

focus



The Newsletter of Alcoholics Anonymous Area 86

Focus: Regional Forums

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Regional Forums originated as the result of our then Chairman of the General Service Board, Dr. Jack Norris, in 1975. It was thought they could be a weekend sharing session that would not only be informational in nature but would allow the General Service Board, A.A. World Services Inc., both staffs of the Grapevine and our General Service Office and the Grapevine Board to keep in touch with the everyday member of Alcoholics Anonymous.

Originally, at the invitation of the various Regions in our Service Structure, there are eight in US/Canada structure, four Regional Forums were held each year. So in the normal two year term every Region would have the opportunity to host a Regional Forum. As in Thunder Bay this year there is also the

opportunity increases this number to five by the inclusion of an Additional Regional Forum. This type of Regional Forum is a rather new concept being brought forward by the General Service Board in October 2006. It is optional every eight years at the request of each region and there is then a selection process enacted at the Regional Luncheon at the General Service Conference to see which Area will actually host the Additional Forum. There is also the Local Forums, which can be brought to remote or sparsely populated areas or for underserved A.A. communities, there is however a cost to the Area for this, our dedicated Staff member, the Regional Forums Coordinator, will as in Regional Forums themselves advise the Local Forum Committee as to their obligations as far as expenses are concerned.

The next Forum to be held in our Region, which incidentally is the Eastern Canada Region, will be in Trios Rivieres Quebec next year. However in 2012 Area 86 will be hosting the Eastern Canada Forum in St. Catharine's in June. The last one held in our Area was 1990 in Niagara Falls, so it will be an exciting time for us to host members of our General Service Board and Staff both of the General Service Office and Grapevine. The Grapevine being a separate entity will also send along some of their board members. Remember there is no fee to attend any Regional Forum in any of the regions.

So why all the fuss? Why do we seem to be focused on these Forums as something special? The answer is easy, because they are. Although nothing can recreate the General Service Conference experience that the Delegates have the privilege to experience the Regional Forums can give the rank and file member of Alcoholics Anonymous a feel of just what goes on at the Conference.

There will be workshops and ask-it baskets but most importantly the people who run our affairs for us will be there to answer any question, whether you choose to do it at a formal time or ask it privately, you will

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Focus: Beginnings

My name is Martin and I am an alcoholic. In the days and months leading up to July 2006, the progression of alcoholism and its side effects of physical and mental deterioration had carried me to the point where I could no longer differentiate between the real and unreal, unable to stand as a man of responsibility

or reason. My health was horrible with anxiety, depression and high blood pressure. Emotionally I was no better since my wife and I had finally split up and we sold our only house that we had together. I can look back now at the power of this disease when I realize that with all this going on, I didn't care, it wasn't my fault and I needed a drink to forget about it.

I embarked upon my last binge for two months not caring what happened, if I lived or died because the world had forsaken me and didn't understand me at all. I refused phone calls from anyone, especially family honestly thinking that they had put me in this sorry position and that they should feel some of my shame.

For some reason though, I kept my appointment with a treatment center, probably to show everyone that I didn't really have a problem but that they needed to try and understand me better.

My life was about to change the instant I walked into Homewood Health Centre. I was hung over and very tired and I wanted to leave but I didn't. At my first group meeting I introduced myself and described myself as being nervous and confused. To my amazement others came up to me and related to my feelings and shared other things that made me feel less alone. I began to realize that something was wrong and that these people had an answer. Attending my first week of classes, eating proper meals and even throwing in a little exercise made me feel stronger. On the ninth day of treatment I had a moment of clarity for lack of a better expression and felt compelled to walk up to my room and write. Maybe I was about to journal, but what came out is what I consider to be the turning point in my recovery and I would like to share what I wrote in that tiny room on August 3 2006.

From doom and sorrow, pity and guilt
Crying in despair
A lonely man reaches out
Hoping someone cares

I've reached the bottom, I am cold
I need to see some light
I don't know where it is I'm going
But I know I need to fight

This ugly downward spiral beckons
It needs to take me back
I turn and face this evil foe
I'm ready to attack

A Higher power calls to me
Come with me, take my hand
You need not be alone again
I'll help you understand

A flower blossoms in my heart
I start to see a path
Can I become the stronger man
To quell this demon's wrath?

The power of God, the gift of love
Will help me see this through
And if I ever start to fall
I'll think of all of you

Martin L

Focus: Is your group information up to date?

The General Service Office (GSO) in New York relies on the group contact or the Area Registrar to keep the group information up to date in the records department at GSO. If you do not

advise the Area Registrar or the records department at GSO of changes of address or group information, then the people at GSO cannot be expected to be clairvoyant. Is your group getting all of the material that is being sent to your group by GSO? Is your group still marked as Active at GSO? Is your group getting Box 459 on a regular basis? Is your group listed in the most recent AA directory?

If your group or your group contact is not receiving information from GSO then your group is more than likely delinquent in filing the up to date information. As long as a group has a valid mail contact person and holds at least one meeting per week, then the group is considered an Active Group. However, if your contact person leaves the group and goes out for a refresher course or goes to another group, then GSO will continue to send this contact person the mailings for your group. If he/she is on a refresher course or is in another group, your group may not be getting the material that is being sent by GSO unless this person delivers it to your group. If he/she is on a refresher course, do you think he/she will deliver the material to your group? If your contact person left the group with resentment and a coffee pot, do you think he/she will deliver to your group the material that he/she is receiving from GSO? In this situation your group still may be considered Active but your group is not receiving its mail as it is going to a contact person who is no longer with your group.

If your group contact changes his/her address without notifying the Area Registrar or GSO and mail is returned to GSO by Canada Post, then the group immediately becomes listed as Status Unknown. GSO

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focus: Regional Forums

find our staff members, trustees and Area Delegates very accessible.

I have attended both as an Area Officer and an ordinary member of Alcoholics Anonymous

Forums in our Region, and I have always left feeling that Alcoholics Anonymous is in good hands, I have always felt that all of the questions posed to our various Trustees, whether Class "A" or Class "B", and Staff members were always given greatest and thoughtful consideration. Regardless of the nature of the question it is my experience always answered with deference and forthrightness.

As all Forums are informal sharing sessions there is no formal actions taken, however quite often formal actions result from these sessions and it is quite often a member of A.A. who is not formally involved in service who is the catalyst for planting the original seed. There is a report of the Forum sent to everyone who requests it and all reports are available on the website. Regional Forums give us the opportunity to share experiences and spark new ideas; ask questions with of course the ultimate goal of improving communication between us in our Region and with our Fellowship at all levels.

If you have the opportunity to go to a Regional Forum I urge you to grasp it you may as has been said "come to scoff" but you may leave a believer in the importance of our Service Structure.

Martin A.
 Delegate Panel 58
 Area 86 Western Ontario

Area 86 / Focus

Published twice a year by Western Ontario General Service.

<http://www.area86aa.org>

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Focus: I held a humming bird in my hand

It was a beautiful summer day and when I entered the garage I could hear an unusual buzzing sound. It waxed and waned as if coming nearer then getting further away.

At first I thought it was a bumblebee, but it was louder and more persistent than a bee who had wandered mistakenly inside before letting itself out. Then I looked up.

I could see a hummingbird frantically bouncing itself off of the ceiling. We had a couple feeders in the gardens in the front of the house and we enjoyed the company of many hummingbirds darting around throughout the summer.

Apparently this little guy had found its way into the garage through the open door.

Now it was frantically trying to escape...searching, darting, back and forth among the rafters and up to the ceiling boards.

The man door was open, as was the doublewide garage door.

"Come down and fly out silly" I heard myself say. "The doors are wide open, it's easy!"

But our little friend continued to fatigue himself with trying it his way...out through the ceiling...from which there was no escape. All he needed to do was look in a different direction. How difficult was that?

I grabbed a butterfly net that was lying about and not wanting to injure the bird I half-heartily tried to catch it so I could release it outside. In actuality I was trying to coax it down and out the door by impeding his vane searching above.

But he was persistent. He avoided me at every turn, but didn't fly down and out. He just kept trying the same escape route over and over again. Finally I just left it to tire itself out.

Hours later I returned to the scene. The buzzing was gone. Had he succeeded and found his way out?

I was curious and climbed a stepladder from which I could see throughout the joists above.

I spied the little fella sitting on a beam near the corner. I repositioned the ladder and climbed up just next to it.

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Focus: Elder Statesmen in A.A.

I acquired membership in A.A. when, as it is now, "The ONLY requirement for membership is a desire to stop DRINKING". A.A. has given me continuous sobriety from that time over 28 years ago.

I was introduced to service work in my early months of sobriety by setting up and cleaning up meetings at my home group. The elder statesmen of that time informed me that we are responsible for A.A. and that I was to be included in the we.

During the years that followed, I accepted and fulfilled service positions in the group as Alternate GSR, GSR, Secretary and Treasurer; in District 5, Central West 4 as Secretary, Treasurer, Literature Chair, Grapevine Chair, Institutions Chair, Alternate DCM, DCM to Area 86, and recently serving as Chair for CPC/PI for 2 terms at district level. I was appointed Program Chair for Central West Ontario Convention, Guelph, On.

All through this period I have recovered, and am recovering, as THE result of the 12 Steps. I have made an intensive study of all of A.A.'s literature and have a good working knowledge of The Steps, Traditions and Concepts of A.A.

About 5 years into my sobriety, by the grace of God, sponsees started to arrive on my doorstep. Over the years, as a servant of God **as I understood Him** and A.A., I have sponsored many people in the 12 Steps of recovery and in service to A.A.

There have been times when I have been too forthright in my enthusiasm by 'preaching to the choir' who already knew the music, and also to others who did not wish to learn, and for this I sincerely apologize. This revelation has come to me rather abruptly during the last few months.

I will now retreat into my beloved group - The PAISLEY Group of Alcoholics Anonymous, there I humbly hope to be accepted as an 'Elder Statesman' and be available to open up and clean up meetings, thus completing the circle from my beginnings in A.A.

Having an understanding of what 'the hand of A.A.' is, I will always be there when anyone, anywhere 'reaches out'.

In closing, having survived to become an 'elder statesman', I would like to quote from Tradition 2:

"They become the real and permanent leadership of A.A. Theirs is the quiet opinion, the sure knowledge and humble example that resolve a crisis. When sorely perplexed, the group inevitably turns to them for advice. They become the voice of the group conscience; in fact, these are the true voice of Alcoholics Anonymous. They do not drive by mandate; they lead by example. This is the experience which has led us to the conclusion that our group conscience, well advised by its elders, will be in the long run wiser than any single leader.

I remain,
Your 'Humbled' Servant, Bill W.

Focus: Our trusted servants

Who are they?

How do we identify them?

We recognize them by their AA loyalty, by their faithfulness to the Traditions and Principles of our fellowship. These souls that serve tirelessly, these wonderful human beings who dedicate their lives to serve the fellowship they love. This does not mean that it is easy for them as often they face criticism and disapproval but they continue to serve just the same because they understand completely why they must carry on and serve the fellowship.

Do not ever feel unworthy or unable to involve yourself for you have exactly what you need to be a good servant and I can assure you that your Higher Power will grant you all the grace you need at the right time.

Remember:

God does not choose qualified members to serve, He qualifies those chosen.

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Journey of life

I have been sober for five whole years
 Filled with hope, from many tears;
 But now meet life, on life's own terms,
 Learning to negotiate Its many turns
 And as I reach the straightaway;
 Not in darkness but by the light of day
 I can accelerate and catch up to stay
 With all the traffic, on life's highway
 And as I near my destination,
 I will lose my desperation
 And with the working of step eleven
 I will reach the gates of heaven
 And maybe God will let me in
 If I am full of love and free from sin.

Lawrence W

We Share Decrepit State

AA a comradeship of the trouble soul
 Bound together by one common goal
 Sharing the problems of a trouble life
 Seeking solutions of defects and strife
 By trial and error of others advise
 We solve problems like the roll of the dice
 And coming up with the answers we seek
 By listening to others learn to speak
 Or how they turned their life around
 With reflection on the hope they have found
 And they will harvest the field they have sown
 And know it's from their toil it's grown
 And like the rash on the babe that we are
 Our torment will heal and become a scar
 To remind us of our old decrepit state
 Before we found AA and penned our date

Laurie W.

Focus: From the heart

Focus: Leadership

(Excerpts from Bill W's article in the April 1959 Grapevine. See Concept IX, page 38 of "Twelve Concepts for World Service" for the full article)

Somewhere in our literature there is a statement to this effect: "Our leaders do not drive by mandate: they lead by example." In effect, we are saying to them, "Act for us, but don't boss us."...

Therefore, a leader in A.A. service is a man (or woman) who can personally put principles, plans, and policies into such dedicated and effective action that the rest of us want to back him up and help him with his job. When a leader power-drives us badly, we rebel; but when he too meekly becomes an order-taker and he exercises no judgement of his own- well, he really isn't a leader at all....

Good leadership originates plans, policies, and ideas for the improvement of our fellowship and its service. But ion new and important matters, it will nevertheless consult widely before taking decisions and actions. Good leadership will also remember that a fine plan or idea can come from anybody, anywhere. Consequently, good leadership will often discard its own cherished plans for others that are better, and it will give credit to the source....

Good leadership never passes the buck. Once assured that it has, or can obtain, sufficient general backing, it freely takes decisions and puts them into action forthwith, provided, of course, that such action be within the framework of its defined authority and responsibility....

Another qualification for leadership is give-and-take, the ability to compromise cheerfully whenever a proper compromise can cause a situation to progress in what appears to be the right direction. Compromise comes hard to us all-or-nothing drunks. Nevertheless, we must never lose sight of the fact that progress is nearly always characterized by a series of improving compromises. We cannot, however, compromise always. Now and then, it is truly necessary to stick flatfooted to one's conviction about an issue until it is settled. These are situa-

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then removes the group from the mailing list and directory until a contact person with a valid address is listed for the group. The group will stop receiving mail from GSO and your group loses receipt of valuable information.

If your group changes locations or meeting times and GSO is not notified then your information is not up to date. If, for example, a person reports to GSO that they went to the place and/or time listed in the records at GSO and there was no meeting, then it is possible that your group status will change from Active to status Unknown as you have not kept the records at GSO up to date. Remember, if the mail is returned or there is no weekly meeting, your group is not maintaining an Active status and your group is missing out on receipt of the information that it could be receiving from GSO. Is your group helping to the best of its ability the suffering alcoholic if your information at GSO is not up to date or your group is not receiving all of the mailings from GSO?

It only takes a few minutes to fill out a group change of information form and to mail, fax or email it as an attachment to your Area Registrar or GSO. Don't forget to sign the form as the records cannot be changed at GSO without the form being signed.

Always remember, if the person completing the change of information form does not check the box for "Yes" to be listed in the directory, then your group will not be listed in the directory. If neither the Yes nor the No is marked then the default is Not to list the group in the directory.

Help your group out in getting the valuable information and mailings from GSO by keeping the records up to date. Forms that are filled out and not forwarded to the Area Registrar or GSO directly are of NO help in changing the records. SO WHEN THERE IS A CHANGE IN YOUR GROUP INFORMATION SEND IN THE CHANGE INFORMATION AS SOON AS POSSIBLE.

Procrastination is a defect of character.

Yours in love and service
Percy G.
Secretary—Registrar
Area 86—W.O.G.S.

focus: Is your group information up to date

focus: I held a hummingbird in my hand

Completely exhausted the hummingbird didn't move. I grew closer and closer until we were eye to eye. It just looked at me helplessly as I reached up and gently cupped it in my hand.

No fight. No struggle.

Climbing down to the ground I took a minute to admire the beauty and majesty of this tiny little miracle.

After a minute or so of feeling intense love, and feeling good about myself, I quietly walked across the yard and nestled it into the safety of a nearby lilac. I said goodbye, thanked my higher power for the opportunity to share this freedom and stepped back and watched from a distance.

After a while he gathered enough strength to feed on a nearby flower and disappeared, as they always seemed to.

Later, while considering this episode I got to think how symbolic this was for my life...and maybe yours?

How often do we fight and fight to do things a certain way, thinking that was the right way. It must be! It's the only way!

Given our own devices we can't see an alternative.

And tired, beaten and exhausted we finally succumb. We surrender. Just like that little hummingbird.

And, in this surrender, we allow the hand of God to gently rescue us and put us on the right path.

We think it's a miracle.

The hummingbird didn't know any better.

But we do.

Sean L.

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Focus: A piece of Area 86 History

In the A.A. program there is a saying called “Remember When” and Wesley (Wes) B. sure does. On February 28th 1956 he left home to deliver fuel oil to three loca-

tions in Deseronto, Ont. and one further north. When leaving home he told his wife Margaret that he would be home in time to celebrate his son John’s 8th birthday. He wasn’t.

Wes was in hospital with a broken neck and numerous lacerations. You see, after drinking with a friend and then stopping at two more bars to drink, Wes rolled his tanker truck off of Highway 2 near Sand Hill, Ont. Recovering at home and unable to cope, he took comfort in what he loved best – alcohol, drinking through straws.

On October 4th 1956 Wes was taken to his first A.A. meeting in Belleville Ont., by his wife Margaret and his sister May. Wes only went to keep his family happy. The speaker that night was Jack H. Wes found him self listening and was able to identify with Jack. Wes admitted that he had a problem with alcohol. When Wes left that meeting the desire to drink had left him.

Wes moved from Napanee to Toronto & then to Oakville where he joined the White Oaks Group of A.A. Wes & three other members (Irving C., Don G. & Al D.) decided that a new group was required in Oakville. On Sept. 4th 1964, the Hopedale Group of A.A. was started. 45 years later, this group is still going strong.

In 1972, Wes moved to Burlington, Ont., & very quickly joined the Glenhaven Group of A.A. In the early 1990’s, Wes & four other alcoholics started the Downtown Discussion Group which is still open, although no longer in downtown Burlington.

Realizing that the north area of Burlington required a new open meeting, he went into action. In mid 1997 he started a meeting at the Brant Hills Church in Burlington. The meeting moved to St. Gabriel’s R.C. Church and on Dec. 8th The Brant Hills Group was formed with Wes B., Tom S., Jim M., Sharon M. and John P. as its founding members. The Group now has 35 members and is well attended.

He could not have achieved 53 years, without the help of the A.A. fellowship and its members. Wes has been giving back, what was so freely given to him for the entire length of his sobriety. He has helped countless alcoholics that were still suffering. Wes still attends 4 to 5 meetings per week and he continues to help & sponsor many alcoholics.

On October the 4th 2009. Wes B. will be celebrating 53 years of contented sobriety. Best wishes Wes, from your friends in The Brant Hills Group and all your other friends in the Fellowship of A.A. who you’ve helped stay sober “One Day at a Time”.

Compiled and Written by Jim M. of the Brant Hills Group

focus: Leadership

tions for keen timing and careful discrimination as to which course to take....

Leadership is often called upon to face heavy and sometimes long-continued criticism. This is an acid test. There are always the constructive critics, our friends indeed. We ought never fail to give them a

careful hearing. We should be willing to let them modify our opinions or change them completely. Often, too, we shall have to disagree and then stand fast without losing their friendship.

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Focus: Unity Day

We did it again!

In 2007 Districts 7 and 8 in Area 86 had a vision: for many years Areas 86 and 83 had shared a common border, but that was about it. Keeping in mind our Declaration of Unity, which states:

This we owe to A.A.'s future:
 To place our common welfare first
 To keep our Fellowship united
 For on A.A. Unity depend our lives,
 And the lives of those to come

a committee was struck; David J., DCM D8, Alex K., DCM D7, as co-chairs, and Percy G., Pat.S. Tom K., Richard J., Dan W. from District 7 and Robert L & Mary K. from District 8, with Martin A., Alt Delegate as Area liaison and we set out to have a Unity Day in cooperation with Area 83. According to Mike W (now Area Chair) in the Fall 2007 Area 86 Newsletter *Focus*, it was the first time that two Districts and two Areas have ever put on a service day together. It was a rousing success as a Service Day, & with the presence of then Chairman of the Board of AAWS Leonard Blumenthal, it was indeed a day to remember. The decision was made to have this as an annual or bi-annual event, hosted by 86 one year, and 83 the next. Unity Day 2009, held September 26, 2009, was hosted by Area 83 in King City and was well attended by people from both Areas. Our Delegate, Martin A., related how things were going in Area 86, and Sandy S. Area 83 Delegate did the same for her Area. Our Alt Del Dean Thrasher was on the PI/CPC Panel, as was John C. Area 86 PI Chair, along with the PI/CPC Chairs from Area 83.; on the Treatment/Corrections Panel we had David J., Area 86 Treatment Chair, as well as Percy G., A86 Secretary/Registrar and Area 83 Treatment/Corrections Chairs. Martin A, Delegate, who is Chair of the Remote Com-

munities, gave an excellent presentation on Remote Communities in Canada, ably assisted by Robb W., alt Delegate Area 83. Phyllis H. new General Manager of the General Service Office, was a delight to spend time with, and gave a talk during the day about her job and the General Service Structure, and at the AA meeting following the banquet, shared her own recovery and service story, and received a standing ovation. Unity Day Chair Rodney S. DCM District 14, Area 83, did an outstanding job, and we had an excellent committee. We received a donation of a Unity Day Banner, which I am looking forward to seeing grace the hall in an Area 86 venue in 2011.

I personally believe that it is too good of a thing to let go – an opportunity to fulfill our Primary Purpose through Unity and Service

Mary K. DCM Georgian Bay South District 8 Area 86

AREA OFFICERS

<u>Area Delegate:</u>	Martin A.
<u>Area Alternate Delegate:</u>	Dean T.
<u>Area Chair:</u>	Mike W.
<u>Area Treasurer:</u>	Anil G.
<u>Area Secretary/Registrar</u>	Percy G.

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