowledge meets Perspective”

What is the General Service Board of AA and how do they serve the fellowship?

Composition The General Service Board of Alcoholics Anonymous is composed of twenty one men or women that are divided into two classes:

Class A is comprised of seven non-alcoholics and Class B is comprised of fourteen alcoholics.

The fourteen alcoholics of Class B are divided into three categories: eight Regional trustees – six from the US, two from Canada, two trustees at large (one from the US and one from Canada). Four General Service trustees (two from AA World Services and two from the AA Grapevine).

The seven non-alcoholic trustees are chosen on the basis of their individual expertise in their chosen field coupled with a demonstrated interest in AA. They are individuals who are not and have not been afflicted by the disease of alcoholism and who express a profound faith in the recovery program upon which the fellowship of AA is founded.

There is always a balance on the General Service Board between the elected trustees from Class B and those from Class A, who were selected primarily for business and or other professional backgrounds, and this is where the knowledge and experience of the elected alcoholics meets the perspective of the chosen professionals.

Function of the General Service Board

The primary function of the General Service Board is to plan and execute the routine business affairs of the two AA service corporations. The board has this authority through the AA conference charter as approved by the General Service Conference.

Why was such Authority Delegated?

Time Constraints and Volume of Work. Just as AA groups find themselves unable to act decisively respecting all district, area and world service affairs the General Service Conference has the same issues. In its wisdom it found it necessary to delegate the authority to the General Service Board in order to meet the needs of fellowship. Specifically, only the trustees have the experience of AA and the breadth of wisdom to pass judgment upon and handle the large number of transactions now involved in both AA World Services and the Grapevine. In view of this Herculean task, they must be given the corresponding authority and leadership with which to discharge their duties. (See Concept X)

While our primary aim is a spiritual one, it must be remembered that this is essentially a business activity, which reflects the standard corporate governance model where the AA groups are shareholders, the delegates are the representatives and/or proxies at the annual meeting and the General Service Board Trustees are the “directors” of this “holding company”.

Subsequently, this holding company, the General Service Board actually owns and controls the subsidiaries that carry out our active world services.

DCM, District 21, Dan D.

AREA COMMITTEE

Area Delegate:

Tom V.

Area Alt. Delegate:

Martin A.

Area Chair:

Nancy J.

Area Treasurer:

Jack C.

Area Secretary/Registrar

Marg C.

Comments, feedback or articles contact
mwww594482@hotmail.com

Website address:
<http://www.area86aa.org>

The Birthday Plan

The 1955 General Service Conference approved the Birthday Plan, under which some members send a dollar a year for each year of sobriety they have in AA. Others use a figure of \$3.65, a penny a day for each year. Some give more but the figure cannot exceed \$2000 for any year.

From “AA Guidelines on Finance” with kind permission of AA World Services, Inc.

A little more on money

GSO spends \$139 per group to deliver services. This is the cost of services divided equally among our 58,000 listed groups. Another figure of \$323 is what it would be if divided by the 25,000 groups actually contributing to this office. As you may remember, approximately 43% of listed groups currently contribute to the General Service Office.

Continued from Page 7—Opinions

the fellowship worldwide? You see we AAs here in North America are very fortunate as we have countless assets at our disposal, sponsors, meetings, literature, etc. Now picture a woman trying to get sober in India a vast country with a population of over a billion. Not only is being a woman alcoholic a huge social stigma but very few ever make it to AA. And I'm sure there are women in India that need the help of AA in their lives.

How many big books have been translated into various languages enabling people all over the world to read it. Or making literature available and transported to many remote places in the world where AA is just starting to get its first roots. My good sober friends this all takes money. Our Delegate will tell you but check the statistics. Contributions to GSO are down. I believe the number of groups sending is 43%. Let's think about that next time we bring a coffee to our own group meeting and only put in a toonie. How about a promise to your group of \$5?

Our Trustee-at-Large/Canada Murray M. tells me that out of 190 countries worldwide AA has a presence in some form in 180. And no I couldn't figure out the 10 we are not in.....maybe somebody in Area 86 can.

There is a strong feeling that the next Chairman of the Board could be a Class B (Alcoholic) Trustee. It's never been done before. Jim C. and I asked Leonard Blumenthal (Class A non-alcoholic) Chairman of the Board and he says there is nothing in place to stop it other than it's never happened yet.

Newsletter Chair, Mike W.