

International A.A. Convention: 80 Years — Happy, Joyous and Free

Amid the infectious laughter, the eager chatter in dozens of accents and dialects, and the irrepressible cheering of the lime-green t-shirt-clad greeters from the Atlanta Volunteer Host Committee, the sure and steady strains of the language of the heart could be heard throughout the Georgia World Convention Center as attendees at the International A.A. Convention in Atlanta, Georgia, celebrated A.A.'s 80th birthday over the weekend of July 2-5, 2015. Attended by over 57,000 A.A. members, family and friends, Convention goes spread out across Atlanta, filling the city with irresistible good humor, an attitude of gratitude, and a deep and abiding passion for sobriety.

As usually happens at A.A.'s International Conventions, attendees rapidly took over the city, flooding the transit system, piling into shuttle buses, filling the hotels and dorm spaces, and crowding the coffee shops and restaurants, where shop owners, cab drivers, hotel personnel and average citizens were

quick to comment on the joyful, orderly, well-behaved group of sober drunks who had taken over their city.

More than 4,000 volunteers, from local towns and neighboring states, were on hand to greet people at the airport and extend a warm welcome throughout the city. These were soon joined by another 1,000, representing 33 countries, who seemed to be everywhere, shaking hands, answering questions and giving directions.

Beginning Wednesday morning the Convention Center was the main hub of activity with registration, A.A.W.S. and GV information booths, food vendors, and a Carry the Message Pavilion where visitors could discover a variety of service opportunities and exchange experience with members from other regions.

Another popular area was the G.S.O. Archives exhibit, where visitors could listen to recordings of A.A. pioneers and watch the films *Markings on the Journey* and *Bill's Own Story* — the hands-down favorite, according to Michelle Mirza (nonalcoholic), G.S.O.'s A.A. Archivist. "Each showing of *Bill's Own Story* was packed, with people coming back a second or third time," she said.

Another focal point of activity was the International Hospitality Suite, where attendees from all over the world could meet, find translators if needed, and mingle with friends and family. There was a map of the world

on the wall, where visitors could add pushpins to mark where they came from. There was also a table-sized puzzle of the world that volunteers and visitors alike could put together, after initialing each puzzle piece on the back indicating where they lived. Eventually, when the puzzle was completed, the hidden side would contain the initials



and countries of thousands of individual A.A.s.

Sharing sobriety dates, offering ad hoc geography lessons, and extending heartfelt invitations to far-flung home groups, A.A. members from around the world lingered in the hallways, pored over the official Convention program, sent and received innumerable texts to confirm the plans of family and friends, and headed out for meeting rooms big and small to listen to fellow A.A.s share experience, strength and hope, or to share their own at one of the many marathon meetings that ran continuously from midnight Thursday until 7:00 a.m. Sunday.

Overall, nearly 250 meetings took place throughout the expansive convention center and other nearby venues, and meetings were available in French, Spanish, Italian,

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German, Japanese, Russian, Polish, Portuguese, Finnish, Lithuanian, Swedish, and ASL (American Sign Language).

Thursday evening was scheduled as an informal “Party in the Park,” with live music and dancing in Atlanta’s Centennial Olympic Park, adjacent to the convention center, but the possibility of rain required some quick reorganization, moving these activities indoors.

The Convention officially opened Friday evening at the Georgia Dome, as a marching drum band entered the stadium at the ground level, weaving its way through the near-capacity crowd and up onto the stage, their progression captured for all to see on the huge video screens set up above the stage. Their rousing entrance was followed by one of the highlights of each International Convention — the parade of flags from around the world, each flag carried by a member who traveled from the A.A. community in that land. It is here that the full impact of A.A.’s global presence is truly felt. This year, to lead the parade, an Eagle Staff was carried by an A.A. member from the Cherokee Nation. One at a time, 94 flags were carried across the stage by A.A. members from each location, many in the traditional attire of their countries, while an image of each flag was placed where it belonged on a



huge map of the world projected onto the video screen.

Chaired by Chet P., Southeast regional trustee, a three-speaker meeting — with simultaneous translation into Finnish, French, German, Italian, Japanese, Polish and Spanish — followed, with sharing from Stephanie N. of New York, Michael B. of California, and Roy A. of Australia. Notably, Michael B., who is deaf, shared his story in American Sign Language, with audio translation provided.

Saturday highlighted more meetings, covering a broad range of topics emanating out of A.A.’s Three Legacies of Recovery, Unity and Service and focusing on issues such as A.A. on the Internet, Our Primary Purpose and A.A. as a Resource for Professionals. Saturday evening everyone was back at the Georgia Dome for the Oldtimers Meeting, chaired by Phyllis H., G.S.O.’s general manager, where more than 100 A.A.s with over 50 years of sobriety put their names in the hat to be selected at random. Twelve were drawn and each graciously offered a brief sketch of their experience in sobriety — one even offered to sing! The meeting also featured a stadium-wide sobriety countdown and a brief cutaway showing a live video feed of the thunderous Fourth of July fireworks going on outside the Georgia Dome.

East Central regional trustee Bill F. chaired the Sunday morning Big Meeting, with sharing from Amalia C. of Connecticut, Jason S. of Georgia, and Trish L. of British Columbia. Highlighting the power and reach of A.A.’s Twelfth Step, Jason S., currently an inmate in the Georgia Correctional system, had been cleared to attend the Convention, accompanied by corrections security personnel, and shared his personal story of recovery.





With a nod to A.A. history and the many nonalcoholic professionals who were — and remain — instrumental in A.A.'s development and growth, the 35 millionth copy of the Big Book, *Alcoholics Anonymous*, was presented by A.A. General Service Board chair Terry Bedient to the Sisters of Charity of St. Augustine, the religious order of Sister Ignatia, who worked closely with Dr. Bob in the early days to sober up literally thousands of alcoholics at St. Thomas Hospital in Akron, Ohio. As noted by G.S.O.'s Archivist in her introduction to a brief audio clip of Sister Ignatia, Bill W. wrote in *A.A. Comes of Age*: "From this uncertain start of hospitalization in our pioneering time, we watched the growing procession of alcoholic sufferers as they passed through the doors of St. Thomas and out into the world, most of them never to return to the hospital except as visitors... And

so the ministry of Dr. Bob, his wife Anne, Sister Ignatia, and Akron's early timers set an example for the practice of A.A.'s Twelve Steps that will remain for all time."

The book was accepted by Sister Judith Ann Karam, the Congregational Leader of the Sisters of Charity of St. Augustine.



The world map in the International Hospitality Area, where A.A.s were invited to pin their hometowns, ran out of push pins the first day. An emergency shipment appeared the next day, and all was well in the world!

For many, it wasn't easy getting to the Convention: some traveled long distances under difficult circumstances, while still others faced challenges of timing and finance. One woman from Upper Manhattan, New York,

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One of several hundred meetings.

related a story about saving up for Atlanta. In the months leading up to the Convention she wanted badly to attend, but sizing up her finances, the prospects looked dim. "I can't afford to go," she told herself over and over again, until one day she heard herself saying, "I can't afford *not* to go." The change, she said, came as the result of a deeper understanding of the Promises. "It says that the fear of economic insecurity will leave us... It doesn't say the insecurity will leave, just the fear." Recognizing this subtle difference and the fiscal uncertainties faced by many, she began saving up for her trip to Atlanta.

Amusingly, one speaker from Tennessee leading a meeting on young people in A.A. wanted to thank everybody who thought she was still young. "I've been using wrinkle cream for two years," she said, garnering more than a few chuckles. Thirteen years sober, she had come to A.A. at age 15, and related how some people wondered how she could have hit bottom at such a tender young age. Her response? "I was suicidal and homicidal, that's how."

Everyone who attended A.A.'s 80th Anniversary celebration will have his or her own thoughts and reflections on the Convention; each life was changed or touched in a different way. But one phrase heard consistently throughout the weekend will be remembered by many; a phrase exchanged over and over between strangers in deep sincerity: "So very nice to meet you."

In 2020, over the July 4th weekend, A.A. will celebrate 85 years in Detroit, Michigan. As it says in the Big Book, in the chapter "A Vision for You": "May God bless you and keep you — until then."

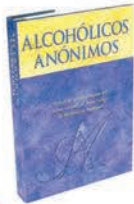


YOUR SEVENTH TRADITION CONTRIBUTIONS

Carrying Our Message Beyond Your Home Group

When you or your home group contributes to the General Service Office (G.S.O.) your contribution helps an alcoholic around the corner or around the world.

Here are some of the ways that happens:

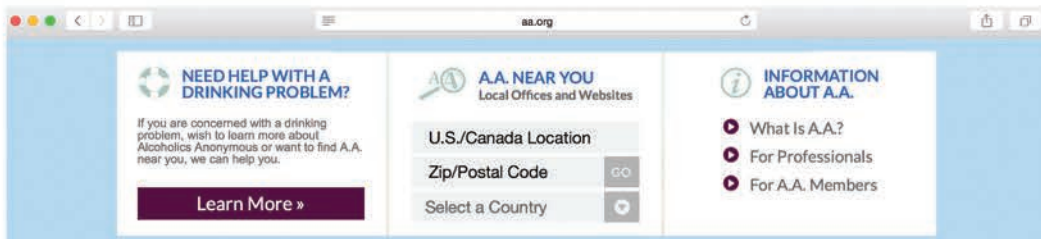


1 The G.S.O. Publishing Department has coordinated translations of the Big Book in 68 languages and translations of other A.A. literature in more than 80 languages. Further translations are constantly in process.

2 Each year G.S.O. staff responds to over 90,000 emails, letters, and phone calls from A.A. members, suffering alcoholics, professionals, students, the press and others interested in A.A. Thus accurate and consistent information about A.A. is provided.



3 Staff communications often help someone find local A.A. meetings, link members in service, and support the start of A.A. in countries where there are no A.A. meetings.



4 G.S.O. maintains and updates the aa.org website that averages over 30,000 visits per day. The website provides information about A.A., including how to find A.A. in their community, and provides help to members and those seeking help with their drinking problem, as well as to families and friends of problem drinkers, and professionals.

5 G.S.O.'s Publishing Department publishes and distributes all A.A. Conference-approved literature. Approximately 8 million books, pamphlets, video and audio products are distributed annually. Some of this literature is specifically designed for sight- or hearing-impaired members. *Box 4-5-9*, news and notes from G.S.O., is published four times a year in English, French and Spanish.



6 G.S.O. coordinates the *Loners-Internationalists Meeting Correspondence Service (LIM)*, which is often the only link to A.A. for many A.A. members in remote areas, homebound, or deployed in active military service.

7 The Corrections coordinator at G.S.O. responds to over 6,500 letters a year, primarily from incarcerated alcoholics. Letters often request literature and many express gratitude for a Big Book supplied or a link to an outside member who can take a soon-to-be released alcoholic to his or her first meeting on the outside.



8 G.S.O.'s Corrections staff member also coordinates a Corrections Correspondence Service (CCS), which each year connects over 1,000 alcoholics behind the walls with outside members in order to share A.A. recovery by mail. *Sharing From Behind the Walls*, containing excerpts from inmate letters to G.S.O., is printed four times a year.



9 The G.S.O. Treatment/Special Needs-Accessibilities desk responds to letters and communications from residents or patients in treatment centers and connects them with local committees. The staff member on this assignment supports groups and members in making the A.A. message receivable to alcoholics with special needs.

10 Professionals are frequently the first contact for an alcoholic seeking help. The Cooperation With the Professional Community (C.P.C.) staff member at G.S.O. provides information about A.A. to hundreds of professionals each year, often sending them basic literature. This assignment also coordinates A.A. exhibits at over 25 national conferences of professionals in various fields each year and publishes the newsletter *About A.A.* for professionals.



11 The Public Information desk coordinates the production and broadcast of audio and video Public Service Announcements (PSAs) to help reach the still-suffering alcoholics. Each year PSAs produced by Public Information are broadcast on television and radio. The most recent PSA, *Tengo Esperanza (I Have Hope)*, was viewed approximately 30,000 times the first year of its release. The Public Information staff member also responds to approximately 600 emails per month from the press and other media, A.A. members and the general public.



12 G.S.O.'s Archives documents the activities of Alcoholics Anonymous for the future and makes the history of the Fellowship accessible to A.A. members and other researchers. Each year the Archives staff responds to over 1,500 requests for information and research. *Markings: Your Archives eNewsletter*, an electronic newsletter, is published three times a year.

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■ Staff Rotation at G.S.O.

Staff rotation is an important part of G.S.O.'s service to the Fellowship, making manifest the spirit of Tradition Twelve and "ever reminding us to place principles above personalities."

Rotation occurs throughout the A.A. service world — from the group level to the trustees of the General Service Board — re-emphasizing the importance of the message over the messenger. Begun in 1951 as a means of broadening the pool of knowledge and experience among staff members, providing a chance for each staff member to contribute, and minimizing any competitiveness among staff members, staff rotation has become a fixture at G.S.O. every two years since.

This year, staff rotation will occur on September 14, 2015. New staff assignments, with minor adjustments pending, are as follows:

Communication Services, Rick W.: (a new staff assignment) secretary to A.A.W.S.'s Communication/Technology/Services Committee; liaison for G.S.O. website.

Cooperation With the Professional Community, Tracey O.: co-secretary of the trustees' Committee on Cooperation With the Professional Community/Treatment/Special Needs-Accessibilities; secretary of the Conference Committee on Cooperation With the Professional Community; liaison with other Twelve Step Fellowships; responsible for *About A.A.*, the newsletter for non-A.A. professionals.

Literature, Clement C.: secretary of trustees' and Conference Committees on Literature; secretary, A.A.W.S. Publishing Committee; responsible for *Box 4-5-9*.

Nominating, Julio E.: secretary of trustees' Committee on Nominating and Conference Committee on Trustees; liaison with Remote Communities; 2020 International Convention coordinator; co-secretary of trustees' and Conference Committees on International Conventions/A.A. Regional Forums.

Treatment/Special Needs-Accessibilities, (To Be Announced): co-secretary of trustees' Committee on Cooperation With the Professional Community/Treatment/Special Needs-Accessibilities; secretary of the Conference Committee on Treatment/Special Needs-Accessibilities.

Conference, Mary Clare L.: coordinates annual General Service Conference; secretary to the trustees' Committee on the General Service Conference and the Conference Agenda Committee; responsible for *Final Conference Report* and the Conference issue of *Box 4-5-9*.

Corrections, (To Be Announced): secretary of trustees' and Conference Committees on Corrections; responsible for *Sharing From Behind the Walls* and the Corrections Correspondence Service.

Group Services, Racy J.: secretary of the Conference Committee on Report and Charter; Intergroup/Central

Offices liaison; responsible for Service Material and A.A. Guidelines.

International, Mary C.: secretary of the trustees' International Committee; handles international (outside U.S./Canada) correspondence; coordinator of the World Service Meeting and responsible for the *World Service Meeting Report*.

Public Information, Clay R.: secretary of the trustees' and Conference Committees on Public Information; handles the public service announcements (PSAs) and the A.A. Membership Survey.

Regional Forums, Steve S.: coordinates Regional Forums; co-secretary of trustees' and Conference Committees on International Conventions/A.A. Regional Forums; responsible for Regional Forum reports.

Staff Coordinator, Eva S.: secretary of Conference Committee on Policy/Admissions; A.A.W.S. director; responsible for G.S.O. *Quarterly Report* and A.A.W.S. Highlights.

■ A Call for Stories

In response to 2015 General Service Conference Advisory Actions the trustees' Literature committee is requesting stories for revision of the following pamphlets:

- "A.A. for the Woman" — revision to include current sharing from women in A.A., including "stories from women in the military, single mothers, and women of diverse backgrounds."
- "A.A. and the Gay/Lesbian Alcoholic" — seeking stories from A.A. members who are gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender or gender nonconforming, especially regarding being a newcomer and sponsorship.

Another Advisory Action requests that the trustees' Literature Committee develop literature for "alcoholics with mental health issues." For this project the committee is requesting a wide range of A.A. recovery experience from members with mental health issues, and from those who sponsor such members.

In all three undertakings, the trustees are giving special consideration to sharing from disabled veterans and from nonbelievers.

For all sending stories regarding the above three topics, manuscripts should be 500-800 words, double spaced. Please include your complete name, address and email/phone information. The anonymity of all authors will be observed, whether or not their story is selected for publication. Please email your sharing to: Literature@aa.org and put the name of the pamphlet or topic you are addressing in the subject line of the message. Or, you may mail it to Literature Coordinator, General Service Office, Box 459, Grand Central Station, New York, NY 10163. The deadline for submissions is October 15, 2015.

■ Four New Class B Trustees Join the General Service Board

Following their election in April at the 65th General Service Conference, the General Service Board of A.A. welcomed four new Class B (alcoholic) trustees: Richard P., Northeast regional; Yolanda F., Southwest regional; Scott H., trustee-at-large/Canada; and Ed M., general service trustee. While all trustees represent the Fellowship as a whole and no trustee can be said to “represent” a geographical section, these newly elected A.A. members will bring extensive service experience to the board’s deliberations and an invaluable regional A.A. point of view.

Richard P., of Pelham, New Hampshire, sober since 1989, succeeds J. Gary L. as Northeast regional trustee. A 2010-2011 (Panel 60) delegate, Richard has served A.A. in a number of different capacities at the group, district and area levels — from greeter and coffee maker to his most recent service as treasurer of a Saturday morning meeting in Derry, N.H. Remembering his home group — the Derry Spacetown Group — Richard “got into the Steps early and was allowed to find the God of my understanding. I was blessed with a wonderful, tolerant group of people who taught me to go to meetings, ask for help and let it happen.”

In his life outside of A.A., Richard has had a 27-year executive career at a regional staffing company and now works as an industry consultant. “Experience and expertise in employment law, liabilities and the Affordable Health Care Act may be relevant to service on the General Service Board,” he says. “I understand financials, income statements, and balance sheets. I have served on many panels with regulators from health and human services. All of this work has occurred in constantly changing financial and health care markets. It is my hope that these skills and experiences will help me gain understanding of where we are and where we may need to go to best serve the Fellowship and A.A. as a whole.”

His professional background, when combined with his A.A. experience, has provided Richard with a mix he believes will be helpful as a regional trustee. “I have solid business experience, matched only by my love for A.A., which just keeps growing. Each day I begin knowing that I need meetings and the Steps in my life. I have a strong commitment to making the eye of the needle wider, bringing more alcoholics from the dark into the light.”

Yolanda F., of San Antonio, Texas, is also a past delegate, serving the Fellowship from 2000-2001 (Panel 50), where she was chairperson of the Conference Literature Committee. Selected to replace outgoing Southwest regional trustee Clayton V., Yolanda is “greatly motivated” to helping the suffering alcoholic.

“Our program should remain a rock solid path in life that brings joy to anyone who wants it. It is so gratifying to see hopeless alcoholics grow spiritually and regain a place in the family and society.... The Steps of recovery and Traditions of unity are a way of life which should not be compromised by the changes of time.”

Sober since 1985, Yolanda found that service was the missing piece to maintaining her sobriety and got involved early on with the Spanish groups in her area. “I started to attend a meeting where the conversation was about forming something called a ‘distrito.’ It would serve the Spanish groups and be part of an area. There was one in California and many phone calls were exchanged. We had to convince our area that this was a good thing and with much doubt Area 68 accepted the idea. These were exciting times and I feel privileged to have seen the birth of distrito 1F.”

Yolanda was also heavily involved with Grapevine and served as the GV Committee chair for groups in San Antonio and was GV secretary for Spanish-speaking groups in the years leading up to the creation of La Viña.

As for her professional life, Yolanda worked nearly 30 years for a major telecommunications company in the engineering department, where many changes were made to accommodate the rapid changes of the digital era. “I have a deep respect for technology,” she says, “and will embrace the many changes that it brings.”

Scott H., (past delegate Panel 61) of Kamloops, British Columbia, will replace Barb K. as the new trustee-at-large/Canada. For Scott, sober since 1998, service to the Fellowship represents an opportunity to be around people who are more interested in *doing* right than *being* right, he says. “I owe A.A. so much more than I can ever repay, and to be allowed to serve in this capacity is a tremendous privilege. Being around people simply grateful for the chance to be sober and live a useful life seems to be about the best way to spend my time.”

One of six partners in a 13-lawyer law firm, Scott has been with the firm for 21 years, advising large and small businesses on a number of legal issues. “My educational background includes a law degree and a business degree,” says Scott. “My work is in large part focused on helping business owners and not-for-profit organizations. I also have a significant responsibility in my law firm for its financial planning and health. My work requires that I be organized and able to balance a number of tasks. In my profession the single most important skill to being successful is the ability to listen. I can’t help anyone if I fail to listen. Listening to the members of Alcoholics Anonymous will be the most important skill I need as a trustee.”

One of the challenges Scott recognizes he will face is balancing his professional and A.A. experience. “A personal challenge for me in service work arises from my professional background where finding the solution is always the priority. In service work I need to remember that the process is as important, oftentimes more important, than the solution.”

Ed M., of St. Louis, Missouri, selected to serve as general service trustee on the Grapevine board replacing Nancy H., has been active in local service since getting sober in 1986. “I joined the same home group as my sponsor. The

group was very warm and welcoming. They were active in service, although I didn't know what service was at the time. They worked together as a group to carry the message outside the meeting. Twenty-eight years later, I am still a member of the same home group. It is one of the longest relationships I've ever had in my life. They are even more involved in service today. The group has grown and matured, as has their Twelfth Step work."

With a B.F.A. in Graphic Design and Filmmaking, along with lifetime teacher certification in K-12 art, Ed has also worked in the substance abuse field.

A past delegate (Panel 51) for Area 38, Ed has served recently as a nontrustee director on the Grapevine board. "My professional life has dealt with image creation, from graphic design and the printed page through digital imaging. As a member of the Grapevine board, I find these talents to be directly applicable to carrying the A.A. message through the magazine and other print and audio offerings."

Additionally, says Ed, "One significant aspect of my service work resulted from my pursuit of a greater knowledge of A.A. history and the relationship between Fr. Edward Dowling and Bill W." This interest led to his producing and directing a documentary film on the life of Father Dowling.

In terms of his service to the Fellowship, it is important to trust the voice of the group conscience in making decisions, says Ed: "listening to the voice of all of A.A."

And as for the challenges ahead, Ed looks forward to an expansion of the working relationship between A.A.W.S and Grapevine, "to forge a stronger, more effective communications outreach for A.A., where new avenues for carrying the A.A. message in media can be explored."

A.A.'s four new Class B trustees, along with the other ten already on the board, each serve one four-year term; the seven Class A (nonalcoholic) trustees serve for six years.

■ Board Welcomes Two New Class A Trustees

Chosen for their professional or business backgrounds and the unique personal experience they can bring to A.A., the seven Class A (nonalcoholic) trustees on the General Service Board have always provided A.A. with a critical perspective, and, importantly, have been able to do things the 14 Class B (alcoholic) trustees cannot do, such as addressing the media head-on or using their last names in public without violating the Traditions.

The part played by such nonalcoholic trustees, according to Bill W., is "quite beyond reckoning." Says Bill in a January 1966 article for Grapevine: "In the days when A.A. was unknown, it was the nonalcoholic trustees who held up our hands before the general public.... Their very presence on our board was quite able to command full confidence and the respect of many faraway groups. Meanwhile, they

assured the world around us of A.A.'s worth. These are the unusual services which indeed they still render."

Following the 65th General Service Conference, the General Service Board officially selected two new Class A trustees to serve the Fellowship over the next six years: alcoholism treatment professionals Leslie Backus, from Savannah, Georgia, and Peter Luongo, Ph.D., from Germantown, Maryland. They will replace rotating Class A trustees Corliss Burke of Whitehorse, Yukon, and Frances Brisbane, Ph.D., of Medford, New York, who have served the Fellowship since 2009.

For Leslie, her selection to the General Service Board offers an opportunity to give something back to those in



Leslie Backus

need and to help spread the message of recovery. "I hope to be of service to A.A. in some small way. I was raised to believe that a life of service is our true purpose," she says. "On a personal note, A.A. has had a positive and powerful impact on my life. I first became involved with A.A. about 30 years ago when a family member found recovery through the Fellowship of A.A.

What attracted me to the program was watching the amazing change that I saw this family member and others go through after joining A.A. I came to understand that it was the Fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous that educated, supported and promoted the changes that I witnessed," she says.

"Another way A.A. has affected my life is by helping countless clients find a sober life. I know in my role as a treatment provider I can educate people on alcoholism and I can help them detox and begin teaching them some life skills to stay clean and sober. But I have seen firsthand, countless times, how the Fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous has embraced the suffering alcoholic and helped them find a better way, one day at a time."

A longtime manager and healthcare executive with over 25 years' experience in business operation management and finance, Leslie has seen alcoholism close up, both in her family and while working with others in treatment.

"Since I work in a treatment center I have a lot of involvement with A.A. members in my community. There are A.A. members who bring a meeting to many of our programs, both our residential and outpatient programs. In addition many of the people I work with are members of A.A. and have helped me to understand how the program works."

With her selection to the board, Leslie hopes that some of the skills she has developed throughout her career will be helpful to A.A. "One strength I bring to the board is as a consensus builder. I believe it is important to make sure

everyone is heard and their points of view are considered.”

Leslie also volunteers one weekend a month in one of the residential programs her treatment center oversees. “The work I do there is not really part of my job. I do it because no matter how frustrated I am with work, finding money, understanding the always changing environment, etc., the residents always remind me of what life is all about. There is a sense of community that I find peaceful. I see recovery in action — a microcosm that exemplifies many of the principles of the Fellowship.”

Peter Luongo, whose experience in the alcoholism treatment field extends over 30 years, is similarly excited to be a part of A.A.’s General Service Board. “I’m excited about this,” he says. “I’m thrilled to death.”

Currently an executive in a health management and applied research practice, Peter is a former director of the Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene Alcohol and Drug Abuse Administration and has held a number of positions in the Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services, along with over ten years’ teaching experience at Johns Hopkins University in the department of counseling and human service.



Peter Luongo

“My introduction to A.A. actually came from some old-timers who are now deceased,” says Peter, “and they hammered into my head that I really didn’t know very much about alcoholism. Thirty years ago, you didn’t learn much about alcohol and substance use in school, but I saw these guys who seemed to know what they were doing. They were two-hatters [a term referring to A.A. members working in the field of alcoholism]. They knew a lot more than I did and we got along.”

When it comes to alcoholism treatment, Peter acknowledges, there is an inside perspective and an outside perspective. “I don’t have the drinking experience that alcoholics have — I don’t walk in those shoes,” he says. “But, I walk comfortably side-by-side.”

“Those men and women I met early on in my career provided me, a nonalcoholic, with an inside perspective that I never would have known. For example, I never would have known if I was going to make a house call, which I used to do, to get people to the hospital or to a nonhospital detox, that it might not be a bad idea to have some fortified wine with me just in case the patient got shaky and started getting sick in my car.”

Teaching at Johns Hopkins, Peter also came to see the benefits that firsthand exposure to A.A. could do for others just learning about alcoholism. “I taught at Johns Hopkins for about 10 years in a counseling pro-

gram that required everyone — not just people on the clinical track, but even people in school counseling — to take courses in addiction counseling. So I had an A.A. member come in and just talk about A.A. It was incredibly helpful.”

With his service to the Fellowship about to begin, Peter sees an opportunity to connect some of the dots in the addictions field. “The job I’m in right now, we do quite a lot of applied research in preservice education. We have some studies going on to put alcohol and drug knowledge into foundational courses in social work, in doctor and nursing programs in medical schools, and one of the things that’s pretty obvious is that people don’t get where A.A. fits into the addictions field and how it works. I think I can help a little bit in discussions about how to better utilize A.A. in the treatment field.”

“So, I’m excited,” Peter says. “A.A., in my opinion, is one of the greatest social, health, education fellowship movements to ever to come out of the 20th century — the best nonorganization organization that people could come up with — and in terms of my service on the board, my motivation is to pay back and honor the men and women who really educated me.”

As the board and the Fellowship welcome these two new friends into service, both Leslie and Peter look forward to becoming the latest links in the long and notable chain of nonalcoholics who have helped Alcoholics Anonymous become what it is today: a worldwide source of help and hope for countless sufferers.

■ Regional Forums

There are four remaining Regional Forums in 2015. Check www.aa.org for information and online registration.

- Aug. 21-23, West Central, Parkway Plaza, Casper, Wyoming.
- Sept. 11-13, Additional Forum, Western Canada, Westmark Hotel Whitehorse, Whitehorse, Yukon.
- Oct. 9-11, Southwest, Sheraton Westport Chalet Hotel, St. Louis, Missouri.
- Nov. 13-15, East Central, Crowne Plaza Milwaukee Airport Hotel, Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

■ G.S.O. Construction

Due to major construction at the General Service Office, there will be limited access for visitors from Wednesday, July 29 to Monday, November 30, 2015.

Unfortunately, we will not be able to accommodate tours of G.S.O. during this time period. The Friday 11:00 A.A. meeting will continue to take place.

All business operations in the office will continue as usual.

■ Central Office/ Intergroup Seminar

Fort Lauderdale, Florida, will be the site of the 30th Annual Central Office/Intergroup Seminar, September 18-20, 2015. Hosted by the Broward County Intergroup in Fort Lauderdale, the event will be held at the Sheraton Fort Lauderdale Airport and Cruise Port Hotel.

This annual Seminar provides a forum, through workshops, discussions, and the exchange of ideas and shared experience, for those who are on A.A.'s front line. Attendees are Intergroup/Central office managers, Intergroup representatives, G.S.O. and Grapevine staff members, and representatives from the A.A.W.S. and Grapevine Boards.

Please make your hotel reservations, at special seminar rates, by August 17, by calling 1-800-325-3535, or online at <https://www.starwoodmeeting.com/StarGroupsWeb/res?id=1311143666&key=EC4C2>.

The registration fee is \$25.00. For any questions, or for a Seminar registration/questionnaire, contact Mary S., coordinator, (954) 462-0403 or help@aabroward.org.

■ Jim M. Leaving G.S.O.

After six years, G.S.O. staff member Jim M. will be leaving G.S.O. An English teacher by trade, with over 18 years of classroom experience at both the secondary and college levels, Jim will be leaving at the end of August 2015 to pursue a creative career in filmmaking and storytelling.

Starting with the corrections desk in 2009, Jim has had a number of different responsibilities at G.S.O., including group services, website services, and most recently, the public information desk, where he worked closely with the press during the 2015 International Convention in Atlanta.

“By far my favorite assignment was the corrections desk,” says Jim. “It was such an opportunity to work as directly as we can from this office with alcoholics looking for help and with our members who are out there actively helping them. To have a front-row seat to that kind of love and service is just an amazing thing.”

Another highlight for Jim was working on the group services assignment where he was the liaison between G.S.O. and the central offices and intergroups. “They do such incredible work — those 500-plus local entities that maintain the answering services and the websites and the local meeting lists and make sure that drunks can find sober drunks.

“I’ve also had the chance to travel a bit in the Fellowship,” says Jim, “and to see how different A.A. is in different places — and yet it still works exactly the same” — one of those apparent paradoxes most A.A.s completely understand.

“I’ve also appreciated the opportunity to serve as secretary to a number of Conference and trustees’ committees,

to watch them go through their process and to help them capture it in minutes and reports, to preserve the experience we’ve had and are having — to watch them give of themselves, their time and their energy, their professional backgrounds, their A.A. experience — everything that we need to come to good decisions.”

And, finally, Jim greatly appreciates the people he has worked with at G.S.O. — those who were there when he got there, those who have left, and those who have come since he’s been there. “I’ve never worked with a finer group of people,” he says.

Throughout the Fellowship, Jim’s presence at G.S.O. will be missed. He wants to remind everyone, however, that he is not leaving A.A. and will continue practicing A.A. principles and helping other alcoholics.

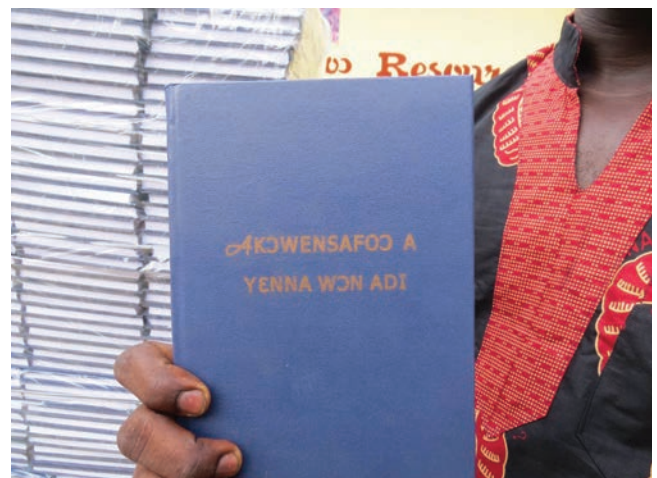
■ Reminder: Résumés for Trustees Election due Jan. 1, 2016

Two new Class B (alcoholic) trustees—from the West Central and Western Canada regions—will be elected at the General Service Conference in April 2016. Résumés must be received at G.S.O. no later than January 1, 2016, and must be submitted by delegates only.

The new West Central regional trustee will fill the position currently held by Andrew W., of Missoula, MT. The next trustee from the Western Canada region will fill the vacancy left after the passing of Marty W., of Sidney, BC.

Please submit your candidate’s résumé to the Secretary, trustees’ Nominating Committee, General Service Office.

■ Big Book in Twi



After nine years of painstaking and diligent work by three local women translators, 1,200 copies of Alcoholics Anonymous, were printed locally in Twi, the language of Ghana. The book, with hand-sewn bindings, is now being used at A.A. meetings throughout the region.

Calendar of Events

Events listed here are presented solely as a service to readers, not as an endorsement by the General Service Office. For any additional information, please use the addresses provided. Please note that we cannot attest to the accuracy, relevancy, timeliness, or completeness of information provided by any linked site. **Please note that we cannot attest to the accuracy, relevancy, timeliness, or completeness of information provided by any linked site.**

September

- 4-6—*Colorado Springs, Colorado.* CO State Conv. Write: Ch., Box 102992, Denver, CO 80250; www.a10conv.org
- 4-6—*Meriden, Connecticut.* 57th Area 11 Conv. Write: Ch., Box 1362, Stratford, CT 06615; www.ct-aa.org
- 4-6—*Powell River, British Columbia, Canada.* 68th Powell River Rally. 9408 Stittle Rd, Powell River, BC V8A 0J3
- 4-6—*Yellowknife, Northwest Territories, Canada.* Dist. 35 Roundup. Info: www.aayellowknife.ca
- 4-6—*Jonquière, Québec, Canada.* Congrès du Saguenay. Info: www.aa89.org
- 4-6—*Berlin, Germany.* 10th Berlin English Speaking Conv. Info: www.berlinaaconvention.com
- 11-13—*Park City, Utah.* BTG Workshop Wknd. Info: coordinator@btgww.org
- 11-13—*Timmons, Ontario, Canada.* Local Forum. Write: Ch., 1066 Hawthorne Dr., Sudbury, ON T3A 1K2
- 11-13—*Whitehorse, Yukon Territory, Canada.* Additional Western Canada Reg. Forum. Write: Forum Coord., Box 459, Grand Central Station, New York, NY 10163; Regionalforums@aa.org
- 18-20—*Kernville, California.* 27th Soberfest Campout. Write: Ch., Box 3784, Lake Isabella, CA 93240-2235; soberfestcampout@gmail.com
- 18-20—*Taos, New Mexico.* 32nd Taos Mtn Fiesta. Info: www.taosmountainfiesta.org
- 18-20—*Bismarck, North Dakota.* ND State Roundup. Write: Ch., Box 1493, Bismarck, ND 58501; www.aanorthdakota.org
- 18-20—*Newbury, Ohio.* 96th Punderson Pk Conf. Write: Ch., Box 844, Chardon, OH 44024; www.pundersonparkconference.com
- 18-20—*Wisconsin Rapids, Wisconsin.* Area 74 Fall Conf. Write: Ch., Box 111, Wisconsin Rapids, WI 54495-0111

- 18-20—*Gatineau, Québec, Canada.* 17^e Congrès du Dist. 90-22. Info: congres22@aa90.org
- 18-20—*Rimini, Italy.* 31st Conv. of Italy. Info: www.alcolistianonimiitalia.it
- 25-27—*Grand Junction, Colorado.* Color Daze Wknd. Write: Ch., Box 4037, Grand Junction, CO 81502; colordazegj@gmail.com
- 25-27—*Somerset, New Jersey.* 59th Area 44 Conv. Write: Ch., Box 118, Madison, NJ 07940-9998; convention@njjaa.org
- 25-27—*Wakefield, Rhode Island.* Rhody Recovery Big Book Wknd. Write: Ch., 10 High St., Wakefield, RI 02893
- 25-27—*Sioux Falls, South Dakota.* Area 63 Fall Conf. Write: Ch., Box 319, Sioux Falls, SD 57101; www.area63aa.org
- 25-27—*Harrisonburg, Virginia.* Shenandoah Valley Roundup. Write: Ch., 618 N. Beverly Ave., Covington, Virginia 24426; shenandoahvalleyroundup@comcast.net

October

- 1-4—*Amarillo, Texas.* 69th Top of TX Roundup. Write: Ch., Box 412, Amarillo, TX 79105; www.topoftexasroundup.com
- 2-4—*Jacksonville, Florida.* FL Unity Roundup. Info: www.floridaunityroundup.com
- 2-4—*St. Louis, Missouri.* Nat'l Tech Workshop. Write: Ch., Box 979, Windermere, FL 34786-0979; www.naatw.org
- 2-4—*Buffalo, New York.* 74th Buffalo Fall Conv. Write: Ch., Box 175, Niagara Falls, NY 14304; www.buffaloaany.org

- 2-4—*Perrysburg, Ohio.* 32nd Midwest Woman to Woman Seminar. Write: Ch., Box 80434, Toledo, OH 43608-0434; www.midwest-wtw.org
- 8-11—*Petit Jean Mountain, Morrilton, Arkansas.* ARKYPAA. Info: www.arkypaa.org
- 9-11—*Cedar Rapids, Iowa.* Area 24 Fall Conf. Write: Ch., Box 846, Marion, IA 52302
- 9-11—*Mackinac Island, Michigan.* 27th Fall Wknd. Write: Ch., 1915 E. Michigan Ave., Ste. D., Lansing, MI 48912; aalansing@att.net
- 9-11—*St. Louis, Missouri.* Southwest Reg. Forum. Write: Forum Coord., Box 459, Grand Central Station, New York, NY 10163; Regionalforums@aa.org
- 9-11—*Angeles City, Pampanga, Philippines.* 20th Internat'l Fall Roundup. Write: Ch., 9-26 Bertha St., Mtn View, Angeles City, Pampanga 2009; roundupangelescity@yahoo.com.ph
- 9-12—*Corner Brook, Newfoundland, Canada.* Area 82 Assembly & Roundup. Write: Ch., 9 Humber Park, NL A2H 2Z7; cbassembly@gmail.com
- 16-17—*Bradford, Pennsylvania.* Day of Learning. Write: Ch., Box 421, Olean, NY 14760; nypennintergroupoct2014@gmail.com
- 16-18—*Columbus, Georgia.* GA State Pre-Paid Conv. Write: Ch., Box 6221, Columbus, GA 31907; 62ndprepaid@aageorgia.org
- 16-18—*Greensburg, Pennsylvania.* 7th Laurel Highlands Conf. Write: Ch., Box 6, Bovard, PA 15619
- 16-18—*Victoria, Texas.* SWTA 68 Fall Conf. Info: www.aa-swta.org
- 16-18—*Sechelt, British Columbia, Canada.* Octsoberfest. Write: Ch., 2855 Lacey Plc., Robert's Creek, BC V0N 2W4; www.sunshinecoastaa.ca

Planning a Future Event?

To be included in the *Box 4-5-9* Calendar, information must be received at G.S.O. four months prior to the event. We list events of two or more days.

For your convenience and ours — please type or print the information to be listed on the Bulletin Board page, and mail to Editor: Box 459, Grand Central Station, New York, NY 10163 or literature@aa.org

Date of event: from _____ to _____, 20____

Name of event: _____

Location: _____ CITY STATE OR PROVINCE

Address to list: _____ P.O. BOX (OR NUMBER AND STREET)

_____ CITY STATE OR PROVINCE ZIP CODE

Web site or E-mail: _____ (NO PERSONAL E-MAIL ADDRESSES)

Contact person: _____ NAME PHONE # AND E-MAIL

Cut along dotted line, and post this page on your group's bulletin board

22-25—*St. George, Utah*. Oktoberfest. Write: Ch., 295 N. Main St., Apt., A, St. George, UT 84770; www.oktoberfest.org

23-24—*St. Cloud, Minnesota*. St. Cloud Roundup. Write: Ch., Box 125, St. Cloud, MN 56302; www.stclouderoundup.org

23-24—*Moose Jaw, Saskatchewan, Canada*. Moose Jaw & District Roundup. Write: Ch., 1037 Oxford St. E, Moose Jaw, SK S6H 7L4

23-25—*Goleta, California*. 31st Santa Barbara Conv. Write: Ch., Box 91731, Santa Barbara, CA 93190-1731; www.sbaaconv.org

23-25—*Hunt Valley, Maryland*. 31st Area 29 Fall Conv. Info: fallconvention@marylandaa.org

23-25—*Branson, Missouri*. Area 39 Conv. Write: Ch., 1415 NE 80th St., Kansas City, MO 64118; www.wamo-aa.org

23-25—*Ponca City, Oklahoma*. 64th NW Dist. 50 Conf. Write: Ch., 1628 Donahoe Dr., Ponca City, OK 74601; www.aaoklahoma.org

23-25—*Montreal, Quebec, Canada*. Area 87 Trilingual Conv. Write: Ch., 3920 Rachel St., East, Montreal, QC H1X 1Z3; congreg@aa87.org

29-1—*Honolulu, Hawaii*. 54th HI Conv. Write: Ch., Box 23434, Honolulu, HI 96823-3434; www.annualhawaiiiconvention.com

30-1—*Greenville, South Carolina*. SC Conv. of YPAA. Write: Ch., 1521 Laurens Rd, Box 17412, Greenville, SC 29606; www.sccypaa.com

30-1—*Arlington, Virginia*. 27th NE Woman to Woman Conf. Write: Ch., Box 1525, Washington, DC 20013; www.newomantowoman.org

30-1—*Winchester, Virginia*. VA State Conf. of YPAA. Write: Ch., Box 773, Winchester, VA 22604; www.vscypaa2015.org

30-1—*Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada*. Keystone Conf. Write: Ch., 1856 Portage Ave., Winnipeg, MB R3J 0G9; aambco@mts.net

November

5-8—*Long Branch, New Jersey*. 5th Jersey Shore Roundup. Write: Ch., 3 Ashford Ct, Spring Lake Heights, NJ 07762; www.jerseyshoreroundup.com

6-7—*Cornwall, Ontario, Canada*. 68th Cornwall & Area Dist. 50 Conf. Write: Ch., 1380 Lochiel St., Cornwall, ON K6H 6N2; cornwallaaconference@yahoo.com

6-8—*Fort Smith, Arkansas*. Border City Roundup. Write: Ch., Box 5800, Ft. Smith, AR 72913-5800; www.bordercityroundup.org

6-8—*San Bernardino, California*. 28th Inland Empire Conv. Info: www.ieaac.org

6-8—*Pratt, Kansas*. Big Book Wknd. Write: Ch., Box 74, Pratt, KS 67124; simplyaapratt@yahoo.com

6-8—*Framingham, Massachusetts*. 52nd MA State Conv. Write: Ch., Box 6562, Holyoke, MA 01463; mastateconvention@aaemass.org

6-8—*Sheridan, Wyoming*. Area 76 Fall Conv. Write: Ch., Box 7312, Sheridan, WY 82801; www.area76wyaa.org

13-14—*Wichita, Kansas*. 32nd Fall Roundup. Info: www.wichitafallroundup.com

13-15—*Lake Havasu City, Arizona*. 27th Miracle on the River LHC Roundup. Write: Ch., Box 1692, Lake Havasu City, AZ 86405; www.havasuaa.com

13-15—*Hyannis, Massachusetts*. Cape Cod Pockets of Enthusiasm. Write: Ch., 26 Morse Pond Rd, Falmouth, MA 02540; www.capecodpockets.org

13-15—*Milwaukee, Wisconsin*. East Central Reg. Forum. Write: Forum Coord., Box 459, Grand Central Station, New York, NY 10163; Regionalforums@aa.org

20-22—*Curry Village, Yosemite National Park, California*. Yosemite Summit Conf. Write: Ch., Box 675, Mariposa, CA 95338-0675; www.serenityyosemite.com

20-22—*Portsmouth, New Hampshire*. 6th Woman to Woman NE Conf. Write: Ch., 39 S. Main St., #108, Rochester, NH 03867; www.womantowomannewengland.org

20-22—*Huntington, West Virginia*. Third Southern States Svc Assembly. Write: Ch., Box 75, Chesapeake, OH 45619; www.aawv.org

26-29—*Las Vegas, Nevada*. 49th LV Roundup. Write: Ch., Box 14743, Las Vegas, NV 89114; www.lasvegasroundup.org

27-29—*St. Louis Park, Minnesota*. Founder's Day Wknd. Write: Ch., Box 8327, Minneapolis, MN 55408; www.foundersdaymn.org

27-29—*Everett, Washington*. Everett Conf. Write: Ch., Box 5003, Everett, WA 98201; www.everettconference.org

December

4-5—*Lexington, Kentucky*. We Have Recovered Big Book Workshop. Write: Ch., Box 11805, Lexington, KY 40578-1805

11-13—*Birmingham, Alabama*. Magic City Roundup II. Write: Ch., Box 550058, Birmingham, AL 35255; www.magiccityroundup.com

17-20—*Portland, Oregon*. WACYPA. Write: Ch., Box 1941, Lake Oswego, OR 97035; www.wacypaaxix.org

January

22-24—*Hilton Head Island, South Carolina*. Hilton Head Mid-Winter Conf. Write: Ch., Box 6256, Hilton Head Island, SC 29938; www.hiltonheadmidwinterconference.com

22-24—*Puerto Vallarta, Mexico*. 14th Sobriety Under The Sun. Info: www.aapvconvention.com

29-31—*Fort Worth, Texas*. XXXII Reunion Zona Norte de TX. Write: Ch., 3244 W. Seminary Dr., Ste. B., Ft. Worth, TX 76133

29-31—*Costa Tegui, Lanzarote, Canary Islands, Spain*. 7th Internat'l Conv. Info: www.aalanzarote.com

February

5-7—*Oostende, Belgium*. 27th North Sea Conv. Write: www.aa-europe.net

5-7—*Dumaguete City, Philippines*. 34th Philippines Nat'l Conv. Info: www.dumagueteaa.org

11-14—*Norfolk, Virginia*. 52nd Internat'l Women's Conf. Write: Ch., Box 12805, Norfolk, VA 23451-0805; www.internationalwomensconference.org

19-21—*Yuma, Arizona*. Yuma Roundup. Write: Ch., Box 6722, Yuma, AZ 85366; www.yumaroundup.org

26-28—*George Town, Grand Cayman, Cayman Islands*. 8th Cayman Islands Roundup. Write: Ch., 1832, Grand Cayman KY1-1110, CI; www.caymanroundup.com